

Talks on Memory and Arts 2020

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Foreword

**Memory and Art:
For Equality, Liberty,
Justice and Peace**

9

**Meltem
Ahiska**

They came to the door and read names from a list.
 If you heard your name, you had to get ready fast;
 a busted suitcase, a bundle you might carry
 over your shoulder, perhaps; forget the rest.
 With each new departure, the place seemed to shrink.
 Finally, those who were left agreed to bunk
 in a single room, which no one thought odd.
 They found an old alarm clock
 And placed it just here, in the hearth,
 A little household gold,
 And made a rota for who would wind it and set it
 To ring at six-thirty, in time for their needle bath.
 Once, it went off at midnight, whereat they woke
 And sluiced themselves under the moon, then sat
 in a circle round the clock
 to smoke the last of their cigarettes.

Yannis Ritsos, "A Break in Routine," transl. David Harsent

The storm continues to blow

In the beginning of 1940, Walter Benjamin was working on his book, *The Arcades Project*, in Paris, the last stop in his escape from the terror of Nazi Germany. In the ninth statement of the text which he imagined would be the introduction to this book, "On the Concept of History", he writes:

"There is a painting by Klee called 'Angelus Novus'. An angel is depicted there who looks as though he were about to distance himself from something which he is staring at. His eyes are opened wide, his mouth stands open and his wings are outstretched. The Angel of History must look just so. His face is turned towards the past. Where we see the appearance of a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet. He would like to pause for a moment so fair, to awaken the dead and to piece together what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has caught itself up in his wings and is so strong that the Angel can no longer close them. The storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the rubble-heap before him grows sky-high. That which we call progress, is *this* storm."¹

The same year, in the fall of 1940, upon learning that they would not be granted permission to cross the border from France to Spain, which he had reached together with a group of German Nazi opponents, Benjamin committed suicide so as not to fall in the hands of the Gestapo.

While he had his looks set on the ruins and losses of the past, with extraordinary earnesty and attention, while striving to recover broken parts from this wreck, he was swept by this storm blowing from "Paradise" toward a non-existent future. In Benjamin's theses on the concept of history, the storm is an allegory. "Allegory is the form of a world falling apart, a world where the connection between things and signification is broken."² In today's world, however, with the hurricanes and natural disasters caused by the climate crisis on the one hand and ongoing wars, exiles, massacres and losses on the other, the allegoric and concrete existence of the storm comes forever closer. The work whereby Banu Cennetoğlu gives a visual rendition of the updated lists of migrant deaths, which she envisioned as an act of "mourning on paper"³, reminds us of the physical storms sinking the migrants' boats, as much as the storms of wars that uproot people from their countries, and those of racism, condemning them to die on the roads or in transit camps.

Throughout this book, both in the artworks that are included in the "selection/archive" compiled by the *Hafıza Merkezi*, and still in the making, and in the responses commenting on them, the reader gets a solid sense of how this storm is still blowing. The storm, taking up a variety of aspects –social, economic, military, legal– under the name of "progress", uproots memory and casts it away, to regions which cannot be accessed, nor given meaning to, off-world regions deprived of life. In his essay, where he advocates for the right to creativity and imagination "against a normative command

¹ Walter Benjamin, "Tarih Kavramı Üzerine (On the Concept of History)," *Son Bakışta Aşk (Love at Last Site)*, presented and prepared by Nurdan Gürbilek (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2012), 43–44. / transl. Dennis Redmond (Global Rights Books, 2016), 4.

² Nurdan Gürbilek, "Sunuş," *Son Bakışta Aşk ("Presentation," Love at Last Site)*, 21.

³ Quoted by Ege Berensel in his essay "The Art of List-Making," from Erden Kosova's interview with Banu Cennetoğlu.

aiming at inclosure, constriction and standardisation by means of law", Turgut Tarhanlı mentions a video work by Gülsün Karamustafa *Duvar Örülürken (Making of the Wall, 2003)*. This striking artwork, which invites the viewers to rethink their relation with memory and the world, shows us interviews carried out with women who were incarcerated during different military coup periods. In one of these interviews, Jülide, one of the two prisoners transferred from Istanbul's Sağmalcılar prison, where they were detained after the 1971 military coup, to the Adana prison, tells of the happiness they felt in taking part in collective breakfasts under the shadow of a huge tree in the courtyard of this civil prison. As Nadia Seremetakis highlights in her writing on the memory of the senses, "commensality" creates an exchange of plural memories between subjects and objects that extend beyond language.⁴ Politically and socially fragmented memories start to come in contact under the common shadow of the tree. However, the prison's authorities were not late in discovering the danger in the emergence of memory through shared space and time between the "urban guerillas" and the other prisoners, and hastily cut down the tree. In Jülide's own words, once the majestic tree was brought down, the place became a prison for real! Everybody was sentenced to their own past and fate once more.

The Turkish word for storm, *fırtına*, which also appears in Greek as *fortuna*, derives from the Latin root of *fortuna*. This ancient word carries such meanings as "luck, destiny, fate". In this light, the connection made by Walter Benjamin between the notions of fate, sin and naming is worthy of reflection. When people eschew naming what exists, they allow for a mythic fate to name them. According to Benjamin, the political form of this sin is called fascism. The imposition of an all-encompassing experience, ingrafted in fate, dictating such a perspective as "we are all on the same boat", is intrinsically lethal: "The fact that I was born a German, it is for this that I die."⁵ No one knows themselves, or can put names on what happens anymore. Those who were banished from the country of childhood and youth have lost their language, as Umut Tümay Arslan discusses in her contribution to this book. "Suddenly, the past was buried and one no longer knew who one was", says Jean Améry. As for those who feign ignorance of their own sins, they are sucked into the banality of evil, repeating the clichés of the official discourse.⁶

The "all-encompassing experience", established on the rough terrain of destruction that the storm has caused, presents this as ineluctable fate. *Ada (The Island, 2012)*, Hera Büyüktaççıyan's work often referred to in this book, shows us a chair standing askew, on top of a mound formed by what has been swept under the carpet. The image stands on the edge of banality; it gives us a feeling of how the sin niched in fate makes an uncanny yet a protected nest for itself. As part of a collective exhibition at Arter, the work was commented on in the brochure in the following way: "it is as though what is not being said, what has become a taboo, silently covers the dust belonging to a hidden past, causing a swelling on the warm and soft floor we walk on."⁷ It seeks to unsettle the approbation of destruction in the form of warmth, of proximity.

The desire to remember aspires to redeem life for those who live and those who were lost, but in order for this to happen, the storm needs to be properly named, without surrendering to a mythic fate; the wreck left in the past, the void created between the past and the present must be identified. In her essay, where she apprehends image not as a presence that represents or mimics something but as "breath," Zeynep Sayın mentions *Dikkat Boşluk Var (Beware of the Void, 2015)*, the work which Evrim Kavcar produced for the 3rd Mardin Biennial. In time, Evrim Kavcar has installed her work, composed of metal letters spelling the word "boşluk" ("void") in various locations across Mardin. In Sayın's own words, the "void traces the contours of a whole segment of history" and brings into existence the traces and breath of those lost throughout the conflict-laden history of this geography. Zeynep Günsür Yüceil also mentions one of these installations in her essay: the image of the void written over the void, mounted on rocks somewhere between the old and the new town of Mardin. What was all the more

⁴ C. Nadia Seremetakis, "The Memory of the Senses, Part I: Marks of the Transitory," *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity*, ed. C. Nadia Seremetakis (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

⁵ Quoted by Susan Buck-Morss, "Mythic History: Fetish," *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: The MIT Press, 1999), 104.

⁶ Barbara Cassin, "Vatan yerine dile sahip olma," *Nostalji: İnsan ne zaman evindedir? Odysseus, Aeneas, Arendt* ("To Have One's Language for a Homeland," *Nostalgia: When Are We Ever at Home?*), transl. Seçil Kıvrak (Istanbul: Kolektif Kitap, 2018). / transl. Pascale-Anne Brault (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016).

⁷ Quoted by Zeynep Günsür Yüceil in her essay "The Body in Hope Slips into Uncanny Spaces or a Praise of the Void."

meaningful was the fact that three months after it was mounted, all that remained of the work was the letter "k". As a result of this transformation, the work became "*boşluk'un K'sı (the D of the void)*". The all-encompassing experience is trying to blow away memories together with the letters, imposing itself once again by scattering away the implications of the void.

The storm is also tearing down the new forms of action distilled by the struggle against oppression and the transformative life connections trying to be built. In his interview with Erden Kosova in the scope of this book, Barış Seyitvan, who has taken part in countless art activities, curated many exhibitions in Diyarbakır over the years, and is now forced to live in exile, tells us how art and cultural activities in Kurdish regions, which had been undertaken for years in spite of all repressive actions and attacks, were eventually interrupted in 2015 with "the discontinuation of the peace process [...], and the wave of repression, as well as the process of appointment of municipal administrators by the government that ensued."

The storm continues to blow.

Is it futile to remember?

Whenever the storm recedes, memory can resurface again, if only for a moment. Hale Tenger's work *Rüzgârların Dinlendiği Yer (Where the Winds Rest)* suggests such a moment. In this installation produced after the death of Hrnt Dink in 2007, she projected verses inspired by Edip Cansever's poem on the walls, accompanied by fans blowing wind into the remembrance site: "Did we pull the dead from underwater / We didn't pull the dead from underwater." According to interpretation that Umüt Tümay Arslan proposes in her essay, this might be a wish – "perhaps the dead body could be pulled out of the water." However, in another installation which she did in 2019, Hale Tenger plunged the same verses in pitch black motor oil. The writings merely appearing from time to time on the oil's surface are suggestive of the darkness, pulling everything toward the bottom, and of the growingly waning probability for the dead to actually be pulled from underwater. In Umüt Tümay Arslan's own words: "The mechanism built with burnt motor oil reminds us of the logic and processing of erasure, of anonymisation, of out-casting, of destruction, and of our responsibility here." A responsibility to remember growing direr by the day!

The feeling of exhaustion that sometimes catches us in our endeavour to remember seems to find an echo in a folk song by Aşık Veysel: "Beyhude dolandım boşa yoruldum. (I roved

pointlessly, I grew tired in vain.)" It is often said that Turkey lacks memory. We are constantly submitted to horrific events, one after another; it merely starts to look as though we could remember one when the next steps in, violently dislodging the former, only to be forgotten a short while later as well. As Hale Tenger herself put it in her interview in this book: "We are placed under the burden of such a heavy trauma in the geography that we live in!" Namely, an uninterrupted series of traumatic events and phenomena ranging from the Armenian genocide to the violent repression of a whole series of uprisings, from military coups to legal and illegal attacks against a number of minorities, from the war against the Kurds to the massacre of the Alevites, disappearances, unjustified detentions, tortures, exiles and a variety of rights violations... Which one should we remember, in what order? According to Mithat Sancar, while in most countries the struggle for remembrance is concentrated on one single event such as military dictatorship, civil war or genocide; in Turkey, social traumas are so piled up on top of one another that they have formed a thick and heavy crust that is hard to break.⁸ The pieces are undoubtedly interlinked, but which piece's memory will be capable of unraveling this caloused mess? What kind of a connection was Yevtart Danzikyan referring to in the introduction of his interview with Jak Alguadiş, published in the 1 December 2017 issue of the Agos newspaper, when he said that "Turkey is a country where almost all issues are interconnected"?

Moreover, when considering how "impunity" is a "state practice sanctioned by law and justice alike"¹⁰, and how state violence has penetrated deep into the social structure through various tracks in Turkey, the complexity and toughness of the situation of memory which we are faced with becomes even clearer. In her essay, Banu Karaca discusses how the conditions of artistic creation are not exempt of the violence that cripples memory. On the contrary, violence is foundational in the field of art. Dispossession and the web of complicity, implication and partaking constitute the unseen ground of the national art history framework. They contribute not only to the obliteration, the eradication of certain artworks, but also to the redistribution of value, the production of the "privilege of citizenship", founded on oblivion; and reveal the role of violence in knowledge production on art. In this regard, Banu Karaca recalls a question voiced by Iranian American poet Kaveh Akbar: when "migrant children were separated from their parents and put in cages at the U.S.-Mexican border and when bombs steered by drones continued to mark targets that killed civilians, among them often children, in Iraq", what Akbar asked was: "What does it mean to be a poet

⁸ Mithat Sancar, *Geçmişle Hesaplaşma: Unutma Kültüründen Hatırlama Kültürüne (Coming to Terms With the Past: From the Culture of Oblivion to the Culture of Remembrance)* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007).

⁹ Quoted by Umüt Tümay Arslan in her essay "The Time of Childhood: Home, Excavation and Memory."

¹⁰ Gülşah Kurt, *Cezasızlık Sorunu: Soruşturma Süreci (The Impunity Problem: Investigation Process)* (Istanbul: Hafıza Merkezi, 2014).

working in a language, a medium, a nation, that can produce all this?"

That being so, how can state violence be represented? Looking at things from the perspective of this question, Nora Tataryan, who emphasises the continuity and systematicity of the regime of denial in Turkey, points at the shaky ground on which artworks end up falling. When artistic truth claims to coincide exactly with historic truth, to be its representation, it will fall in a certain representational regime shaped by violence and denial, and lose its potential for bearing testimony. Can art have an impact without causing a crisis within the given regimes of truth? Can testimony and the confrontation of the past be comfortable experiences?

Archive too has its share of violence. In her book *Potential History*, Ariella Aïsha Azoulay discusses how archive, underneath abstract claims of preserving the past and being neutral, shelters such mechanisms as distortion, exclusion, seizure and judgement, that serve in enforcing imperial power. Archive actually rests on the pillars of silence and absence which deny the other's existence.¹¹ Begüm Özden Fırat also problematises the *Hafıza Merkezi's* "selection/archive" in her essay contributing to this book. In doing so, she proposes to look at the times, places and contexts that constitute the archive, even though they are placed outside of it. By discussing themes that weaken the current regimes of memory and art such as the uncertainty of time, the destruction of experience, the darkening of the future, the state of melancholy, the obsession for memory, the cultural industry and complicity, she adds a valuable question to those formulated earlier: how can we build an autonomous space of memory? In their essays which reciprocally refer to each other, Banu Cennetoğlu and Seçil Yersel question why we should need templates or categories. If a "helix of interconnectedness forever subject to metamorphoses, never completed" is intrinsically a part of narrations, can there be a holistic representation of the truth at all? The quotation they make from Nurdan Gürbilek is the perfect formulation of this doubt: "The fact that every truth can only exist by being mutilated, invalidated, and turned into a half-truth by its opposite; [...] a state of 'whatever I say is a lie!'"¹²

Is remembrance, the search for truth, futile? We must commence by understanding that this widespread mindframe regarding remembrance is a significant component of the regime of memory in Turkey. As Asena Günel points out in her interview in this book, current oppressions and rights violations, leading to the feeling of weariness, sucking out all the energy to come to terms with the past, alongside the "institutionalisation-commercialisation" dynamics, growingly prevailing in the art sector, harm the environment of memory work. Still, we can try and formulate the question differently: how can we build another relation with the archive? Can memory be an autonomous realm? As Gülsün Karamustafa puts it in her interview in this book, is there a memory of transience? Does truth cease to be truth when it cannot be represented holistically?

In her essay, Özlem Hemiş focuses on the artworks and theatre performances in the *Hafıza Merkezi's* "selection/archive" that focus on the tragic figure of Antigone from Greek mythology. Antigone, who dared to go against the king's law, and represented a potential "voice against silence", was represented time and time over in numerous ways in Turkey. However, the representations made in Greek or Armenian from the 19th century are missing in the archival records. According to Hemiş, "The gaps and incompleteness of these data actually shed light on the intentional amnesia that exists in the field of archive/record keeping." This incompleteness again reveals the national framework that encases the archive. Hemiş touches upon the continuity, the endlessness of violence. But in the same essay, she also mentions a less known truth: in Kurdish, the complementary notions of remembering, forgetting and missing, which are needed to complete the cycle of mourning, are all derived from the same root, that of "bîr", designating a well. Remembering, forgetting and missing are all united within the image of the well, reminiscent of Sema Kaygusuz' story "*Esir Sözler Kuyusu* (The Well of Trapped Words)"¹³. Remembering is not an act that can be isolated from forgetting or missing. Most importantly, remembering is not limited to merely the subject's temporality; it houses a variety of residues, pains, angers and longings inside the wide and fragmented temporalities it is sprawled across.

¹¹ Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (London: Verso, 2019). For an essay by Azoulay about the notion of archive published in Turkish, see: "Potansiyel Tarih: Şiddet Üzerinden Düşünmek," *Çatışmayı Kaydetmek: Arşivler, İnsan Hakları ve Toplumsal Mücadele* ("Potential History: Reflecting on Violence," *Recording the Conflict: Archives, Human Rights and Social Struggle*), ed. Duygu Doğan, Sıdar Bayram (Istanbul: Demos, 2018).

¹² Nurdan Gürbilek, *Kör Ayna, Kayıp Şark* (*Blind Mirror, Lost East*) (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2004), 213.

¹³ Sema Kaygusuz, *Esir Sözler Kuyusu* (*The Well of Trapped Words*) (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2017).

Yes, a bottomless pit! But, if the words that are trapped inside can only surface when we call for them, the transformative power they may display then cannot be foreseen.

Statufying memory

Monumentalisation is a way of controlling the liveliness, indeterminacy and multi-directional effects of memory. Of producing a visual trace of the dominant ideology and of imposing the official register of memory.¹⁴ Monuments lay claim to timelessness, to eternity, through the self-proclaimed move of the ruling power. The function of monuments in the age of nation-states is simply to sustain the national framework. Monumentalisation, by cancelling the more ancient significations of aesthetics in terms of sensory perception, aestheticises memory and politics by petrifying them.

In his essay within this book, Tanil Bora initiates a discussion on the statufication of memory. By focusing primarily on the ruling AKP's cultural and symbolic policy throughout the last 20 years, he exemplifies cultural and artistic endeavours at "memory restoration" currently at work. Policies investing on "our glorious past", the continuity with the Ottoman empire and an "authentic" memory, with a concern over the fact that "we have fallen short of becoming culturally influent", and cursing those who are "trying to oblivate", can be designated as efforts to "plan and statufy the past". According to Bora, these "nostalgic" policies, which are but manifestations of resentment and fantasies of power, are sick with a nationalist-conservative narcissism.

Through the detailed examples provided by Tanil Bora, we acquire an understanding of how "memory restoration" was implemented in recent years through monuments, statues, naming (places), museums and exhibitions. Still, the following questions remain and pop up in one's mind: how much can these be called memory? What is the nature of this nostalgia?

In her book *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym touches upon the dual meaning of nostalgia. On the one hand, it represents "the promise to rebuild the ideal home that lies at the core of many powerful ideologies of today, tempting us to relinquish critical thinking for emotional bonding."¹⁵ On the other hand, "the sentiment itself, the mourning of displacement and temporal irreversibility, is at the very core of the modern condition."¹⁶ In this light, Boym makes

a distinction between two kinds of nostalgia: restorative nostalgia and reflective nostalgia. Restorative nostalgia, in other words "memory restoration", constitutes the backbone of national and religious revival endeavours, as is the case in Turkey. It has become a tool in the hands of the rationale of the return to the roots, of the protection of the "ideal home" against conspiracies, relying on the creation of enemies and monsters. On the other hand, reflective nostalgia is a manner of giving signification to the impossibility of returning home. Without ignoring the feeling of loss and longing, it "dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging and does not shy away from the contradictions of modernity."¹⁷ As Umut Tümay Arslan points out in her essay, diffusing the tension is a gesture that belongs to the ruling power.

While emphasising the significance of the concept of "homeland", which has become dubious in this day and age, Umut Tümay Arslan designates the homeland as the country of childhood and youth. But, she adds, the time of childhood is that which does not fully open up. Reflective nostalgia contemplates silences as much as it does the fragmented and conflictual nature of the past; it looks for ways to imagine multiple spaces and various temporalities without letting itself be carried away by the urge to conquer the past.¹⁸ The different kinds of nostalgia present us with different concepts of home and homeland, but also with different forms of memory. However, these are not only different modalities of remembrance that coexist in the same plane, or either in the same time, simply pointing out to an elementary plurality. The conflict between them is as deep as that which separates the dominant from the oppressed, the desire for power from the search for truth.

In that sense, it seems of the utmost importance to distinguish between social memory and the reconstruction of history. The latter has no connection with memory whatsoever; on the contrary, it arises by disregarding the memories of people as to their daily life experiences and testimonies. The state instrument in totalitarian regimes mentally enslaves the people precisely by depriving them of their own memory.¹⁹ But the reconstruction of history is also being presented as collective memory at the same time; by preaching that what is narrated is everybody's story, historiography and memory-making are melted in the same pot. Fascist regimes have provided the most blatant examples of this.²⁰

¹⁴ Rita Sakr, *Monumental Space in the Post-Imperial Novel: An Interdisciplinary Study* (London: Continuum, 2012), 51.

¹⁵ Svetlana Boym, *Nostaljinin Geleceği (The Future of Nostalgia)*, transl. Ferit Burak Aydar (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2009), 17. English edition: (London: Bloomsbury, 2011).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Paul Connerton, "Social Memory," *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 14.

²⁰ In her essay, where she examines Italian fascism, Zamponi states: "Fascism imposed an artificial,

In that case, what do we say when we state that memory is a battlefield? It is important to remind that the conflicting sides here are not different memories, but the construction erected by the state mechanisms upon militant oblivion²¹, and the memory of the life crushed under it. In this "conflict", memory cannot be seen as a *weapon* that serves to obtain victory. There is an irremediable contradiction between the methods required to mobilise the feelings of envy, hatred and resentment and those required to revive memory. The "homeland" of memory is simply different.

Tanil Bora states that the mythology of martyrdom occupies a crucial place in the statufication of memory. He emphasises the "politico-psychological flattening effect on time, unifying the past-present-and-future" of the mythology of martyrdom. *Şehit*, the Arabic word used in Turkish for martyr, derives from an Aramaic/Assyrian root which means "to bear witness, testimony". The kindredness between "martyr (*şehit*)" and "witness (*şahit*)" brings up a question regarding testimony, that is both "dangerous" to ask inside the current regime, yet all the more important: within the mythology of martyrdom, is there room for the testimony of those who fall martyrs? Here, it may be useful to remember *Bury the Dead*²², the theatre play written by Irvin Shaw in 1936. Six soldiers who died in a war which occurred in an undetermined place and time refuse to be buried with ceremonies and instead wish to mingle among the living to tell them of the pointlessness of war. As this anti-war play suggests, is the monumentalisation of martyrs a way of silencing their testimony-bearing capabilities?

Testimony is a topic that has been the subject of much discussion. It has been apprehended with regards to its legal dimensions and beyond, in a number of ways by human rights defenders and thinkers.²³ In her essay within this book, Aslı Zengin calls our attention to the posthuman embodiments of testimony. When considering "the body forms [...] brought about by ghosts, the disappeared, ruins, debris, wreckage, the void and stories as they engage in relationships with the material world" as witnesses, we understand that testimony cannot be reduced to one person's narration. The wasted cars represented in front of torn-down buildings in *Cars* (2015), the artwork by Soner Ulu, bear witness to the massacre that took place in 2014 in Kobane during the war with ISIS. In Zengin's own words, "Each car stands, together with the places or buildings in front of which they are photographed, almost as a scream, expressing the violence which was experienced only a while ago." The relationship between testimony and the material culture in posthumanity helps us perceive the traces erased by the statufication of memory –the memory of the devastation directed against life– in another dimension.

Monuments and statues are situated somewhere between life and death. Monuments are dead and yet alive, or they are "undead", just like vampires. Even though they claim to revive the past, they actually represent the past by a dead and petrified body or mechanism; they even transform the representation of the past into a "living" imperative, immortal yet lethal, ruling over the memory of the living. In this respect, with their instruments and mechanisms, monuments resemble the states, essentially non-living but revived through the injection of such a fictitious "organic" community illusion as the "nation". "[Monuments] are there to immortalise a mythic memory that constructs an imagined community through an intricate play with life and death, and by blurring this boundary. Monuments deny death by giving life to the dead, but they also deny life since they are nothing but stones."²⁴ Monumentalisation creates monsters.

Part of the posthuman bodies which Aslı Zengin touches upon in her essay are

auratic tradition that, through recourse to aesthetic politics, and by appealing to history as its cultural legitimator, crushed the modern individual and presented Mussolini's regime as the authentic and true expression of the Italian "community"." Simonetta Falasca Zamponi, "Of Storytellers and Master Narratives: Modernity, Memory, and History in Fascist Italy," *States of Memory: Continuities, Conflicts, and Transformations in National Retrospection*, ed. Jeffrey K.Olick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 68.

²¹ Tanıl Bora, "'Söyledim ve vicdanımı kurtardım'dan ötesi? (Beyond 'I Spoke and Saved my Conscience?),' Birikim, issue: 248 (2009).

²² Irvin Shaw, *Ölüleri Gömün (Bury the Dead)*, transl. Çoşkun Büktel (Istanbul: Yeni Tiyatro Dergisi, 2010). / (New York: Random House, 1935).

²³ For instance, when examining the significations of witnessing, Giorgio Agamben argues that founding a new language is necessary in order to open up space for the impossible witnessing of those who disappeared. See: *Tanık ve Arşiv: Auschwitz'den Artakalanlar (Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive)*, transl. Ali İhsan Başgöl (Istanbul: Dipnot Yayınları, 2017). / transl. Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 1999).

²⁴ Meltem Ahıska, "Hatırlayan Ucubeler: Tophanedeki İşçi Anıtının Hikâyesinin İzini Sürmek (Monsters That Remember: Tracing the Story of the Workers' Monument in Tophane, Istanbul)," transl. Selim Karlıtekin, *Red Thread*, issue: 3 (2011).

"techno-monsters". They too, like monuments, are dead but living, and killers. *Bu Bir Toros Değildir* (*This is not a Toros*, 2009), Ali Bozan's work often made reference to in this book, is an allusion to the white Toros model of car that would spread terror in the Kurdish regions in the 1990s. However, this is not merely the image of a machine, a car; it is an image that bears witness to the terribly violent performance of a life-snatching instrument that has turned into a monster. In her essay, Dilan Yıldırım also addresses the questions of remembrance and testimony. She discusses how the state's military technology has infiltrated the very landscape of the Kurdish region, penetrating the whole of living, and creating monsters. Emphasising how Turkey is "a non-testimonial society", she calls our attention on the "different modalities of witnessing". Zehra Doğan's and Fatoş İrwen's artworks, which she interprets in this context, give visibility to deformities resulting from this violence, turn their eyes on those who are surveilling, and embrace their own monstrousness, "bearing testimony to themselves and to one another". These works perform witnessing, which statufication has violently made impossible, on their own fragmented bodies. According to Dilan Yıldırım, the artistic performance of the "testimony to the self" opens up to a collective incarnation. The 40 documents produced by Fatoş İrwen when she was incarcerated in the Diyarbakır prison, as a reference to the prison's 40 years of existence, is a striking example of that. "40 historic documents [...] produced by piercing holes with a needle so as to compose texts of prose or poetry" on sheets of paper obtained from the canteen and made to look older by soaking them in tea. A history that could not be read, an archive that could not be read! The prison's authorities could not solve this "code" either, even through laboratory analyses.

"The unread archive" invites us to cross the monumental thresholds of memory and go on a journey toward new shores.

The adventure of memory

Can we try to be the "riders on the storm"²⁵ that continues to blow?

In her essay on *Karşı Sanat*, Ezgi Bakçay tells the story of "a collective whose shape has not been defined from the start". Here, she alleges that there is a "will to open up a space which would gather temporalities and generations around the void created by these losses". While discussing the capacity to tolerate uncertainty, the lack of definiteness, and refusing to become an institution, she uses an unexpected concept, not much associated with memory: that of ad-

venture. According to Bakçay, adventure means embracing that which is coming as well as that which is yet to come.

Adventure is a form of experience, which Simmel, one of the unconventional sociologists of the 20th century, has written upon.²⁶ There is something resembling dream in adventure, a segment of time cut out of life's continuity. In fact, it moves so far away from, becomes so estranged to the subject's centre and the temporality which it organises around the ego that one could well mistake the person who experiences an adventure for someone else. As much as it transfigures the subject, adventure unsettles the general conventions of modern life experience. It disrupts the distinctions between chance and necessity, power and fate, activeness and passiveness, predictability and uncertainty. The adventurer chooses to work with uncertainty, to trust chance, and to go after the truth of a piece separated from the whole. The adventurers extract themselves from the ruling time and devote themselves to that which they make. According to Simmel, there is an affinity between art and adventure. The artwork too cuts out a part from the continuous, unobstructed flow of perceived experience, breaks off its connections from every direction and gives it a shape of its own. The piece carries a power to resist society's oppressive, all-encompassing "reality". The very fabric of adventure proposes imaginary topographies and potential spaces that can serve as models for the future.²⁷

With the powerful emphasis they place on art's potential to create the new, the essays within this book issue an invitation to embark on the adventure of memory. In order to give a few examples: by stating that an archive must encompass singularity, coincidences, noise and accidents, Ege Berensel opposes the statufication, the monumentalisation of memory. By insisting on art's potential to open cracks in the strings of meaning, Nora Tataryan talks of its potentiality to become the location of another kind of truth. Umut Tümay Arslan propounds an important position: memory is not an instrument, it is an environment. Together with the concept of "defective acts" which she proposes, a concept that can be read as stumble, slipping and dislocating within the procession of the past; she argues that art defies the melancholic language of destruction's capacity to engulf everything. Turgut Tarhanlı alleges that truth cannot be circumscribed by the legal definition of reality. By exposing how frightened laws are of art's power, how they strive to imprison art within the boundaries of "objectivity" by fear of unpredictability, he defends the right to art and imagination. Tanıl Bora objects against the percep-

²⁵ Inspired by "Riders on the Storm", the song by The Doors.

²⁶ Georg Simmel, "Macera," *Bireysellik ve Kültür: Seçme Yazılar* ("The Adventure," *Individuality and Culture: Selected Texts*), transl. Tuncay Birkan (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2020). / *Simmel on culture*, ed. D. Frisby and M. Featherstone (London: Sage, 1910).

²⁷ Svetlana Boym, "Architecture of Adventure and the Off-Modern," *Architecture of the Off-Modern* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 6.

tion of artistic creation as the forthright translation of truth. By pointing at a truth that is not made visible, and represented as emptiness, Feyyaz Yaman proposes to open up history and the image layer by layer. Zeynep Sayın calls our attention to the breathlike, life-giving power of the image. The image is not something that represents and mimics something else, it possesses the capacity to summon the void into existence. She invites us to join in the struggle for the right to image and justice. By discussing the many ways of looking and seeing, as well as their effects on the body, Zeynep Günsür Yüceil invites us to rethink the political. This new way of looking is called "wonder". "A state that denies the power of intimidation its due."

One can see the adventure of memory at work in all these propositions, as the probability of a different experience of space and time. Adventure means challenging. Breath. Wonder. The power to resist fragmentation, emptiness. At the same time, it is the antidote to uncertainty. It is starting anew "in spite of everything". It is the creative trial of a different manner of living together on this world.

Against the ruling powers, which govern by producing the demand for "a saviour no matter what"²⁸ through the threats of inner enemies-outer enemies-omnipresent enemies, translating the current fears of disjunction, of being swallowed by the other, of losing, into such feelings as resentment and hatred, adventure may well be a manner of reviving, of expanding the archive and memory. As Walter Benjamin stated in his theses on the concept of history, adventure means "to brush history against the grain."²⁹

Adventure means inventing new stories against the horrendous stories being circulated under the name of reality. "Fiction is not the treasure that simple beings pass down from age to age along with family heirlooms and traditions of the land. It is the capacity to begin, time and again, the leap into the unbegun, to cross anew the edge and enter into spaces where an entire sense of the real is lost along with its identities and its points of reference."³⁰ In order to grant visibility and audibility to the traces of a common truth that stolen, rejected and annihilated lives carry. In order to pursue the struggle for and the memory of equality, liberty, justice and peace.

I would say that the way in which the *Hafıza Merkezi* has constituted this "selection/archive" by uniting some more than 400 artworks from the fields of visual and performing arts in order to cast a look at memory through the lens of art, opened it to different readings, thus allowing for the narrations of memory to be disseminated, for its parts to multiply, coincides exactly with the notion of adventure. In the temporality opened and inscribed by this valuable project, which carries the discontent of aesthetics to the fields of memory and politics, the archive will continue to form, to transform, to differentiate, to challenge with its unreadable parts. While writing this introduction, I have tried to join in this adventure by re-organising the themes, rearranging the writers' words. As Banu Karaca states in her essay, in a reference to a scene³¹ of the film that documents Angela Davis' and Yuri Kochiyama's comradeship, "We are here. And it is from here that we begin."

²⁸ Cem Kaptanoğlu, "Direnme ve ruh sağlığı (Resistance and mental health)," interview with Samet Kurnaz, *Medyascope*, 13.02.2021, last accessed 15.03.2021. <https://medyascope.tv/2021/02/13/psikiyatriden-gundeme-33-direnme-ve-ruh-sagligi-prof-dr-cem-kaptanoglu-ile-soylesi/>.

²⁹ Walter Benjamin, "Tarih Kavramı Üzerine (On the Concept of History)," op. cit., 43.

³⁰ Jacques Rancière, *Kurmacanın Kıyıları (The Edges of Fiction)*, transl. Yunus Çetin (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2019), 168-69. / transl. Steve Corcoran (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019).

³¹ In this film (*Mountains That Take Wing*, 2009), 80 years old Kochiyama, who has devoted her whole life to revolutionary politics, feminism and the defence of rights, asks feminist philosopher and prison opponent Davis what remains to be done with regards to justice: "So, where do you think it has to begin?" Angela Davis answers: "I think it begins wherever you are."

Bridges, Chains and Ruptures

**Erden
Kosova**

During the first phase of the Memory and Arts project, in order to build the thematic bridge promised by the project's title, a digital archive was compiled, bringing together works from the fields of visual and performing arts related to collective memory issues. Thus, the speakers in what was to be one of the main axes of the project, the talk series, would be presented with a concrete platform which they could consider as a starting point. What first caught our attention, together with Ezgi Bakçay and Turgut Tarhanlı, with whom we formed a working group, was the fact that the archive had been conceived on the basis of the last twenty years as its scope. The project's tight schedule and limits of research entailed such a historic framing. However, the periodic interval that starts in the 2000s and stretches to nowadays, coinciding with the years of the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) rule and with the process of institutionalisation that occurred in the art field, presents both unity and coherence as a time frame. Still, as is the case whenever a periodisation is established by drawing parentheses on a calendar, something is being left out without the shadow of a doubt. Nevertheless, I believe it would not be out of place to indicate, as we set out, that numerous pioneering works were produced prior to this twenty-year-long period, that tackled the project's very framework, i.e. the unmediated consideration of collective memory's mode of operation within Turkey's specific context, and allowing for it to be undertaken on a broader scale in a later period.

When making this statement, I am undoubtedly referring to my own experience. The works moulded on the notion of memory by Gülsün Karamustafa, Hale Tenger, Aydan Murtezaoğlu and Selda Asal are the first that come to my mind: all strike me specifically because I first discovered them while still a master's student in the late 1990s, before having the chance to actually work with these artists. Still, it is clear, when we consider the shortcomings and the discriminative nature of examples from past historiography, presenting themselves as the reference or base, that there is a need for a broader, more comprehensive look, which itself needs to stretch further back in time. It is indeed possible to identify threads and continuities that stretch until the 80s, when ruptures within the art world had not yet gained real prominence; the 70s, when the diversity and differentiation that existed in the stratum of political debate and struggle was reflected in art, and the 60s, when the disconnection from official ideology began to slide from intellectual circles to the student population; and to diagnose the ruptures and differentiations that occurred in between.

Over the course of recent years, a considerable critical literature of academic nature has emerged, which has made recent artistic practices the object of its study. Yet, it is undeniable that, beyond monographies and short periodisations, a broadscale mapping process is still under way, and that attempts to mend the rup-

tures require a long-term effort. I believe that further ground will be covered in that direction in the years to come, if the Memory and Arts project continues to be developed and broadened content-wise. In this initial phase, I anticipated that my contribution would be limited to the presentation of a sketch, considering the current timescope as well as my own shortcomings regarding the theoretical background on memory-related issues. I thought that browsing along the lines of the historic track that surfaced in my mind through a series of interviews would be the most fruitful course of action. Setting out with this mindframe, we, together with Turgut Tarhanlı, Ezgi Bakçay and Eylem Ertürk, carried out a series of interviews with five important figures who witnessed different periods and, as influent artists and producers, actively shaped their respective fields. Those interviews with Gülsün Karamustafa, Feyyaz Yaman, Hale Tenger, Asena Günal and Barış Seyitvan open up with autobiographic information dispensing rich clues as to social dynamics, before covering works, exhibitions and debates related to the issue of memory.

From a chronological standpoint, the interviews retroject to the end of the 60s. The 1960s constituted a period when socialism unfolded in the shape of a second pouncing wave across the world, especially in Latin America and Africa, and, within the specific context of Turkey, reached a wide audience through much discussed campaigns carried out by the newly founded Turkish Workers' Party (TİP), and was excitedly adopted by university students. The period was characterised by how the younger generation, raised by the republic's founding ideology, progressively distanced itself from this official ideology, which was being reshaped by the Cold War paradigm, and how it gained greater interest in political developments occurring on an international scale. We may view the change in the handling of the theme of the Anatolian people in visual arts and in the development of political criticism as the first impact of this distantiation from the state's language. The painters who brought forth an image of rural life's somber fate, of those forlorn villagers who somehow cannot elude poverty, against the idealisation of Anatolian culture's colourfulness and abundance performed by the localism movement, propounded another social landscape. That is precisely why they were accused of supporting "the domination of one social class over the others", of spreading communist propaganda, and faced legal prosecutions as a result. Neşet Günal stands out among those painters who strived to break from the depiction of Anatolia as desired by official ideology and brought the social reality of their time to their canvas. He depicted the physiological deformations which resulted from centuries-long chains of oppression exercised on villagers in his monochrome pastoral compositions stemming from his childhood memories of the colours of the earth. Relying on critical realism, he has left a profound imprint on his students and younger

generations with his style. Furthermore, the first examples of works by Altan Gürman, openly critical of militarism and the state bureaucracy, also surfaced in those years. Parallely, Sarkis, recording the political enthusiasm that seized the streets of Paris in May 1968 with his photograph camera, would exhibit the negatives of his films by placing them inside water-filled tanks instead of developing them. He later attempted to realise the first examples of the long-running matrix established between collective memory, the political sphere and the image, through a repertoire which he would link to global political history, by means of the concepts of *Leidschatz* (the treasure of suffering) and *Kriegschatz* (war treasure).

While a growing number of youngsters gathered around the principles of socialist thinking and a socialist vision of the future, frictions with the state's apparatus became ever more frequent. As Gülsün Karamustafa recalls, the suspension of student scholarships abroad in 1969 and their recovery through legal procedures in the following period were an indicator of the heat building up. The fever which spread across the universities soon pervaded the streets. With the security forces and reactionary groups' violent response against this agitation, a spiral of tension was set off. The 12 March 1971 military memorandum did not only target the revolutionary elements that had come forward, but also the intelligentsia and university students by means of trials, prison sentences and torture. Soon, such artists as Cengiz Çekil, Mehmet Gülerüz and Aydın Ayan would translate the traumatic experiences endured by themselves and their close friends in their works, in the shape of cages, iron bars and bodies bent, deformed by pain. The loosening of the emotional bond with official ideology and the state allowed for the liberation and deepening of the critical perspective. When, in 1973, the Paris students' syndic suggested to the students who were studying in art academies in France to organise a broad exhibition honouring the 50th anniversary of the republic. In response, putting their political disagreements aside, the students issued a common declaration stating the anger they felt against the 12 March military memorandum, and rejected the proposition in the sternest language.

Later, toward the second half of the 70s, as the socialist struggle was gaining more and more momentum despite continuous crackdowns, it maintained a hopeful belief that social revolution would eventually occur. The divergences of views within the revolutionary struggle as to which concrete model from different geographies to follow were linked to the debates regarding who the transformative subject of the revolution was; as a result of this partition, art saw an emphasis placed on collectivity, constituted by the horizontal articulation of the villagers, the working class and other social strata. If the figures represented still bore the physiological traces of their way of life and work on their bodies, as they did in Neşet Günal's works, this was not interpreted as a consequence of an inexorable destiny anymore, but as a seed, carrying the potential to change the course of history. These were figures contemplating brighter tomorrows, their heads held high, represented within the struggle's dynamism. But the artists involved in the struggle, apart from accrediting this representation brought forth by the perspective of the revolution, were coming up against the temporality of the order of the day, of the street, resulting in continuous urgency. As Feyyaz Yaman recounts in his interview, they would simultaneously try to finalise figurative images on banners for meetings attended by hundreds of thousands of people, while finishing up portraits of the countless comrades who had lost their lives in attacks or street fightings in time for their funerals. Devastating news of raids, targeted killings and attacks, as well as massacres, started to leave their imprint on collective memory, together with the images of their atrocity. Along with political assassinations and the 1 May 1977 massacre, which aimed to cripple class struggle, the massacres of Maraş (1978) and Çorum (1980), which placed the Alevite population on the target board and deliberately played on cultural equilibriums resting on centuries-old frailties as well as on political fault lines linked to identity differences, were imprinted in collective memory as major concussions. Such painters as Hüsnü Koldaş and Nedret Sekban endeavoured to give a rendition of these traumas on their canvas.¹

¹ For detailed analyses of these periods, see Ahu Antmen, "Türk Sanatında Yeni Arayışlar, 1960-1980 (New Pursuits in Turkish Art)" (Doctoral thesis, Mimar Sinan University, Western Art and Contemporary Art History Programme, 2005); Güler Bek Arat, "1970-1980 Yılları Arasında Türkiye'de Kültürel ve Sanatsal Ortam (Cultural and Artistic Environment in Turkey Between 1970-1980)" (Doctoral thesis, Hacettepe University, Social Sciences Institute, Department of Art History, 2007); and two essays by Bora Gürdaş: "Altmışlı Yıllarda Sanat Ortamı (The Art Sphere in the Sixties)", *Türkiye'nin 1960'lı Yılları (Turkey in the 1960s)*, edited by Mete Kaan Kaynar (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017) and "Yetmişli Yıllarda Sanat Ortamı (The Art Sphere in the Seventies)", *Türkiye'nin 1970'li Yılları (Turkey in the 1970s)*, edited by Mete Kaan Kaynar (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2020).

Toward the end of the 70s, social objection and resistance came to be seen as glitches in Turkey's swift incorporation into neoliberal economy policies implemented on a global scale, that needed to be done away with, and the 12 September 1980 military coup, by ruthlessly enforcing a broadscale political lockdown, was able to apply a deep freeze effect on open wounds and hide them under the rug. The death penalties and severe torture inflicted by the junta only began to be discussed years after this traumatic period, when approximately one in every fifty adults among the general population were arrested, and close to a quarter of a million people stood trial by military courts. After spending 3,5 years in the Mamak prison, Orhan Taylan, who designed the giant posters used during the massive May 1 rallies on Taksim Square and other demonstrations, represented the torture he was subjected to in his paintings. As for the systematic, nightmarish torture, often resulting in death, inflicted upon the detainees of the infamous Diyarbakır Prison No. 5, it was only represented by illustrator Zülfikar Tak in 2003, after his 20-year-long detention there ended. In spite of all its ruthlessness and violence, the junta period also signaled the moment when the national consensus discourse started to stall: national myths that had been forged to back this discourse began to crack, and the past that had been attempted to be concealed, as well as ongoing traumas, started to ooze out from where they had been smothered up, gaining visibility. Even though it was achieved through the use of violent actions, debates over the Kurdish people's presence and living conditions as well as the 1915 genocide became central issues in the public debate, underlining the crisis and loss of credibility of the supra-national identity discourse which had been built on the promise of first-class citizenship at the origin of the republic.

The economic policies implemented by the ruling Motherland Party (ANAP) after the 1980 coup led to the rapid erosion of social life: values such as equity, equality, moderation, modesty and collective thinking and action, which had shaped the collective imaginary in the 1970s, gave way to such dynamics as individualism, economic interest and deregulation. This process, unfolding in parallel with the transformations that were occurring on a global scale, translated, in the artistic field, into the prevailing of the neo-expressionist movement, leaning toward the individual, a psychologism far-off of political intensions, and a tendency for decorativeness. Yet, the plurality of expression and experimentality that had surfaced in the 70s, despite the traumas and regression experienced after the fatal blow delivered to the revolutionary movement, managed to bequeath social criticism to the years ahead. The silver lining of the overall grey clouds of the 80s were the works that exposed the consumerism that transpired from Pop-Art's critical wing to social relations; the feminist standpoint appearing in the works of such artists as Füsün Onur, Nur Koçak

or Nil Yalter, targeting the masculine gaze over the women's bodies and patriarchic rule; works that tackled the problems which occurred as a result of the absence of support to the industrialisation process on the part of urban planning dynamics, and the ensuing cultural encounters/confrontations; and painting practices that humoristically apprehended the ethical deformations that occurred during the Özal period.

Over the course of the same period, a strong tendency for art to become ever more conceptual became prevalent. The 80s saw an advancement, within their own spectrum, of the works, group formations and exhibitions which could be considered as pertaining to the framework of Conceptual Art, addressing the question of what artistic practices and works are; underlining the incompatibilities between image, language and objective reality; and deconstructing familiar systems of representation. Parallely, toward the end of the 80s, Conceptualism, now combining the flexible forms of expression and narration spawned by the conceptualisation dynamic with different visual-linguistic-auditory disciplines and technologies and leaning on social relations rather than art itself, became more widely embraced and adopted. This framework, which produced striking examples interpreting and shedding light on the social and political turbulences of the 70s in Latin America, was viewed as suitable ground for image and discourse production in Turkey, where political friction and pressure was on the rise. In the beginning of the 90s, when fighting and casualties intensified especially in the Kurdish geography, when tenebrous counter-guerilla operations multiplied, when the revival of a political spirit in universities was met with a violent backlash, artists who rocked the iconography of militarism and nationalism such as Hale Tenger, Selim Bırsel or Erdağ Aksel, and others like Aydan Murtezaoğlu or Bülent Şangar, opened a critical arena through their works addressing the societal claustrophobia jointly induced by the founding ideology of the republic and politico-social conservatism. This newly instated ground, not shying away from looking straight at Turkey's specific past and present issues, unabated by the complexes enforced by the centre-periphery relation, endeavouring to bypass the arteries clogged up by taboos, would soon raise the interest of the younger generations. The 90s also saw the resurgence of the student movement, the effort by socialist political formations to regroup, the endeavour to develop a new political thinking fed by autonomous marxism and anarchism, the growth of critical literature thanks to the translations disseminated by powerful publishing houses, the opening of sub-cultural fields of expression, and the overall dynamic that translated into such developments as the apparition of private radios or the rise of LGBT activism, all found echoes in art.

Aside from this dynamism in the cultural field, this period also spawned an irremediable spiral of violence, such as translated in the tunnel of

fear which the Kurdish population was shoved into; the Sivas massacre in 1992; the 1995 attack on the Gazi neighbourhood and the subsequent operations; or the "*Hayata Dönüş*" ("Return to Life") operation in 2000. It seemed impossible to exit this dead end without properly battling the history of this country, full as it is with examples of exile, migration, population exchange, deportation, pogrom, genocide, massacre, operation and assassination. Undoubtedly, one could argue that a state of contemplativeness developed in parallel to the weariness caused by modernity on a global scale, but the burden accumulated by the "tabula rasa" claims of a country founded on the ruins of an empire whose dissolution was accompanied by chains of traumas only grew heavier and heavier, forbidding it to move forward toward the future. As a result, a number of wounds were hushed up before they could heal; identities, beliefs and languages put aside by former generations, almost forgotten, and tangled and inherited issues which individuals could not solve or fathom gained growing visibility both in social life and in artistic practices.

It seems unfair to interpret artistic practices predicated on remembrance and recollection as symptoms of a political retraction, of the loss of the notion of future within the historic course. Determining a comprehensive, radical path toward change in the future does not seem possible without analysing how previous modes of domination overlapped, coincided and articulated over the course of history, or what residue hierarchies established in the past leave today: as underscored by the global political agenda in 2020, the worldwide campaigns we are witnessing unfold such as *MeToo* and *Black Lives Matter*, actions consisting in pulling down statues of colonialists and renaming streets bearing their names, or the rising claims for restitution of cultural artefacts stolen from former colonies. Without a doubt, numerous structural issues remain in need of criticism within the context of art; such as the lack of proper, institutional criticism and analyses regarding economy-politics, the silences that surround the problematisation of the relation between art and the capital, the hushing up of the privileges that shape artistic production and mediation, the difficulties for critical energy to build independent formations and locations, or the absence of renewal and ensuing redundancy. Yet, projecting a contradiction between the artworks relating to memory issues and the perspective of social transformation, and associating memory-related works with identity-oriented politics, amounts to cutting corners and eventually disregarding the discursive wealth which these practices have attained to this day.

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Today, numerous artists, such as Hera Büyükaşçıyan, Dilek Winchester, Banu Cennetoğlu, İhsan Oturmak, Didem Pekün and Barış Doğrusöz have made remembrance and oblivion and their social consequences the main motifs of their artistic practice, mastering the finest theoretical nuances of the issues at stake and addressing the current debate over them directly in their works. The previous talks and essays in this publication, prepared within the framework of the Memory and Arts project, give a detailed insight into a broad array of works produced during the last twenty years, by means of various connections and perspectives, associations and distinctions. Perhaps this question could be added on top of what has already been discussed here: what sort of a setting for display do these works require; in what kind of institutions do they function or not? As Hale Tenger points out in her interview, during the 80s and 90s, it was possible to see and exhibit her works of experimental nature, which were considered bold in terms of political content, in public institutions and venues. Together with the wave of privatisation which unfurled over the course of the last twenty years, places of such a nature have almost completely disappeared. The structures that have replaced them –institutions placed under the patronage of wealthy families, financial groups, import or construction businesses and new generation galleries– all act according to a commercial understanding. Among these highly sanitised circles where social filters are set high, the use of a politically correct tone is apparently privileged. While an effort is made not to appear completely apolitical and disconnected from the current context, a lot of attention is being given to delivering exhibitions that will not make too much waves, but rather voice their criticism in mediated, indirect ways, or through a generic framework. As a result of the political pressure which has particularly intensified in recent years, and of the rising level of aggressivity and punitiveness on the part of the forces composing the ruling block, the fear of causing damage to the family, the company or the institution has gained prevalence. There is a surge in the risk of falling in contradiction with the historical fiction which the AKP-MHP coalition is trying, with little mastery, to build, and, consequently, of becoming a target of the ruling power's propaganda mechanisms. Displaying art without making content-related compromises or being compelled to institutional concerns is growing more difficult by the day, and becoming possible only by virtue of the dedication and risk-taking of a few institutions that maintain their independent stand. Perhaps the solution to this

state of hopelessness in artistic circles in western metropolises lies, as Barış Seyitvan points out in his interview, in the model of conjunction, interaction and solidarity between independent collectives and minor formations instated in Diyarbakır, Batman and Mardin, capable of reducing the impact of the state's pressure. It is also necessary to learn to reclaim public resources for cultural practices now that major municipalities such as Istanbul's and Ankara's have swung over to the opposition, and to participate in the structuring process of the encounters made possible thereby.

The field of visual arts is generally considered as one of the cultural fields least affected by persecution ensuing from political pressure. Comparison is meaningless of course, but still, as I have tried to briefly account for, a heavy toll was paid in this particular field in the past. Moreover, we are currently witnessing as further toll is being collected. This was not a criteria when choosing the artists whom we conducted interviews with, but when placing their names side by side, the fact that they all had to suffer from the state's authority and violence clearly stands out. Gülsün Karamustafa was detained along with her husband after the 12 March military memorandum; Hale Tenger was prosecuted for opposing the law on the Turkish flag because of her wall installation *Böyle Tanıdıklarım Var II (I Know People Like This II)*, exhibited during the 3rd Istanbul Biennial. Feyyaz Yaman lost his brother Hüsametdin Yaman, who "disappeared while under arrest" in 1992. Asena Günal was taken into custody in 2018, along with my fellow collaborator in the working group within the Memory and Arts project Prof. Dr. Turgut Tarhanlı, and 11 other co-workers, and is still scuffling with legal procedures launched against *Anadolu Kültür*, on the basis of its legal entity. Barış Seyitvan is forced to live in exile as of today because of suits filed against him for two exhibitions he has curated. What we are confronted with is a particularly unpleasant, unwanted, painful continuity across generations, that we cannot simply leave behind. It recalls itself through repetition but, in a paradoxical way, in order to free ourselves from it, we need to better understand, to process our memory and transmit it to future generations. I sincerely hope that these interviews will contribute in this direction...

“The Politics of Art” in Turkey in the 2000s: *Karşı Sanat Çalışmaları*¹

**Ezgi
Bakçay**

¹The full name of this collective founded in 2000 literally translates to Dissident Art Works. It is often (e.g. in the present text) used in its contracted form: *Karşı Sanat* (Dissident Art).

The sheer volume and importance occupied by *Karşı Sanat Çalışmaları* within the selection/archive constituted in the framework of the *Hafıza Merkezi's* Memory and Arts project is what has prompted this research. I wanted to understand what an institution "focusing on addressing both Turkey's interrupted collective memory and important social events that have caused rights violations" (quoting from the *Hafıza Merkezi*, which has managed to hold numerous exhibitions and cultural events), resembles. I chose *Karşı Sanat's* works as an example in order to discuss the main contradictions, frailties and potential of numerous praxes (including the present work) occurring within Turkey's economic, political and legal topographies and artistic and political arenas.

The present research focuses on *Karşı Sanat Çalışmaları's* exhibitions in order to address art's potentialities and limitations within the process of the expression and memorialisation of claims for rights in Turkey. Considering how the 2000s were the pivotal years when Turkey's artistic field started to become institutionalised, it seeks to understand what meaning *Karşı Sanat's* unique character carries within the context of the transformations that occurred at that time in the field of "the politics of art".

For this research, I have looked at the twenty-year-long past of *Karşı Sanat*, which I have been a member of for five years. I have scanned through exhibitions which have been included or not in the *Hafıza Merkezi's* archive. Eventually, in a nutshell, I have had ample opportunity to observe *Karşı Sanat*: a not-yet-archived effort to memorialise, a political action without a manifesto, an uninstitutionalised quest for a collective, standing on the brim of both arts and politics, and not befitting the paradigms of either arena. In the upshot, I have strived to discuss the frailties and potentialities of this liminal position of "a collective whose shape has not been defined from the start". I believe this topic to concern the vicissitudes encountered by all the actors who strive to bridge rights activism and arts.

Introduction

Karşı Sanat Çalışmaları is a non-profit culture and art centre as well as an exhibition venue. It was founded in the Elhamra Passage in 2000 by Feyyaz Yaman, who also financed it. As Mr. Yaman puts it, "connecting with the city's space through memory"¹, it chose to stay on İstiklal Avenue against all odds. Eventually, in 2019, *Karşı Sanat* relocated to the Aznavour Passage on the same avenue.

In a way, *Karşı Sanat's* story matches Feyyaz Yaman's, who began studying painting at the Mimar Sinan Academy of Fine Arts in 1971 and became the students' spokesperson in 1974. The founding principle of *Karşı Sanat*, inherited from the political climate of the 70s, is the belief in aesthetic utopia's power to transform modes of coexistence: "Art holds the power to transform life, that is why it is political."²

On the other hand, the whole constituted by behaviours and choices (what Pierre Bourdieu defines as "habitus") which have solidified both in Feyyaz Yaman's personality and within *Karşı Sanat* occupies a unique place with regards to the relations which the left-wing movements of the 70s have established with art. According to the vision developed by Feyyaz Yaman, art is not a means of ideological communication; it is a way of experiencing life itself. The roots of the concept that have shaped *Karşı Sanat* do not stem from propaganda, but rather from the self-confidence earned through the experience of having successfully claimed and managed the Academy's refectory as a cooperative during the self-management period that began when the Academy's painting workshop was left without a professor after the demise of Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu in 1974, in accordance with his workshop's economic organisation tradition. Feyyaz Yaman started pursuing a manner of collective thought, such as would procure the proper conditions for artistic-intellectual creation, free from both the market and ideology. Before establishing *Karşı Sanat*, he took part in other collective spaces and organisational experiences. According to him, "the achievement of artistic freedom is a political act."³ Viewing "the experience of freedom as cocreation in the world"⁴, Feyyaz Yaman has taken personal life-changing decisions in that light. He stopped painting in order to finance a collective grounded in art, which would later be named *Karşı Sanat*, and undertook its financial responsibility.

When considered within the framework of his own historical context, Feyyaz Yaman is not an "art lover" or a "modern patron". His lifelong political engagement and practical connection to art is rooted in his witnessing the suspension of politicised violence, the state violence, the traumatic rupture which followed the 12 September 1980 military coup, the enforced disappearance of a brother, the loss of a generation, of utopia, as much as in the popularisation of politics in the 70s. Perhaps the will to open up a space which would gather temporalities and generations around the void created by these losses is what keeps *Karşı Sanat* standing to this day in spite of all economic and political hardships.

¹ From the in-depth interview held with Feyyaz Yaman, Istanbul, 10.12.2020.

² From the in-depth interview held with Feyyaz Yaman, Istanbul, 10.12.2020.

³ From the in-depth interview held with Feyyaz Yaman, Istanbul, 10.12.2020.

⁴ Svetlana Boym, *Başka Bir Özgürlük / Bir Fikrin Alternatif Tarihi*, transl. Cemal Yardımcı (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2016), 17. / *Another Freedom: The Alternative History of an Idea* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010).

As I stand here striving to comprehend the relation between art and politics, I ponder on the possibilities offered by social sciences. I am aware of how problematic linking the establishment of a venue and an organisational endeavour to one single person is. Why does one individual venture into material and spiritual sacrifices in order to bring up a form of collective? I guess that this is not the right question. Because, ultimately, as Jean-Luc Nancy put it, "there is no theory, ethics, politics or metaphysics of the individual that is capable of envisaging this *clinamen*, this declination or decline of the individual within community."⁵ Consequently, what we should be focusing on is the nature of this community, how it is or could be shaped. Henceforth, I will be trying to make use of the concept of the "politics of art" in order to carry out my research on the experience of *Karşı Sanat*, an endeavour to create a liberating collective through the potentialities of art.

"The Politics of Art"

Following Jacques Rancière, who alleges that art and politics are not two separate, rigid realms, "the politics of art" can be defined as the whole of conventions and disagreements related to art's visibility and comprehensibility, its subjects, its intersubjectivity, its spatiality and its relation with history. The politics of art is a level of representation that establishes what is visible, audible, comprehensible. It is the consensus on what art and who an artist is. For instance, saying that the institutionalisation of contemporary art in Turkey began approximately in the year 2000 –the chronological starting point of the selection/archive made by the *Hafıza Merkezi*– also means that, in the same time frame, this field began to constitute a manner of "politics of art". The politics of art encompasses what works will be used to fill which spaces, who is entitled to do what, the field's position with regards to the relations between prizes and penalties, its walkers-on and main actors and actresses, and popular or dominant representation schemes. There is a politics of contemporary art. Only, this does not mean that contemporary art is political. What it means is merely that contemporary art is linked in a particular way to the consensus based on sensory partnerships which Jacques Rancière calls "police".⁶

The politics of contemporary art is a subject of its own but, in a nutshell, it can be argued that contemporary art establishes itself by parting from modern art's principle of autonomy. Together with contemporary art, the modern autonomy ideal, best formulated in Adorno's thought: "Insofar as a social function can be predicated for artworks, it is their functionlessness"⁷, has been abandoned. Thus, in the context of daily life, contemporary art connects with other fields, with activism as much as design and advertisement, with social sciences as much as fashion and finance, without a concern for autonomy. That is the reason why it spills out and leaks in all spheres of daily life. The same phenomenon can also serve to explain the difference between the political engagement of contemporary art and modern art. That is precisely what has allowed art in Turkey since the 90s to openly criticise the militarist, etatist and patriarchal structure that governs the country, to refer unequivocally to its indicators, collected from the past or present day and to start answering current questions directly. By trampling down on the "functionlessness" principle, while connecting firsthand with the political sphere, contemporary art has started to speak in the daily language, its means of communication to diversify, it has embraced responsibilities related to current social problems. As a matter of fact, it has had to embrace these with regards to the politics of a newly developing area. Shortly put, this responsibility can be defined as the widening of a gradually narrowing public sphere. In this respect, the artists may find themselves in the position of archivists, activists, journalists, social scientists or archaeologists. As a matter of fact, that is even what is expected from the artists.

Another characteristic of contemporary art is the temporality of the practice which has appropriated the adjective "contemporary". Contrarily to the relation of continuity which modern art has established with tradition, with the past and with history, contemporary art's time is "the present". In the words of Hal Foster, it is even a "post-utopian present". In the language of neo-liberalism, it is the present of sustainability. It is expected of the artists to constantly update themselves according to contemporary

⁵ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Ezersiz Ortaklık* (Istanbul: Monokl, 2020), 21. / *The Inoperative Community*, ed. Peter Connor, transl. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland, and Simona Shawhney (Minneapolis and Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 47.

⁶ Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus – Politika ve Estetik Üzerine*, transl. Mustafa Yalçınkaya (Istanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2020). / *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, ed. and transl. Steven Corcoran (London and New York: Continuum, 2010).

⁷ Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 225.

political sensibilities. Institutionalisation leads to higher expectations in terms of new works, new projects, new orders of business. Because it requires for contemporary art institutions to be managed in the same way as structures in other fields are managed in technological and economic terms. In order to achieve sustainability, every institution's goal is to be operational: bringing a project to a final state, producing a work, being actual, or rather active. Thus, the field turns the artist into a worker. Moreover, it does so by bestowing on them its precarity in the guise of freedom. Maintaining oneself as a contemporary artist in the field requires to come to terms with the contradiction of always remaining an artist while enacting the short-lived performances of ever-changing new identities.

Eventually, institutionalisation comes from the Latin "instituire, in-statuer", which means to stabilise, to settle, to erect a statue. Art's institutionalisation requires the former to settle in the "here and now", to be "syn-chron", that is, simultaneous with the epoch, to be "contemporary" or rather "actual". Yet, in the notes for one of his lectures at the Collège de France, Roland Barthes wrote: "What is contemporary is what contradicts the time". Contemporaneity (from the Latin "con-temporarius", the togetherness of times) and currentness, or rather actualness (from the Latin "actualis", meaning what has to do with action) are different temporalities.⁸ According to Giorgio Agamben, being contemporary does not require one to be *syn-chron* with one's epoch, but rather *dys-chron*, that is, "inattuale":

"Contemporariness is, then, [...] that relation with time that adheres to it, through a disjunction and an anachronism. Those who coincide too well with the epoch, those who are perfectly tied to it in every respect, are not contemporaries [...]. If, as we have seen, it is the contemporary who has broken the vertebrae of his time (or, at any rate, who has perceived in it a fault line or a breaking point), then he also makes of this fracture a meeting place, or an encounter between times and generations."⁹

Non-Institutionalised Communities

Karşı Sanat went through the beginning of the 2000s without "institutionalising". To this day, it still is neither an organisation, nor an association, a non-governmental organisation or a gallery. Its legal entity is a sole proprietorship, for obvious reasons in the land of trustees. Even

though it does not collect commissions on the basis of artworks sales, it insists on renting venues for large exhibitions. It holds mostly –and without interruption– collective, group exhibitions. It is a place of encounter which the actors in the fields of modern art, contemporary art, rights activism and philosophy do not only frequent, but also shape as they do.

The first task of the politics of art is to define who the actors of art are, to establish, view and promise connections between those who make, those who are the subject of and those who follow art. The actors of *Karşı Sanat* may be contemporary artists, political prisoners, the *Hafriyat* (Excavation) Group, the *Özgür Kazova İşçileri* (Free Kazova Textile Workers), the *Defter* (Notebook) Group¹⁰; the TAYAD (*Tutuklu ve Hükümlü Aileleri ile Dayanışma Derneği* – Solidarity Association for the Families of Detainees and Convicts) families, the *Tarih Vakfı* (History Foundation), *KAOS GL*, the *Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı* (TIHV – Human Rights Foundation of Turkey), the *İnsan Hakları Derneği* (İHD – Human Rights Association), the *500. Yıl Vakfı* (Quincentennial Foundation), the *Cumartesi Anneleri* (Saturday Mothers), the *78'liler Girişimi* (1978ers' Movement), the *Roll Magazine*, the *Diyarbakır Askeri Cezaevi Gerçeğini Araştırma ve Adalet Komisyonu* (Commission for the Investigation on the Truth and Justice Regarding the Diyarbakır Military Prison), the *Hakikat Adalet Hafıza Merkezi* (Truth Justice Memory Centre), the *Express Magazine*, *Fulya Erdemci*, *Beral Madra*, *Türkan Şoray* or emerging artists willing to hold their first exhibition. All these actors are present with all their singularities, without needing to compromise with one another, or *Karşı Sanat* for that matter. They don't resemble one another; they even clash at times. Thus, different world comprehension approaches, in the shape of exhibitions, successively gain visibility. They pile up on top of one another.

The *Hafriyat* Group is the very first in the list of collective actors who produced and were produced by *Karşı Sanat*. Resembling *Karşı Sanat*'s collective model with its inviting and flexible organisation method, *Hafriyat* first held *İstanbul Defterdarları* (*Bookkeepers of Istanbul*), a collective exhibition which brought 69 artists together in *Karşı Sanat* before settling in their own location in Karaköy. To this day, the exhibition's catalogue serves as a resource to understand artistic creation in the 2000s in Turkey. In this respect, *Bir Bilanço: 80'li Yıllarda Türkiye'de Sanat Üretimi* (*A Balance: 80s and Art Production in Turkey*), curated by Beral Medra in May

⁸ "contemporary," Online Etymology Dictionary, last accessed 29.01.2021, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/contemporary>.

⁹ From *Che cos'è il contemporaneo*, the introduction to the philosophy lecture given by Agamben at the Art and Design Faculty of the Venice University: Giorgio Agamben, "What Is the Contemporary?," *What is an Apparatus? and Other Essays*, transl. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2009), 41–52.

¹⁰ Between 2002–2007, that is, at its very establishment, it collaborated with the *Defter* Group; including the likes of İskender Savaşır (who died in 2018) and İhtar Gözaydın, Zeynep Sayın, İhsan Bilgin, Bülent Somay, Ferda Keskin, Tanser Korkmaz, Orhan Koçak, Meral Özbeke and Fatmagül Berktaş. It also shared space with *Express Magazine*. The documentation of debates in the archive of *Karşı Sanat*, which occupy an important place in the post-Marxist tradition of thought in Turkey, are still waiting to be deciphered.

2005, is one among many interesting examples. The exhibition started off as a collective endeavour to remember the cultural movements of the 80s, but the team split in the process. Those disagreements led to the preparation of another exhibition, *Geriyeye Bakmak (Looking Back)* in September 2006, following a different historical and aesthetic approach. Within a cultural "institution" that is not managed by one single corporate head, exhibitions –as channels where thoughts collide and conflict– serve as worksites for historiography and memory studies. Thus, *Karşı Sanat* emerges as the venue of a conflicting community, the very community that gave birth to it.

Before broadening the spectrum of this discussion by going over a few selected exhibitions, I would like to briefly stress how choosing not to be an organisation, an "institution", "a collective whose shape has been defined from the start", not to be standing on one's feet, in a precisely defined place, the way "-stare -state -statu" would imply, means committing to an exhausting journey. This journey is actually, in the full sense, an adventure, because it hypothesises the future. That is why it parts from the futureless precarity of liberalism. Adventure (etymologically rooted in *ad-venire*), claims to embrace that which is to come, what has not come yet. In order to stay within this temporality, which resembles that of the artistic practice or that of the mourning process, one has to tolerate uncertainty, the lack of definiteness.

Exhibition as a Political Act

As I strived to find an answer to the question "what kind of collective" and to understand *Karşı Sanat*'s politics of art, I chose to examine exhibitions as a method, because exhibitions can be thought of as temporary collectivities formed by as many actors as the exhibition's artists, visitors, transporters and designers coming together. Every exhibition defines its own agenda, speaks its own language, is born, lives and eventually withers. The succession of exhibitions in such places as *Karşı Sanat*, whose calendar have been freed from economic needs, the pressure of public communication, the preoccupation of recognition or the fear of censorship, constitute the performative state of a collective whose shape has not been defined from the start. I would like to examine some of the exhibitions held by *Karşı Sanat* in that framework. The selection I have made from over 200 exhibitions will only allow me to give a few examples, and convey only a limited quantity of information as to its totality. Nevertheless, I will try to apprehend these exhibitions with respect to three functions which make them political acts: 1) How they give birth to new collective actors, to collectivities; 2) How they open up physical and symbolic spaces; 3) How they allow for the transformation of the relations between image and meaning in the realm of representation.

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The 6-7 September Istanbul Pogrom Exhibition

Throughout the course of the interviews that I have carried out, I was often met with the sentence, regarding those held at *Karşı Sanat*: "This exhibition could not have been held elsewhere." Undoubtedly, one of the works that primordially helped in earning the collective this reputation was the *6-7 September Istanbul Pogrom* exhibition, held in collaboration with the *Tarih Vakfı* (History Foundation) and the *İnsan Yerleşimleri Derneği* (Association for Human Settlements) in 2005.¹¹ The exhibition displayed a series of photographs and a number of documents showing the role of the state behind the events in question, issued from the private archive of Admiral Fahri Çoker, which he donated to the *Tarih Vakfı*, along with a will for their publication after his death. On 6 September 2005, the day of the exhibition's opening, a group of 20-30 people raided the venue. Prior to this attack, the venue had been cordoned off by the police's riot squad and plainclothes officers, because the Istanbul's governorate had announced having been tipped off regarding a probable attack. Nevertheless, the mob gathered on İstiklal Avenue, chanting slogans such as "Why don't you show the Turks killed in Cyprus?", or "Don't side with those who burnt down Atatürk's house!", before they barged in the place and distributed leaflets. The police did not intervene until the mob started tearing down the photographs and hurling them out the windows. The event, a strikingly concrete example of the notion of "battlefields of memory" propounded by Tanıl Bora, was left unpunished. Two people among the mob were liberated immediately, another on bail.¹²

¹¹ Mentioned in *Hatırlayan Şehir: Taksim'den Sultanahmet'e Mekân ve Hafıza (A City that Remembers: Space and Memory from Taksim to Sultanahmet)*, the publication edited by Asena Günel and Murat Çelikkan from the *Hafıza Merkezi*, for the exhibition titled *The 6-7 September Events in Their 50th Anniversary, From Admiral Fahri Çoker's Personal Archive*.

¹² Balca Ergener, "Ellinci Yılında 6-7 Eylül Olayları Sergisi ve Sergiye Yapılan Saldırı Üzerine (The 6-7 September Events in Their 50th Anniversary, From Admiral Fahri Çoker's Personal Archive)," *Red-Thread*, issue: 1, <http://www.karsi.com/ellinci-yilinda-6-7-eylul-olaylari-sergisi-ve-sergiye-yapilan-saldiri-uzerine>.

Documentary photographs of attacks carried out 50 years earlier eventually sparked similar images on the same spot 50 years later. These events resembled a *séance* of spiritualism, where the ghosts of the perpetrators and those of the victims appeared simultaneously. After the attack, the *Karşı Sanat* team chose not to clean the place up. The traces of violence were kept intact on site for days as though an installation. Following the attack, a burst of solidarity, unprecedented in the culture and arts field, occurred. The police called the gallery in order to warn them: "a crowd is heading towards you again, but don't worry: this time they merely want to express their sympathy for what happened". The solidarity visits had turned into mass demonstrations on İstiklal Avenue. As it shed light on the face of political violence, uninterrupted across the course of time, this exhibition, "rocking history to its core", turned the gallery situated in the Elhamra Passage into one of Beyoğlu's remembrance sites.¹³ Eventually, the exhibition recalled the existence of a collectivity standing in the way of injustices carried out across time and generations. Jacques Derrida affiliates this collectivity, jamming the living present, with the concept of justice:

"No justice –let us not say law– and once again we are not speaking here of laws– seems possible or thinkable without the principle of some responsibility, beyond all living present, within that which disjoins the living present, before the ghosts of those who are not yet born or who are already dead, be they victims of wars, political or other kinds of violence, nationalist, racist, colonialist, sexist or other kinds of exterminations, victims of the oppressions of capitalist imperialism or any of the forms of totalitarianism. Without this non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present, without that which secretly unhinges it, without this responsibility and this respect for justice concerning those who are not there, of those who are no longer or who are not yet present and living, what sense would there be to ask the question 'where?' 'where tomorrow?' 'whither?'"¹⁴

On such issues as violence, representation and testimony, *Karşı Sanat* has repeatedly hosted exhibitions whose languages were irreconcilable. This state of things, while showing the potential multiplicity of the connections between image and meaning, lays out various representation mechanisms conflicting with one another. The fundamental contradiction that arises from being positioned in between art and rights activism is that which exists between the responsibility of displaying violence and "the violence of display". Specifically speaking, some exhibitions about hunger strikes lean on the frontier of pornography in the name of showing reality as it is.¹⁵ Who has the right to show the suffering of "those who are not among us or who cannot be anymore", whether it is done with the consent or even upon the will of the victims themselves or their families? What is the effect of appalling images? How is it possible to politicise the representations of suffering? Those questions have been raised by many exhibitions held by *Karşı Sanat*. It would appear that a different answer emerges every time.

In this respect, casting a closer look at the exhibition conceived by the journalist Ahmet Şık on land mines, held in cooperation between *Anadolu Kültür* and *Karşı Sanat* in March-April 2006, will be helpful. This work, based on documents and photographs, titled *Başkasının Acısına Bakmak 2 (Regarding the Pain of Others 2)*, literally challenges the eponymous text by Susan Sontag. In spite of Sontag's argument that "It seems that the appetite for pictures showing bodies in pain is as keen, almost, as the desire for ones that show bodies naked"¹⁶, Ahmet Şık insists on bearing witness. In spite of Sontag's doubtfulness toward the political impact of pictures of crippled bodies, of open wounds, almost impossible to watch, he says of journalism's picture ethics:

"I want you to feel uncomfortable, to respond, to see nightmares. You will understand if we do, I hoped that some would have no choice but to grasp a problem too big to fit within one picture's frame."¹⁷

¹³ "Hatırlayan Şehir: Taksim'den Sultanahmet'e Mekân ve Hafıza (A City that Remembers: Space and Memory from Taksim to Sultanahmet)," *Hafıza Merkezi*, last accessed 29.01.2021, <https://hatirlyansehir.hakikatadalethafiza.org>.

¹⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Marx'ın Hayaletleri: Borç Durumu, Yas Çalışması ve Yeni Enternasyonal*, transl. Alp Tümertekin (Istanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2001), 12. / *Specters of Marx: the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, transl. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), xviii (Exordium).

¹⁵ The exhibition titled *Başkasının Acısına Bakmak 1 (Regarding the Pain of Others 1)*, the product of a collaboration between *Karşı Sanat Çalışmaları* and the *Tutuklu ve Hükümlü Aileleri ile Yardımlaşma Derneği (TAYAD - the Solidarity Association with the Families of Detainees and Convicts)*, gave an account of the political prisoners' struggle against the F-type prisons and the operation carried out on 19 December 2000. This operation, presented to the public under the name of "*Hayata Dönüş*" ("Return to Life"), carried out simultaneously in 20 incarceration centres, was documented straightforwardly through photographs and videos. The exhibition, which also told the story of the 121 persons who lost their lives in hunger strikes in the aftermath of 19 December, displayed film, slide film, mock-up, drawings and objects as well as Hüseyin Karabey's film, *Sessiz Ölüm (Silent Death)*. Frankly speaking, some images were simply too appalling to watch. The TAYAD families came to the gallery from Küçük Armutlu wearing white gaze and red bandanas as a reference to the hunger strikes. Later, in 2007, the "Hunger Strikes" period was displayed within the ULIS fotoFEST through the work of Gençer Yurttaş, comprising 50 photographs. <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/169555/baskasinin-acısına-bakinca>.

¹⁶ Susan Sontag, *Başkalarının Acısına Bakmak*, transl. Osman Akinhay (Istanbul: Agora Kitaplığı, 2003), 40. / *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003), 33.

¹⁷ "Ahmet Şık'tan Başkasının Acısına Bakmak (Regarding the Pain of Others from Ahmet Şık)," *biamag*, 20.03.2006, <https://m.bianet.org/biamag/kultur/76194-ahmet-siktan-baskasinin-acısına-bakmak>.

While the political impact of this discomfort caused by the pictures is dubious, Şık's exhibition does associate land mines, which claim lives because of their invisibility, with a war that is being ignored. Thus, it reminds us that the so-called social status quo ongoing in the country is reminiscent of an area where land mines have been planted. Therefore, whether you see them or not, both the war and mines are actually out there:

"'There was no war' in the country, but there were tens of thousands of dead designated as martyrs, terrorists, enemies or guerillas. 'There was no war' in the country, but there were hundreds of thousands of people whose bodies or hearts were wounded. 'There was no war' in the country, but there were thousands of villages emptied, burnt or destroyed, and millions of citizens forced away from their land. 'There was no war' in the country, but there were hundreds of people tied to the torture benches; thousands who disappeared during detention and overall, millions of war victims. 'There was no war' in the country, but there were 1 million landmines, and many times more war debris scattered across its terrain, leaving an unknown number of dead behind them."¹⁸

On the other hand, perhaps an exhibition's political impact should not be considered as limited to the sole impact of the images it displays. Words always accompany pictures. During the duration of Ahmet Şık's exhibition, the gallery received threats, urging them "not to scratch the wounds or we won't assume responsibility for what happens". *Karşı Sanat* had to resort to private security to protect the photographs. When it was shown in the exhibition hall of the Ministry of Culture in Ankara, upon an invitation from the İHD, 6 out of the 42 photographs had to be left out under the motive that they contained "propaganda against the state". Thus, the explanatory texts supposed to accompany the photographs by Murat Çelikkan, Ahmet Tulgar and Reha Mağden were censored.¹⁹

There is another interesting anecdote concerning this exhibition: the same photographs were shown again in another exhibition held by *Karşı Sanat* in April 2011 under the title *Ben Tanıgım* (*I Bear Witness*). By then, Ahmet Şık had been arrested; "Ahmet's Photographer Friends" prepared a travelling exhibition displaying his photographs. This work was designated as "action-exhibition"²⁰, hereby granting photographs a brand new political function.²¹



HaZaVuZu, *Akışı Kes* (*Cut the Flow*)
2007, Poster

¹⁸ Quoted from the introduction of the book accompanying Ahmet Şık's exhibition. "Ahmet Şık'tan Başkasının Acısına Bakmak (Regarding the Pain of Others by Ahmet Şık)," *biamag*, 20.03.2006, <https://m.bianet.org/biamag/kultur/76194-ahmet-siktan-baskasinin-acisina-bakmak>.

¹⁹ Evrim Altuğ and Belgin Toraman, "Mayın sergisine sansür (Censorship to the mine exhibition)," *Birgün*, 08.07.2006, <https://www.birgun.net/haber/mayin-sergisine-sansur-27850>.

²⁰ The first work of *action-exhibition* happened on 8 April 2011 at *Karşı Sanat*'s gallery. It was later transported to *Evrensel Sanat*, the *Kazım Koyuncu Kültür Merkezi* (Kazım Koyuncu Cultural Centre), the *Nazım Hikmet Kültür Merkezi* (Nazım Hikmet Cultural Centre), and Istanbul Bilgi University's santralistanbul campus.

²¹ "Ahmet Şık'ın objektifinden: 'Ben Tanıgım' (From Ahmet Şık's Lens: 'I Bear Witness')," *Milliyet*, 08.04.2011, <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/kultur-sanat/ahmet-sik-in-objektifinden-ben-tanigim-1375184>.



HaZaVuZu, Akışı Kes (Cut the Flow)
2007, Performance

One of the most important "action-exhibitions" consisted in the collective exhibition titled *Hrant Dink Sevgili Kardeşim... Sireli Yeğpayrıs (My Dear Brother Hrant... Sireli Yegpayrıs)*, held at *Depo Istanbul* on 23–28 January 2007 as a result of a four-day preparation work carried out hand-in-hand by *Karşı Sanat* and *Anadolu Kültür* shortly after the assassination of Hrant Dink, which brought together works by about 50 artists.

Be a realist, demand the impossible!

Only 6 months after Ahmet Şık's, the exhibition titled *Gerçekçi ol, imkânsız talep et! (Be a realist, demand the impossible!, 19 October-17 November 2007)*,²² curated by Halil Altındere, was held at the same venue. To me, what is highly noteworthy is the profound difference between the languages conveying the political claims of these two exhibitions. Documentary was replaced by artistic fiction. Unleashing the full propensity for criticism of the language of contemporary art –now in the process of institutionalisation–, *Gerçekçi ol, imkânsız talep et!*, which brought together 41 of the most prolific contemporary artists, is another one of these exhibitions that "could not have been held elsewhere".

Bashir Borlakov's photographic installation titled *Bomba (The Bomb, 2007)*, included in this exhibition, contains a reference to the memory of *Karşı Sanat*. The photograph-installation shows a hand grenade thrown into one of the exhibition rooms, and three people running away. The glass is broken although the hand grenade has not detonated yet. The photograph is installed in the room where the action is staged. This composition operates entirely in reverse when compared to the documentary photographs of Ahmet Şık's exhibition concerning land mines, insofar as it completely obscures who the perpetrators and victims are. The origin and target of the threat remain unknown but are still there nonetheless. In the beginning of the 2000s, contemporary art, with its fictional reality, has taken the shape of this hand grenade, this bomb, threatening the social status quo.

Another work that stood out in the exhibition was the performance titled *Akışı Kes (Cut the Flow, 2007)* carried out on İstiklal Avenue by HaZaVuZu. Those who wished to be part of the performance were invited to meet at 18:30 at the entry of the Elhamra Passage. When the time came, the persons who showed up were asked to form a single line, holding each other's hands. The participants were told not to let go of each other's hands under any circumstance, to keep the line intact at all costs and to reach until the wall of the Saint Anthony of Padua Church, so as to interrupt the daily flow of pedestrians on İstiklal Avenue. Thus, through a performative action pertaining to contemporary art, the church that was looted during the 6–7 September 1955 events and the passage that was attacked on 6–7 September 2005 became connected to each other.

Both examples incorporate the place's and city's memory into the present. They both expect the viewer, the participant, to complete the meaning. They stir up memories of violence here and now. In order to achieve this, they both resort to art's fictional power.

Zülfikar Tak and Eva Haule

As one scans through *Karşı Sanat*'s archive, one realises that prisons and detention conditions have always been on the agenda. After the preparatory work that *Karşı Sanat* carried out together with the *Diyarbakır 5 No.lu Askeri Cezaevini Araştırma ve Adalet Komisyonu* (the Investigation and Justice Commission on the Diyarbakır Military Prison No. 5), an exhibition was held, accompanying the release of the commission's reports. Exhibitions kept being held in Urfa and Diyarbakır until the transformation of the prison into a museum.

Karşı Sanat has also hosted many exhibitions devoted to detainees' creations, paintings, poems and photographs. These exhibitions, due to which the collective still receives letters from various prisons in Turkey, appear to be an attempt to tunnel the

²² Orton Akıncı, Nevin Aladağ, Halil Altındere, Vahap Aşar, Cem Aydoğan, Seyhun Babaç, Tufan Baltalar, Ramazan Bayrakoğlu, Bashir Borlakov, Songül Boyraz/Peter Höll, Gökçen Cabadan, Aslı Çavuşoğlu, Burak Delier, Işıl Eğrikavuk, Aksel Zeydan Göz, Ara Güler, Özlem Günyol, Nilbar Güreş, Ha Za Vu Zu, Hakan Gürsoytrak, Seda Hapsev, Gülşah Kılıç, Mustafa Kunt, Levent Kunt, Cem Madra, Sefer Memişoğlu, Ahmet Ögüt, Fahrettin Örenli, Didem Özbek, Ferhat Özgür, Anny-Sibel Öztürk, Necla Rüzgâr, Erinç Seymen, Aslı Sungu, Canan Şenol, Serkan Taycan, Murat Tosyalı, Nasan Tur, Mehmet Ali Uysal, Anti-pop.com (Evrensel Belgin) and Ali Miharbi took place in this event.



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Zülfikar Tak, *Büyük Kapatma (The Great Confinement)*
2007, Charcoal drawings



Eva Haule, *Tutsak Kadınların Portreleri (Portraits of Women Under Captivity)*
2007, Photography series

inside and the outside.²³ I would like to look into two exhibitions held in 2007 within the framework of our discussion: Zülfikar Tak's *Büyük Kapatma, karakalem çalışmaları* (*The Great Confinement, charcoal drawings*) and Eva Haule's *Tutsak Kadınların Portreleri* (*Portraits of Women Under Captivity*).

Zülfikar Tak was a prisoner who experienced the September 12 military coup oppression in its starkest shape when he was detained in the Diyarbakır Military Prison at the age of 17, and later began painting while imprisoned there when the head of inner security Esat Oktay Yıldırım retired. An unfathomable, unspeakable level of cruelty and systematic torture became the main focus of his artistic practice. His paintings are considered as references in the debate regarding the testimony of suffering and political representation in the artistic field. The violent events that he depicts in his caricaturistic charcoal drawings seem to embrace the point of view of an outer observer, in situations which deny individuals of their humanity. Combining documentary and abstraction elements, these drawings open the issue of showing violence in the fields of art and rights activism up for discussion.

As for Eva Haule, she was born in 1954 and detained in 1986 for being a member of the Red Army Faction. She was sentenced to life imprisonment. After Haule, who spent her first three years in jail in isolation, went on a hunger strike, she was transferred to another incarceration centre, where she stayed with other detainees in a dorm. After she took photography classes from two professional photographer volunteers in jail, Eva Haule started to take nude photographs of women inmates. Her selection of portraits of women under captivity emerged from the photographs which she shot over the years 1998–2003. The strength of this photography selection consists in the impossibility for the viewer to tell that they were shot in a prison. The prison, which has condemned these women to invisibility, is made invisible by Eva Haule in her photographs. These photographs show how life happens in unique, irreplaceable bodies, outside the reach of the jail uniforms.

"A person letting their picture be taken, means they still believe in the promise of freedom."²⁴

Similarly to Zülfikar Tak, Eva Haule has found a way to fight the very violence that she herself suffered, by inventing a representation method that opens a trench between documentary and fiction. In both examples, *Karşı Sanat*'s policy has been to allow for two persons, casting a look from the region of invisibility, who have reached beyond the separation between who is an artist and who is not, to weave new connections between image and meaning, hereby inviting the viewers to bear witness.

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The Paradoxes of Freedom

Since the 2000s, the struggle for justice of artists, social scientists, journalists, rights defenders –belonging to a particular group or not– and victims of violence in Turkey have coalesced within such collectives as *Karşı Sanat*. Different actors feel the need to open up more spaces, which will allow them to create together without giving up their proper languages or radical singularities. To me, gateways not only between spaces but also between times are reminiscent of the concept of "aesthetic and political act". On the other hand, we are no strangers to the deep paradoxes inherent to the experience of freedom, defined by Svetlana Boym as "the adventure of co-creation in the world":

"The questions that concern me point to the paradoxes of freedom: What, if anything, must we be certain of in order to tolerate uncertainty? How much common ground or shared trust is needed to allow for the uncommon experiences of freedom?"²⁵

There is undoubtedly a deep connection between creativity and uncertainty. But the same connection exists between extraordinary freedom and tedious day-to-day duties or the unconditional trust, responsibility and self-sacrifice that people whom you do not know at all expect from you. Nevertheless, if we agree to view politics, not as "the conquest of power", but as the radical transformation of the connections linked to domination and segregation, taking part in an adventure by believing in the advent of a collectivity is, to say the least, a risk worth being taken in the precarious conditions created by neoliberalism.

²³ "Özgürlüğün Sesi, 10–20 Eylül 2020 (The Sound of Freedom, 10–20 September 2020)," *Karşı Sanat*, last accessed 29.01.2021, <http://www.karsi.com/ozgurlugun-sesi-2>.

²⁴ From the interview conducted with Eva Haule by Filiz Taylan (Nokta Magazine, 01.04.2007).

²⁵ Boym, *Başka Bir Özgürlük / Bir Fikrin Alternatif Tarihi*, 17.



**Violence, Memory
and Art within the
Context of the
Right to Freedom of
Artistic Expression
and Creativity**

39

**Turgut
Tarhanlı**

The present study, as part of the Memory and Arts project, does not only propose a legal perspective. One of the main objectives of this essay consists in trying to outline the fundamental connections for an analysis relating to the processes of memorialisation, in the context of law, of art and of the concept and policies of transitional justice, which constitute another multidisciplinary axis. Thus, I will attempt to analyse, within the framework indicated above, the significance and function of the selection/archive consisting in the works of contemporary art (2000–2019) from Turkey compiled within the scope of the Memory and Arts project.

Briefly put, the views which I will be presenting can be thought of as resting on the three following pillars: law/human rights, contemporary art, and transitional period, and more specifically transitional justice.

Law

Before analysing the connections one runs across within the framework which I described above, as a legal scholar, I would like to elaborate a little on the concept of the "right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity", a legal term which stems from the terminology of human rights law. This concept can be viewed as a kind of right whose constituents are still in the making; indeed, only recently has it started to be defined in such a framework.

The fact that this issue possesses both individual and collective dimensions is obviously also relevant to many areas of artistic expression and creativity. This dual structural pattern requires our consideration. We need to explore how this kind of right is being exercised: not only the ways in which it is exercised, but also the different forms of interference against it by various persons, institutions and milieus.

I believe it is not necessary to specify that the approach which led me to start this study from a "legal" standpoint does not mean that I think that we should restrict our field of action to an area circumscribed by legal rules. As I have indicated earlier, over the course of the last ten years, in the field of human rights law, the provision of the Turkish Constitution on "Freedom of Science and the Arts" (Article 27) has begun to be designated, and therefore conceptualised, under a new denomination and understanding, as the "right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity". Therefore, I believe that it is necessary to examine this constitutional provision under this light.

When considering things from this perspective, we come across a matter which bears primordial importance for future assessments. Indeed, the constitutional provision which I mentioned above has rigorously restricted and narrowed to a specific perimeter the individual and collective dimensions of the area of rights applying to art, by drawing its frontiers from a political and legal standpoint.

This political approach undeniably creates a tension in the relations between the state's apparatus and individuals or social actors. Nevertheless, for a number of reasons, these restrictions are characterised by an uncertainty that allows for variations in the way and time they manifest themselves.

In today's human rights law, the interferences with rights, which may have different degrees of impact and violence, are not necessarily state-induced. Briefly put, I am referring to situations of "violations". The actors who carry out interferences which can result in such situations may be persons or institutions endowed with state-given authority (vertical violations), but they may also be entirely independent from the state, non-state actors (horizontal violations).

Undoubtedly, this categorisation is not to be viewed as strictly delimited: according to the attitude and behaviour of the state's instruments in question, an act of interference carried out by a non-state actor may or not be of such a nature that its responsibility should be imputed to the said state actors.

Another category often referred to in today's human rights law literature is linked to the main responsibility for actions resulting in interferences with this range of rights belonging to a person or institution endowed with state authority, despite its apparent perpetrator not holding that authority. I am referring to what can be defined, in daily language, as subcontracting: a type of interference which we may well come across in the form of actual violations (diagonal violations), with regards to the consequences it can give rise to.

While emphasising this conceptual and categorical distinction, remembering the state's positive liability to respect and protect the rights in all three situations is an

absolute necessity. In other words, the state's responsibility to take action, positively and preemptively for that purpose, and its accountability in the event that it fails to do so, either deliberately or by way of negligence.

The examples of contemporary art and performing arts works encompassed by both the field of action of the *Hafıza Merkezi* and the selection/archive compiled thanks to the Memory and Arts project, can be described on the basis of the categories that I mentioned within the framework of the abovementioned typology of violations, and are adequate forms of artistic expression for the identification of connections between different ranges of rights.

Obviously, this selection can be broadened, deepened, both in chronological terms and with regards to the works encompassed. On the other hand, in terms of the forms of interference against ranges of rights which I touched upon in the paragraphs above, I do not profess to establish a direct legal connection between the selection/archive and particular events.¹ I am aware of the limitations of such an archive in a general sense. But, on the other hand, I also care about the potential contribution that the cumulative compilation of different themes of victimisation may bring to the context of exercising freedom of artistic expression and creativity, in the direction of opening up and constructing new lines of advocacy or a new perspective on rights.

After this general introduction, I would like to proceed by relaying the relevant constitutional provision. This will allow us to depict the legal topography of artistic expression and creativity within Turkey's context, as well as to produce analyses through the identification of a connection with the selection/archive further on, before eventually establishing relations with international legal standards regarding the issues at stake and opening the way for interpretation supported by these standards.

The article of the Constitution which I am quoting beneath has not gone through a single amendment since the day when the Constitution was adopted; the text, adopted by the constituent assembly² in 1982, during the period of the 12 September 1980 coup, states:

"IX. Freedom of science and the arts

ARTICLE 27- *Everyone has the right to study and teach, express, and disseminate science and the arts, and to carry out all sorts of research in these fields freely.*

The right to disseminate shall not be exercised for the purpose of changing the provisions of articles 1, 2 and 3 of the Constitution.

The provision of this article shall not preclude regulation by law of the entry and distribution of foreign publications in the country."

There are national and international legal instruments that apprehend science and art together. However, today, in light of the works carried out by institutions in order to set up standards in the field of human rights, there is also a tendency to separate those fields. Nevertheless, I will not be addressing the matter of "science" specifically within the framework of this essay.

The first paragraph of the provision mentioned above defines the subject and scope of the right being recognised, protected, and expected to be respected. As for the next two paragraphs, they draw the framework of the limitation regime that applies to the uses made of this right; however questionable the effect of the restricting authority may have become in today's world, for instance with regards to the entry of foreign publications into national borders.

¹ Here, a situation of impossibility stands out, especially underlined by Agamben, spurred by the unwavering equation between facts and the will to attain a legal goal. See Giorgio Agamben, "Tanık (Witness)," *Tanık ve Arşiv: Auschwitz'den Artakalanlar (Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive)*, transl. Ali İhsan Başgöl (Ankara: Dipnot, [no date]), 18.

² The body consisting of the Advisory Assembly and National Security Council.

According to the first paragraph, the fact that everyone has the right to study and teach, express and disseminate science and the arts, and to carry out all sorts of research in these fields freely is acknowledged. However, the second paragraph, which follows immediately, states the following provision:

"The right to disseminate shall not be exercised for the purpose of changing the provisions of articles 1, 2 and 3 of the Constitution."

The articles mentioned here in order to emphasise the importance of their protection concern the following matters: the *"Form of the State"*³, the *"Characteristics of the Republic"*⁴ and the *"Integrity, official language, flag, national anthem and capital of the State."*⁵

This restriction, prescribed in the provision of article 27, paragraph 2, does not exist in the Advisory Assembly's draft text of the same article.⁶ The provision in question was only added later to the article's text, when the latter was presented to the National Security Council (a board composed of the Chief of General Staff and Force Commanders), during the latter's deliberations.⁷

The "dissemination" (right of distribution) of an artistic production, of an artwork, is something that deserves a legal explanation. Such a notion was defined in Article 23, titled "Right of distribution", of the Law on Intellectual and Artistic Works, adopted in 1951⁸. Actually this provision, while defining the "act of distributing" in light of the rights possessed by the author and with their permission, also mentions other acts and procedures that ought to be apprehended under those questions' scope. However, obviously, those do not constitute a limited and closed list (*numerus clausus*). Therefore, the "right of distribution" encompasses such operations and relations as renting, lending, putting up for sale or distributing in any other way the importation of copies of a work that have been reproduced abroad, or public lending. As a result, the provision of Article 27, paragraph 2 of the Constitution should be understood within that framework.

The reason why I wanted to draw this legal framework is to present a general view of the public space with the negative and positive responsibilities that pertain to the use of artistic freedom in Turkey and the creation of a convenient atmosphere for it. In addition, by integrating this analysis in the dynamic field of the formation of international rights standards, I address the assumption that these two legal regimes—domestic law and international law—are incompatible, and I intend to clarify the parameters of this conflictual situation.

Within this context, the access of everyone to this field, and the participation of everyone in cultural activities are as much encompassed by this freedom as its individual and collective uses by artists in Turkey. Therefore, a work or performance pertaining to

³ "ARTICLE 1- Form of the State

The State of Turkey is a Republic."

⁴ "ARTICLE 2- Characteristics of the Republic

"The Republic of Turkey is a democratic, secular and social state governed by rule of law; bearing in mind the concepts of public peace, national solidarity and justice; respecting human rights; loyal to the nationalism of Atatürk, and based on the fundamental tenets set forth in the Preamble."

⁵ "ARTICLE 3- Integrity, Official Language, Flag, National Anthem, and Capital of the State

The State of Turkey, with its territory and nation, is an indivisible entity. Its language is Turkish. Its flag, the form of which is prescribed by the relevant law, is composed of a white crescent and star on a red background.

Its national anthem is the "Independence March".

Its capital is Ankara."

⁶ The text adopted by the Advisory Assembly is as follows:

"IX. Freedom of science and the arts

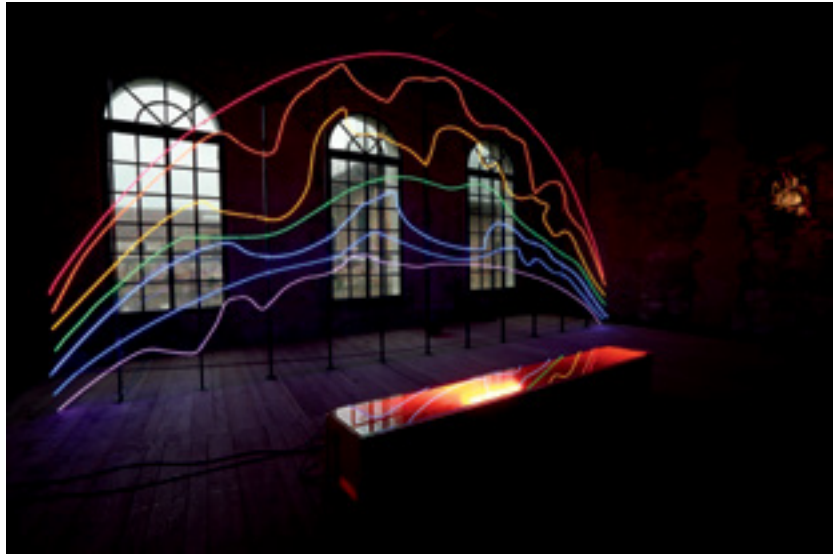
ARTICLE 27 - Everyone has the right to study and teach, express, and disseminate science and the arts, and to carry out all sorts of research in these fields freely. This paragraph shall not preclude regulation by law of the entry and distribution of foreign publications in the country."

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL Sequence Number: 450 Constitution of the Republic of Turkey Draft Text approved by the Advisory Assembly and Report of the National Security Council's Constitution Commission. (Adv. Council: 1/463; Nation. Secur. Council: 1/397), 106.

⁷ *"Article — 27 By addition of a new paragraph to the Article, it was specified that the right to disseminate may not be exercised for the purpose of changing the provisions of the articles 1, 2 and 3 of the Constitution, whose modification is impossible, and, by submission to re-writing, the Article was reformulated in three paragraphs."* NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL Sequence Number: 450 Constitution of the Republic of Turkey Draft Text approved by the Advisory Assembly and Report of the National Security Council's Constitution Commission. (Adv. Council: 1/463; Nation. Secur. Council: 1/397), 69 and 107.

⁸ Law no. 5846-Date of adoption: 5 December 1951 (*Official Gazette*, 13 December 1951-7981).

Sarkis, *Respiro*
2015, Installation



artistic freedom, when not considered within the framework of the "right to disseminate" on the ground of a view, or claim, that it should fit this restriction, may turn into an "artistic object" excluded from the political sphere, and therefore not disseminated or distributed, but insulated instead. At least, there is a high probability that it does. On the other hand, in every incidence, as in the case of the work titled *Respiro* (2015) by Sarkis, exhibited in the Pavilion of Turkey at *la Biennale di Venezia*, there may be no probability to respond in aesthetic terms to such an interference, or such a response may well be precluded on the same ground.

I have no intention to highlight a cascade of impossibilities and draw an overall pessimistic picture of resignation in conclusion. On the contrary, my efforts aim to envision a situation where the use of freedom of artistic expression and artistic activism coincide and intersect.

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Keeping in mind that, in a "democratic society", processes are more important than results, the fact that this constitutional restriction of freedom of artistic expression may become a threat in regard to efforts to create possibilities and opportunities for plurality.

On the other hand, this concern over a possible threat regarding freedom of artistic expression, emerging in the framework of the Constitution, for instance in regard to the "freedom of expression and dissemination of thought" (Article 26), has not even been formulated in a broadly comprehensive language.⁹ Even though the Constitution sets a more restrictive framework for freedom of expression and dissemination of thought than international human rights standards, only artistic (and scientific) free-

⁹ **"VIII. Freedom of expression and dissemination of thought**

ARTICLE 26- Everyone has the right to express and disseminate his/her thoughts and opinions by speech, in writing or in pictures or through other media, individually or collectively. This freedom includes the liberty of receiving or imparting information or ideas without interference by official authorities. This provision shall not preclude subjecting transmission by radio, television, cinema, or similar means to a system of licensing.

(As amended on October 3, 2001; Act No. 4709) The exercise of these freedoms may be restricted for the purposes of national security, public order, public safety, safeguarding the basic characteristics of the Republic and the indivisible integrity of the State with its territory and nation, preventing crime, punishing offenders, withholding information duly classified as a state secret, protecting the reputation or rights and private and family life of others, or protecting Professional secrets as prescribed by law, or ensuring the proper functioning of the judiciary.

(Repealed on October 3, 2001; Act No. 4709)

Regulatory provisions concerning the use of means to disseminate information and thoughts shall not be deemed as the restriction of freedom of expression and dissemination of thoughts as long as the transmission of information and thoughts is not prevented.

(Paragraph added on October 3, 2001; Act No. 4709) The formalities, conditions and procedures to be applied in exercising the freedom of expression and dissemination of thought shall be prescribed by law."

dom are targetted by the introduction of such a severe restriction as that described above for the exercise of the "right to disseminate" artistic works.¹⁰

Thus, those who drafted the Constitution refrained from clarifying the comprehension, predictability and language of the field of artistic freedom, or even the very thought of the works it might give birth to, and, from the very start, they preferred to eliminate the "threat" that appeared. Since this issue has not been resolved, its resolution is not even sought for, and this situation is not even perceived as problematic, it seems that the maxim according to which forbidding constitutes a "solution" has prevailed.

I would be tempted to consider that this constitutional provision was drafted in such a way as to give credit to this interpretation. Here is the first paragraph of the rationale text, relevant for the subject matter:

"By virtue of this article, guaranteeing scientific and artistic freedom, everyone has the right to study and teach, express and disseminate science and the arts, and to carry out all sorts of research in these fields freely. In compliance with this provision, strict observance of objectivity, intrinsically characteristic of science and the arts, is required on the part of the persons who exercise scientific and artistic freedom."¹¹

The perspective and terminology used in the second sentence of this text regarding the right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity –under its modern denomination– are so far off from the artistic field that it seems to be in contradiction with all art theory: *"In compliance with this provision, strict observance of objectivity, intrinsically characteristic of science and the arts, is required on the part of the person who exercises scientific and artistic freedom."*

In my opinion, the sense of "threat" which I mentioned above eventually leads to a suspicion, a tension, disabling all answers to the questions of what artists will do when exercising this freedom, how they will do it, and how they will share what they do with others, and, what's more, to such an absurd position as that of trying to determine the guiding principle of art, summoning it to *"... strict observance of objectivity, intrinsically characteristic of art"*. The use made of the concept of "freedom" in the same sentence that emphasises obedience, alongside the phrase *"strict observance is required"*, makes one wonder, not only from the perspective of a legal rationale text, "how" this freedom, recognised by the provision of Article 27, paragraph 1 of the Constitution will be restricted, and even restrained.¹²

On the other hand, in the framework of artistic freedom, its restriction for all works produced not to be used for the purpose of changing the articles 1, 2, and 3 of the Constitution results in a strange outcome when placed in relation with the provision of Article 4 of the same Constitution. Indeed, those first three provisions are placed under strong protection against "constitutional modification" by the provision of Article 4; indeed, the latter states that these provisions *"shall not be amended, nor shall their amendment be proposed"*.

¹⁰ For a comprehensive overview of the subject of the "legal framework of artistic freedom" from a constitutional law perspective, see Deniz Polat Akgün, *Sanat Özgürlüğü (Artistic Freedom)* (Istanbul: On İki Levha, 2020), 195 and following pages. Also see *Sanatta İfade Özgürlüğü Sansür ve Hukuk (Freedom of Expression, Censorship and Law in Arts)* (Istanbul: Siyahbant, 2013); prepared for publication by Ulaş Karan, Constitutional Law scholar at the Istanbul Bilgi University Faculty of Law, as a result of one-year-long workshops conducted in collaboration between the *Siyahbant* group and the Human Rights Law Research Centre of Istanbul Bilgi University.

¹¹ NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL, Sequence Number: 450, Constitution of the Republic of Turkey Draft Text approved by the Advisory Assembly and Report of the National Security Council's Constitution Commission. (Adv. council: 1/463; Nation. Secur. Council: 1/397), 14.

¹² During the negotiations of the Advisory Assembly regarding the draft text of Article 27, only Assembly member M. Utkan Kocatürk voiced disapproval of the phrase *"strict observance is required"* in the provision's rationale: *"(...) The claim that art's intrinsic nature be objective does not stand against logic. Because, since art is the expression of an artist's spirit, it can be either normal or abnormal; therefore, expecting art works to be objective is in contradiction with art's very definition and nature. In this light, I believe it is necessary that the esteemed Commission bring clarification to this rationale."*

Thereagainst, Feyyaz Gölcüklü, the deputy chairman of the Constitution Commission maintained that a modification of the text was not necessary by giving the following answer, and the Article was adopted after this short negotiation. Gölcüklü: *"As our friend just remarked, this objectivity quite naturally changes according to the science and the art. The objectivity in physics is different compared to that which exists in social sciences, and the latter is different when compared to that which exists in arts. We have placed that phrase here precisely to indicate this subject. Objectivity will be interpreted according to the nature and type of science and the intrinsic nature of art."* Review of Proceedings of the Advisory Assembly, Group: 132, Session: 2, 21 August 1982, 296–297.

Therefore, there is a legal framework whereby, even in the event of an ordinary amendment to the Constitution, the provisions of these first three articles are "protected" by the Constitution itself against such a procedure. Then, against what threat, or sense of threat might this "protection", this political preference, this attempt to preserve the Constitution's first three provisions and, *additionally and specifically*, its provision on artistic freedom from the exercise of the "right to disseminate" artistic works, have been devised?

Starting from 1987, various articles of the Constitution were amended, some amendments and partial withdrawals were made. However, no modifications were ever made to the text of Article 27 on artistic freedom. Perhaps, but this is merely a speculation, it was found useful to keep this provision untouched.

This situation must have aroused ideological unrest as to the radius of action and horizons of artistic freedom in Turkey. For instance, what significance does the phrase "*strict observance of objectivity, intrinsically characteristic of art*" carry in the context of the debate on artistic imagination; or rather, does it make any sense? Over the last ten years, as I have indicated above, "artistic freedom", which is also recognised as a human right, has started to be designated under the denomination of the "right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity" as well, and its scope re-envisioned on the basis of this perspective. Despite my awareness of how absurd the question is, I don't want to elude its enunciation: can the concepts of "creativity", "subjectivity", "imagination" and "image" be envisioned together with the individual and social dimensions of freedom, through the lens of this constitutional text? Undoubtedly, they cannot.

This introduction concerning the boundaries of artistic freedom, as a freedom recognised in the Constitution and its scope of application, in the context of the Memory and Arts project, served to signal the main aspects of the institutional enforcement against the different subjectivities existing in the artistic field, and society's dynamism. In my opinion, such an enforcement by means of legal provision does not necessarily need to be applied literally. Indeed, it is there and this mere fact, in terms of mindset, may help produce derivative forms of restricting provisions, and, when needed, facilitate a discourse of supposed legitimacy, with reference to this restriction paradigm. As a matter of fact, that is what actually happens, no matter how its real level of impact may vary from case to case.

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On the other hand, you may think that the institutional enforcement which I have tried to clarify above by taking into account the ties between art and politics has only hindered the exercise of the right to disseminate the artworks that, in terms of content, are exclusively focused on an important political claim, or were produced through a social and political collaboration of the same importance.

Alleging that artistic activities and works "with such contents" may have been used, like as many instruments, "for the purpose of changing the provisions" of the Constitution's first three articles¹³, which shall not be amended, nor their amendment be proposed, would be an emphatic way of putting things. Therefore, the interpretation of works which tackle subjects that could be deemed related to the content of these provisions, even when they are conveying criticism in the form of artistic creativity, as aimed at restrictive political behaviours and interventions, looks to be left to the appreciation of the ruling power, which resorts to these methods. Even though the provisions of Article 13, titled "Restriction of fundamental rights and freedoms" of the Constitution, in its amended version of 2001, upholds the principle of not "infringing upon [the] essence" of rights in an effort to attain a more democratic quality in comparison with the original text, it is not enough to dissipate the degree of uncertainty of an approach largely dependent on interpretation, against the rigorous formulation of the provision of Article 27.

It is unlikely, in technical legal terms, to modify these unalterable provisions through the production or distribution of artworks. Therefore, these provisions open a space for the deployment of a mindset that approves of interfering with artistic freedom on a much broader basis, encompassing many other ranges of rights.

¹³ See above, footnotes (3), (4) and (5).

Law, Art, Image

Whether in the context of "Memory and Arts" or not, legal apprehension of modes of artistic expression has, generally speaking, been carried out or defended on the ground of freedom of expression. In international human rights standards regarding freedom of expression, "artistic" language, as a mode of expression, is being interpreted within the context of this freedom. Therefore, everything that is expressed and distributed in artistic forms also falls within the scope of freedom of expression in conventional terms.¹⁴

However, in an indirect way, legal rulings regarding cases brought within the framework of human rights and freedom of expression in particular imply and reveal that the language of artistic forms differs from the issue of freedom of expression in a general sense. For instance, rulings by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) regarding cases of interferences with artistic works brought before this court generally reflect this view.

Briefly put, one would be entitled to say that, broadly speaking, the equation sought for in terms of protection and restriction of freedom of artistic expression is kept within the boundaries of freedom of expression. Yet, for now, I will content myself with stressing that this approach does not entirely hide tacit implications of an acknowledgement of the difference between both, leaking from the cracks so to say.

The apprehension of artistic freedom from such a legal standpoint is of course not a perspective so loaded that it would be deemed inappropriate or wrong, but it is still insufficient to a large extent. And the void created by this very insufficiency begins to bolster up the chance for this range of freedom to be submitted to groundless restrictions and interferences when, in fact, legal dispositions compel for its observance and protection.

The situation which I am trying to elucidate here is not only one of interference, within the framework of the Constitution, by the military wing of the Constituent Assembly during the period of the September 12 military coup, which I have touched upon in the previous chapter, restricting this freedom by narrowing its range. That this interference is a serious one is already clear enough, but it also virtually constitutes a mechanism instating a state of exception. I am only sharing this view as an observation. I believe that I have brought sufficient clarification on the matter above.

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Still, from a broader perspective, we are confronted with such a problem regarding the question of freedom of artistic expression, from the standpoint of a comparative analysis against international human rights standards. An examination of this problem in Turkey, within the project titled "Memory and Arts", is of the utmost necessity.

There are mechanisms, designated as Special Procedures, within the Human Rights Council of the United Nations, in charge of watching over and protecting human rights on an international scale with regards to issues concerning a variety of human rights, whose numbers and titles have evolved over time, such as Special Rapporteur, Independent Expert or Working Group. Their existence dates back to the early 1980s, but their initial constitution, at an embryotic stage, happened another ten years earlier; at least for some of them.

Amid this sheaf of mechanisms, a new Special Rapporteur task was instated in 2009: that of the "Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights".¹⁵ A Pakistani citizen, sociologist and feminist activist Farida Shaheed was appointed to this position. She has led the way for the preparation of a study, shaped by field research and the answers and contributions of states and NGOs to a survey proposed by the Rapporteur herself. This study was completed in 2013, and published as a report bearing the title: "The right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity".¹⁶

¹⁴ Especially with regards to visual arts; see Judgment of the ECtHR. *Müller and Others v. Switzerland*, 24 May 1988, no. 10737/84; Judgment of the ECtHR. *Otto-Preminger-Institut v. Austria*, 20 September 1994, no. 13470/87; Judgment of the ECtHR. *Wingrove v. the United Kingdom*, 25 November 1996, no. 17419/90; Judgment of the ECtHR. *Vereinigung Bildender Künstler v. Austria*, 25 January 2007, no. 68354/01; ECtHR. *Samodurov and Vasilovskaya v. Russia*, 15 December 2009, no. 3007/06; *Ehrmann and SCI VHI v. France* decision, 7 June 2011, no. 2777/10 (no admissibility).

¹⁵ Special Rapporteurs may conduct fact-finding missions in countries on the grounds of issues related to their mandate. The Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights has sent a proposition in that sense to Turkey in 2012 but this proposition was left unanswered. The proposition to visit Turkey was reiterated in 2017. However, such a visit has not been carried out as of today. See <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/CulturalRights/Pages/CountryVisits.aspx> (visit: 01.02.2021).

¹⁶ "The right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity", Report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Farida Shaheed, 14 March 2013.

This report constituted an important contribution to the strengthening of the perspective of human rights on the subject. It clarified its interpretation, especially on the grounds of art, politics and law, by identifying its conceptual elements. In my opinion, the forthright emphasis on the structural components of artistic freedom carried much value: it addressed how this issue could be conceptualised, beyond the prevalent exclusive approach of freedom of expression, as distinct from, yet parallel to the field of freedom of expression, without excluding it either. The form of artistic expression whose framework the report draws bears much importance with regards to the conceptual clarification that sets it apart from plain freedom of expression in the context of human rights.

The question of what point of view should be adopted, especially from the perspective of human rights, regarding the main objectives of the Memory and Arts project, as well as the works included in the selection/archive (and those which will be in the future) is addressed and partly answered in this report, although neither in detail nor in depth.

According to the report, "*An artwork differs from non-fictional statements, as it provides a far wider scope for assigning multiple meanings: assumptions about the message carried by an artwork are therefore extremely difficult to prove, and interpretations given to an artwork do not necessarily coincide with the author's intended meaning. Artistic expressions and creations do not always carry, and should not be reduced to carrying, a specific message or information. In addition, the resort to fiction and the imaginary must be understood and respected as a crucial element of the freedom indispensable for creative activities and artistic expressions (...)*"¹⁷.

From the point of view of art theory or that of art criticism, one could argue that the views defended in the report are far from attaining depth of thought. Such an appreciation is not irrelevant. Nevertheless, the existence of a text addressing the setting of an international standard for a range of freedoms in light of human rights law should not be overlooked. The most important aspect of this report is its presentation of a conception of the right that draws attention to a range of freedoms (and to its protection) that is being apprehended, as far as artistic freedom is concerned, by means of its "fictional" and "imaginary" aspects, with a particular emphasis on these concepts, beyond freedom of expression in its plain and widely-known sense.

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I believe that the main reason why the range of rights presented in this report by Farida Shaheed is titled "right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity" is precisely this parameter. The report seeks to probe and depict the structural characteristic of a range of rights made up of such components as "artistic expression" and "artistic creativity". Moreover, its most noteworthy aspect, i.e. the "creativity" element, gains existence and meaning inasmuch as it is included in the field of human rights law. Of course, this is an issue that naturally exceeds the frontiers of human rights and law, requiring a cross-disciplinary perspective and understanding. As a matter of fact, the examination, from a standpoint that is shaped by art theory, political theory, social sciences and law, of the value and impact of this right's characteristic, on the basis of the artistic practices compiled within the selection/archive under the scope of the Memory and Arts project, can only be achieved through an awareness of the structural characteristic which I commented on earlier, in light of my own field of work.

Now I would like to briefly return to the matter which I mentioned in the previous chapter, that of the constitutional coordinates of the range and uses of artistic freedom in Turkey, and to proceed thereon.

I will address two issues:

(i) The limitation framework addressed in the provision of Article 27, paragraph 2 of the Constitution: "*The right to disseminate [art] shall not be exercised for the purpose of changing the provisions of articles 1, 2 and 3 of the Constitution.*"

(ii) The rationale (first paragraph) of the provision of Article 27 of the Constitution: "*[S]trict observance of objectivity, intrinsically characteristic of science and the arts, is required on the part of the persons who exercise [...] artistic freedom.*"

¹⁷ Shaheed, *report cited*, p. 9. According to a perspective mentioned in the Special Rapporteur's report, artists should be free to discover the *darker side of humanity*, and to express it without being incriminated for it. See *loc. cit.*

These two textual quotations are the manifestation of the restrictive mindset on the part of the State, of those who drafted the Constitution, as transpired later in numerous manners in its range of application and specific policies, in the face of (or, from the point of view of that side, should we say "out of concern about"?) the forms of artistic expression, of their unpredictability and volatility.

The purpose of changing the Constitution's first three articles, protected against the event of any amendment by the Constitution itself, by means of forms of artistic expression, necessitates a debate as to the actors who possess political power being the only ones who may produce such a result. Seeing as how impossible it would be for artistic forms on their own to lead to such a result through the achievement of a public language, what is actually being prevented, or taken aim at, rather than the event of a constitutional amendment, are artistic expression and creativity themselves.

Of course, the existence of some works, in the field of contemporary art, which, although they may not be technically considered as instruments for such modifications, are, directly or indirectly, of a critical nature as to matters related to the contents of these constitutional provisions, is by no means a surprising feat. What is important is not the fact that artworks of such a nature are assuredly submitted to interference. This may or may not occur, or manifest itself on matters irrelevant to the content of these provisions.

From the viewpoint of freedom of artistic expression and creativity, forms of expression and creations of this nature, rather than being the subject of a broad-scale prohibition, should be appreciated in light of the criterias of legitimacy regarding the limitations of right in "a democratic society", and, in that sense, interpreted in the context of the preservation of the principle of "plurality" in particular.

As per the second matter, we are faced with a more ironic situation. Because the "ground" defended in the rationale of this article is presented in a language that commands for complete distancing from subjectivity in light of the right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity: "*strict observance of objectivity, intrinsically characteristic of art.*" Actually, if interpretation is needed with regards to this rationale, it is entirely invalidating Article 27, paragraph 1 of the Constitution, which defines artistic freedom. Indeed, artistic freedom, and the field which is protected by the right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity, expressing it in a more empowering manner, is a range of subjectivity where the exact contrary of such positions as objectivity, neutrality, impartiality, etc. is defended.

The "creativity" component of artworks and artistic narratives, where fiction and imagination come into existence, or, to designate it in the same way as Farida Shaheed does in her overview of this range of rights, the right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity, requires for "subjectivity" to be left out of the scope of the discussion, even in comparison with the "expression" of that creativity, and for this to be acknowledged as a right.

However, a regime of characterisation and categorisation regarding the submission of this right to "strict observance of objectivity" is in need of an upper normative system in order to institute the ideological mechanisms that can achieve this and to produce the necessary deterrence against adverse discourse. As a consequence, the construction of a hegemony in this regard, in terms referring to the terminology of human rights law, calls to mind a situation beyond the mere potentiality of producing a *chilling effect*. As a matter of fact, in the text, what is being achieved through the emphasis placed on "art's intrinsic characteristic" is, far from showing respect to the altogether embracive character of the artistic field –subjectivity–, the trailhead that ultimately leads to the enforcement of "observance of objectivity". In other words, instead of the creation of new areas and instruments of subjectivity and, interrelatedly, the defense of a right to imagination, a situation which cannot be explained otherwise than through the "observance of objectivity" maxim of an "official art" policy, produced by a wholesaler, monodimensional, homological and circumscribing mindset.

Therefore, the contemporary arts and performing arts practices encompassed by the selection/archive, related to diverse social issues from Turkey's more or less recent past or present, however limited to a certain timeframe, may be apprehended as an incipit (entrance gate) for an attempt at drawing an inventory of the uses of the right to creativity and imagination. From the point of view of the triangle of law, art and image, here, we may speak of either an opposition stance against a normative command aiming at inclosure, constriction and standardisation by means of law, or, in the language of artistic expression, of criticism and resistance.

Gülsün Karamustafa, *Duvar Örtülür-ken (Making of the Wall)*
2003, Video



The director said "those girls are 'urban guerillas'
and we never know what they are able to do,
therefore we have to cut this tree".



I lost all positive impressions I had on my arrival and the
space immediately turned into a real prison for me.

I would like to propose such an analysis, not over the whole repertoire of the selection/archive, but by casting a closer look at two video works by Gülsün Karamustafa included in this compilation. These are the videos titled *Duvar Örülrken (Making of the Wall, 2003)* and *Meydanın Belleği (Memory of a Square, 2005)*.

Duvar Örülrken (Making of the Wall) consists in interviews conducted with three women who were sentenced during various military coups (1971 and 1980) in Turkey. It conveys observations as to the impacts of these coups upon individuals, how the obstructing, circumscribing mechanisms of prison conditions –briefly put, “that wall”– were built, both individually speaking and in terms of human relations. On the other hand, permanencies and divergences between the coups constitute the film’s fundamental theme.

I would like to touch upon the observations and interpretations voiced especially in the first interview of the film, that which is conducted with Jülide¹⁸.

The film starts with the observations of two young women regarding their arrest during the period of the 1971 coup (March 12 military memorandum), transport from the Istanbul Sağmalcılar prison to the Adana prison, and the first hours that they spent there. Jülide, the witness in this first interview, describes the first impression she had there as finding herself amid an atmosphere that made her feel as though she was taking a recreation. She recounts how she was impressed by the huge tree which she saw in the prison’s courtyard, how this was where the recreations occurred, where life revolved around. She recalls this atmosphere as very different, and a lot more agreeable, when compared to the Sağmalcılar prison. She also recounts how they, that is, these two women, including herself, who were transferred there, as well as two other political prisoners, were designated by the prison’s authorities, in the political terminology of the time, as “urban guerillas”. According to the prison’s director, this was a dangerous situation; one could never foresee what this lot would do next. Therefore, some measures had to be taken.

As for which measures would be taken and how, they unfolded no later than the day after their arrival, during their first encounter with the prison’s director: the majestic tree in the courtyard would be cut down.

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Indeed, the tree was cut down; it was said that an awning would be put up in its stead. Jülide says that, of course, they knew that this was a prison, where women were incarcerated for major offenses. Still, she describes her emotions at the time in the following words: “*from that moment on, this place had become a prison, a real prison for me*”.

Is it possible to interpret the transformation of this image of a tree into that of a wall in the film, and the other subjectivities of the other persons depicted in it that resulted, in light of the “observance of objectivity” maxim? On the other hand, even if it cannot be said that this tree image was entirely tarnished by the act of cutting it down, one may well consider the latter as the first brick laid in the construction of this “wall”, encircling individuals. This depiction is also an image that carries strong figurativeness in order to grasp the language of the construction and running process of the authoritarian regime of the time; both for those who witnessed it and from the point of view of the video work which starts with this image upon which Karamustafa builds her own freedom of artistic expression and creativity.

The second video is *Meydanın Belleği (Memory of a Square)*, a work designed and exhibited as a video installation comprising two tracks/screens. One screen shows a chronological sequence consisting of images related to the Taksim Square, going back as far as before the Republic (for instance, the launch of balloons from Taksim) in the beginning, but soon concentrating on photographs and documentary footage from the aftermath of the 1920s and the second half of the 1980s.

The film ends with images of the Republic Monument; the “good” old days; the 6-7 September pogrom; demonstrations related to the Cyprus Dispute; the 27 May 1960 coup and “Bayonet” statue erected on the Square; the demonstrations against the US 6th fleet; the “Bloody Sunday” event; the 1 May 1977 demonstrations and massacre; other mass protests and expropriations in the surroundings of the Square occasioned by the opening of the Tarlabası Boulevard.

¹⁸ I am using the first name of the witness interviewed only because that is how the artist, Gülsün Karamustafa, herself preferred to proceed.

Gülsün Karamustafa, *Meydanın Belleği (Memory of a Square)*
2005, Video



The second screen shows, both parallelly and simultaneously to the film focusing on the Square, a family's private and domestic life. Even though the actresses/actors do not speak to each other, they do communicate, and we can see their psychological states: being worried, anxious, troubled, afraid or irresolute in the face of the events and developments occurring on the Square.

This work by Karamustafa, which was exhibited both in Turkey and abroad, exposes the parallelisms, and, at times, overlaps, between the relations occurring within the private, ordinary, daily course of family life and the collective burden which the image of the Square carries. However, the work's prevailing element, i.e. the antagonism between the private and the public sphere, concentrated in the image of the Square, is precisely what determines the nature of this image.

If the period in Turkey's recent political past which is reflected in *Meydanın Belleği* (*Memory of a Square*) cannot be described as the epitome of "a functioning democracy", it can still be interpreted as a situation of encounter between opponents, in the words of Chantal Mouffe.¹⁹ However, while Mouffe emphasises that such an encounter is the *sine qua non* for "agonistic struggle"²⁰, what is being etched in *Meydanın Belleği* (*Memory of a Square*) is actually rather a situation of antagonistic struggle. This is true of almost all the events reflected in the film. As a matter of fact, their effects are still felt today.

The emphasis placed by the film on the timelessness of family life and the perception of the "Square", independent from the social events that develop over it, practically assigns an unlimited value, in terms of space and time, to the imagery which it produces. *Meydanın Belleği* (*Memory of a Square*) is undoubtedly local, but, with respect to this image of the Square which the artist brings into view and reconstitutes, it may intersect and resonate with other, resembling localities. The Plaza de Mayo (Argentina), the Union Square (USA), the place de la République (France), the Wenceslas (Czechia), the Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Ukraine), the Tahrir (Egypt) and Tiananmen (The People's Republic of China) Squares are the first spaces that come to mind.

Even though neither the period encompassed by the film, nor the time of its production fit with such an interpretation, considering the current prominence of the image of the "Square", one would be entitled to consider that this video work contains such an imagery that steps over the borders of temporality, for instance all the way to the Gezi park protests. No matter how utterly different the pattern of these events may be from that of all the previous developments, the creativity of the film's montage carries the potential for such a conception.

We understand that the persons shown in interior scenes live somewhere situated close enough to the Square for them to actually see the developments that occur there and in its surroundings. And, judging from the range of emotions which their expressions show, we also understand that they are trying to see and make sense of what occurs there, outside. But we, the film's viewers, do not know what they are seeing. This choice of the artist emancipates the viewers as much as the artist herself, by pointing to a subjectivity that is at the opposite of the policy which approaches and curbs artistic freedom from a hegemonic perspective ("*observance of objectivity, intrinsically characteristic of the art*"!); the artist shares the space of the right to symbolism and develops its semantic repertoire. However, we need to elaborate on this idea.

Here, I would like to proceed with a quotation from Mouffe: "*If artistic practices can play a decisive role in the construction of new forms of subjectivity, it is because, in using resources which induce emotional responses, they are able to reach human beings at the affective level. This is where art's great power lies –in its capacity to make us see things in a different way, to make us perceive new possibilities.*"²¹

As for Jacques Rancière, while stating that "*all forms of art [including video-T.T.] can rework the frame of our perception and the dynamism of our affects. As such, they can open up new passages towards new forms of political subjectivation*"²², he also

¹⁹ Chantal Mouffe, *Dünyayı Politik Düşünmek: Agonistik Siyaset*, transl. Murat Bozluolcay (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2015), 27. / *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically* (London and New York: Verso, 2013).

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Mouffe, *Dünyayı Politik Düşünmek*, 116.

²² Jacques Rancière, *Özgürleşen Seyirci*, transl. E. Burak Şaman (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2010), 76–77. / *The Emancipated Spectator*, transl. Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2009), 82.

finds necessary to defend the view that the political impact of critical art is not guaranteed, that "there can be no anticipating that effect".²³

In conclusion, by establishing a distance through the adoption of the perspective described in the subtitle: "how it looks from the inside", *Meydan'ın Belleği* does not only include the viewer in this visual universe by means of an uncertainty, an invisibility, that which we can neither see or be certain of, but whose effects on the household we can observe. It also builds on this force to thrust the image of the Square forward in the future, granting future generations its access.

When stressing the importance for art to raise more interest on the part of the viewer, Special Rapporteur Shaheed also emphasises how important it is for the viewers to approach the artworks they face without pre-conceptions, to show the ability to establish communication with them.²⁴ We may consider this view as related to the impact of the exercise of the right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity.

In this light, bearing in mind the distinction between the didactic and the ambiguous in various conditions brought about by Nato Thompson in the chapter titled "The Didactic and the Ambiguous in the Paranoid Age" of his book²⁵, I believe that, on the issue of imagery, the artist chooses to stay in an ambiguous position in order to avoid being didactical in this film. I consider that it is possible to view this outcome as a preference in the framework of the right to artistic freedom and creativity.

Memory, Human Rights, Transitional Period (But Where to?)

In the last quarter century, memory studies have both become widespread and attained new depths, while opening up to other disciplines. We owe this situation to the post-Cold War world to a great extent. It would not be accurate for us to circumscribe this situation within the past only. Still, the period that unfolded after the Cold War, in total opposition with the politics of silence and smothering which prevailed for decades between the two blocs (East and West), has seen a major increase in efforts and demands for confrontation and settlement regarding injustices which occurred both in the distant and recent past. Among the factors which contributed this state of things, armed conflicts, especially those carried on the grounds of identity, occupy substantial space.

Additionally, the struggle for the dissemination of human rights activism and the development of institutional mechanisms to facilitate the latter, democratic transition policies (which served as incubators for numerous conceptual and institutional mechanisms), post-colonial policies (yes, still!), the migration phenomenon, becoming ever more widespread as a consequence of economic and political factors, new approaches in the field of social apprehension of gender and rights activism related to these issues, have all contributed to the political and geographic dissemination of memory studies as well. Through institutional mechanisms instated locally, nationally and internationally, there have been increased efforts to address and offer solutions to the issues and phenomena which have become visible or whose visibility is sought. Obviously, one could not allege that a homogeneous implementation exists on a global scale. Moreover, if some examples among the initiatives listed above can be deemed successful, others are still far from being so. Even in the cases commonly viewed as successful, the fragility of the post-conflict equilibrium equation continues to produce lasting tensions (e.g. Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Approaching this subject from the viewpoint of law is undoubtedly a political preference. But, at the same time, it is also a matter of human rights related to several ranges of rights. Therefore, the repertoire of rights corresponding to the title "Memory and Human Rights", requires the awareness of such a conceptual and factual span in order to be properly established.

On the other hand, its being translated into "transitional period" policies regarding the grave injustices of the past stresses the need for a democratic, plural, inclusive society to be constructed. Promising a garden of roses in a close future is not easy. What is primordial is the progress made in that direction, in that "process", and even that process itself. Not seeing this puts one at risk of falling for an obsession over "results". That is why an approach that observes a distinction between the concepts of "process"

²³ Rancière, *Özgürleşen Seyirci*, 77.

²⁴ Shaheed, *Report cited*, 9.

²⁵ Nato Thompson, *Seeing Power: Art and Activism in the 21st Century* (New York: Melville House, 2015), 36. Translated into Turkish by Erden Kosova: Nato Thompson, *İktidarı Görmek: 21. Yüzyılda Sanat ve Aktivizm* (İstanbul: KÜY, 2018).

and "outcome" is essential in a work placed under such a title as "Memory and Human Rights". In some cases, as the outcome of political preferences based on these concepts, one may run across the use of one of them against the other, or their positioning within a strategic tension configuration.

Another major difficulty arises in the form of the phenomenon of weaponisation of politics or efforts at memorialisation, initially a manner of defiance and adverse discourse.²⁶ Such a situation occurs mostly, even though on different scales and in different manners, during "conflicts" or in their aftermath.²⁷

Beatriz Sarlo prefers to close the first chapter of her book *Time Past* with a quotation from Susan Sontag. These are the words by Sontag which Sarlo relays: "*Perhaps too much value is assigned to memory, not enough to thinking.*"²⁸

Sarlo propounds that this sentence draws attention to how too much remembrance may lead to war once again; especially with reference to the Serbs and the Irish people. And she carries on: "*This book does not explore such national martial memories; it moves in another direction, examining the inviolability of certain discourses on the past. Based on what Sontag said: Understanding is more important than remembering, although it is necessary to remember to understand.*"²⁹

Yes, we cannot escape that. Still, we are compelled to take this fact into account: as Sontag appropriately diagnosed in her last book, *Regarding the Pain of Others*,³⁰ "*Citizens of modernity, consumers of violence as spectacle, adepts of proximity without risk, are schooled to be cynical about the possibility of sincerity.*"³¹

Forms of artistic expression can have a massive impact on thinking and understanding in the framework of efforts for memorialisation. When stating the above, I choose not to use the language extensively adopted in the jargon of international human rights courts or the various *mediums* produced within the mechanisms meant to safeguard human rights. The issue which I have tried to briefly emphasise cannot be considered as limited to such a superficial phrase as "art's openness to polysemy", extensively referred to among those circles in judgments on the relation between art and human rights.³²

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As emphasised in the Special Rapporteur's report, art and culture strengthen the bonds between different dimensions of individuals. They bring about opportunities to evolve and an interplay between these dimensions which is not only based on verbal language. The fundamental characteristics of a strong approach toward art and culture-based initiatives, both conscious of this context and fit to answer it, can be defined as follows: the consideration of local resources in the bid to survive in spite of destruction and downfall, the existing level of trust between people and in public institutions, and the level of threat from physical or armed violence.³³

On the other hand, the approach which consists in "*considering the framework for the compilation of works related to collective memory with reference to the concept of international crimes, that serves as a reference in the Hafıza Merkezi's works*",

²⁶ See Memorialization processes in the context of serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law: the fifth pillar of transitional justice, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, 9 July 2020, 4 and same report, 13.

²⁷ See same Report, *passim*. In his book, *On Stupidity*, bearing the same title as the conference it is based upon, pronounced in 1937, Robert Musil, with his knowledge of the prevailing political atmosphere of the time, makes the following remark: "*Of course, one cannot transpose to whole societies what happens psychologically in a real sense in the individual, and this includes mental illnesses and stupidity, but still one might speak repeatedly today of a 'social imitation of mental defects'; the examples are pretty blatant...*" Robert Musil, *Aptallık Üzerine (On Stupidity)*, transl. Ersan Üldes, Amy Spangler (Istanbul: Sel, 2018), 77.

²⁸ Beatriz Sarlo, *Geçmiş Zaman: Bellek Kültürü ve Özneye Dönüş Üzerine Bir Tartışma (Time Past: The Culture of Memory and the Subjective Turn, A Discussion)*, transl. Peral Bayaz Charum, Deniz Ekinci (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2012), 19.

²⁹ Sarlo, *loc. cit.*

³⁰ Susan Sontag, *Başkalarının Acısına Bakmak*, transl. Osman Akınhay (Istanbul: Agora Kitaplığı, 2004). / *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Picador, 2003).

³¹ *Ibid.*, 111.

³² See above, footnote (14) and court rulings mentioned there.

³³ Report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, 4 January 2018, 4. For a research casting a look at the same subject in the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, though consistent with the current standpoint, see Sabine von Schorlemer, Sylvia Maus and Felix Schmermer (Ed.), *UNESCO World Heritage and the SDGs – Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Papers of the UNESCO Chair in International Relations, Special Issue 1, Dresden, 2020.

which I referred to when trying to account for the conceptual and institutional framework of the *Hafıza Merkezi's* range of activity in the context of memory and arts, may be helpful for the effort to draw the factual lines of this issue. However, in the face of the definition of "international crimes" and of how obviously this category of crimes essentially sends a message toward an inclination for a legal and judicial basis to be provided, it is an undeniable fact that, while trying to proceed along normative lines, a number of procedural instruments will be required, which might fit that purpose or not, but are legally inevitable nonetheless. Therefore, I believe it is necessary to stress how, within the scope of memory and human rights, "truth" will always exceed the limits of "legal truth", well-defined in terms of framework and content. This issue, aside from being a linguistic and terminological question, undoubtedly bears significance as a decisive parameter regarding its content and material mode.

Here, I would like to quote from the 2018 report of the UN Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights Karima Bennouna: "*Taking a human rights approach to evaluating the contribution that socially engaged actions in the field of arts and culture can make requires further thinking about objectives and methodologies.*"³⁴

Among policies of memorialisation of victimisations in a more or less distant past, the monumental form is often prevailing. Of course, it would be impossible to claim that every single example of this approach carries aesthetic value. Furthermore, if this preference for monumental expression is deprived of the capacity to build locations and constructions met with a broad consensus, expressed through social and political transitional processes, it cannot convey any message beyond that of the goal to achieve predominance over opponents through presence and visibility in public space. Then, the antagonistic phenomenon prevails. That is why such an exhibition of figures designated as "heroes" of the past, or of glorified concepts from the past, may lead to renewed social tension and polarisation. For instance, the stance opposed against the colonial past and its enduring traces which emerged in 2020 under the slogan of *Black Lives Matter* in the USA before spreading to other countries, sets an important example against memorialisation policies of this nature.

In the sub-section titled "*Remodelling the Art as a method*" of the article "Memorialization as the Art of Memory: A Method to Analyse Memorials"³⁵, Ahenk Yilmaz proposes an examination of the main elements for an analysis conscious of this tension. In this framework, while emphasising how memory is operative on not only mental organisations but also physical constructions of memory, she states that the method proposed in her article is made up of, or can be read by dissociating it into three key components: "Image", "locus" and the relation between them ("image-locus relation").³⁶

"'Image' corresponds to the physical representation of the commemorated past in a memorialization." The second component, "locus", expresses the place or background of this representation which assumes the shape of physical reality. Unlike the mental place occupied by the art of memory³⁷, it instates a physical environment in which the viewers may position themselves. As for the "image-locus relation", "it refers to the physical interaction between representation and its place." Therefore, according to the author, image, as understood in this framework, becomes memorable in proportion of its suitability with its position, its place.³⁸

The definition effort which focuses on location within the memorialisation process rests on Yilmaz's view, which she supports with the argument she quotes from Edward S. Casey³⁹, that "*memory is naturally place-oriented or at least place-supported.*"⁴⁰ Accordingly, "locus" can be examined in three phases: "*determination*", i.e. the identification of the limits of a field and of a particular remembrance site; "*detachment*", i.e. the identification of the visible and invisible limits of the locus with regards to the perception of individuals, and "*guidance*", i.e. the examination of the locus with

³⁴ See Report cited in the previous footnote, 5.

³⁵ Ahenk Yilmaz, "Memorialization as the Art of Memory: A Method to Analyse Memorials," *METU Journal of the Faculty of Architecture* (June 2010): 272.

³⁶ *Loc. cit.*

³⁷ See Frances A. Yates, *Hafıza Sanatı*, transl. Ayşe Deniz Temiz (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2020). / *The Art of Memory* (London: Routledge, 2010).

³⁸ Yilmaz, *Memorialization*, 272.

³⁹ See Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) quoted by Yilmaz, *Memorialization*, 274.

⁴⁰ *Loc. cit.*

regards to its suitability for the individuals' movements.⁴¹ Within the framework of this conceptualisation, in the formation of the visible and invisible frontiers of the locus, it is possible to contribute to the memorialisation process, in other words, to help establish the "image-locus relation" insofar as the ties between the locus and the external environment are conceived in such a way that prevents their divergence, or even their parting from memory.

Although it is based on a study carried out in the field of architecture, I believe that Yilmaz's analysis, which I have tried to summarise above, carries meaningful value for the formation processes of memorialisation in relation to space. Noteworthy are here the author's definition of "*remodelling of the art*" as a parameter of transitional justice above all, but also the fact that this, far from meaning the instrumentalisation of art, points to a perspective that grounds the bond between "Memory and Arts" within the framework of space-oriented artworks.

I would like to go back to the field of human rights law and touch upon the view defended by the UN Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur in the field of Cultural Rights in her report. In my opinion, the selection/archive compilation prepared by the *Hafıza Merkezi* can accurately be analysed within this context, without referring to technical specifications of "archiving" as a priority at that stage.

When touching upon the role played by artists in the processes of memorialisation, Shaheed draws attention to the importance of their capacity to shed light on the past and enhance the people's ability to envision the other.⁴² This may have exerted an important influence, especially in the scope of a critical analysis of historic, political, social, etc. discourses. Additionally, this artistic language and contribution may be considered as more concrete actions for the purpose of raising awareness of the depth, scope and impacts of rights violations, and of granting visibility to their victims, when compared with such data as "cold" statistics and reports.⁴³

It now seems possible, in the section titled *Memory, Human Rights, Transitional Period* of this article, to make a comment on this title, by taking into consideration the report by another Special Rapporteur within the UN Human Rights Council, constituting yet another rights protection mechanism.

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This report, drafted by Fabián Salvioli, the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Guarantees of Non-Recurrence, is titled "Memorialization processes in the context of serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law: the fifth pillar of transitional justice".⁴⁴ In the chapter titled "*Memory as a battlefield*", the Special Rapporteur Salvioli stresses how the concept of memorialisation's framework is constituted by the conjunction of different views, values and discourses, and can take many forms.

The parameter upon which the Special Rapporteur bases the views expressed in this chapter is the creation of "*the conditions for a debate within society on the causes and consequences of past crimes and violence*"⁴⁵ in order to establish "*a dialogic truth*", that is, the proper use of memory. Both the existence of this debate, and the possibility for different discourses and interpretations regarding a violent past to be heard, which it allows for by keeping a distance from a dangerous relativity and homogeneous thinking, bear much importance with regards to the goal of social reconstruction.⁴⁶

On the other hand, another issue, which I mentioned above, again with reference to the same Report, is being addressed and placed much emphasis on in the latter. It consists in the diagnosis of the impossibility for truth commissions and courts to

⁴¹ Yilmaz, *Memorialization*, 274–275.

⁴² Report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Farida Shaheed – Memorialization processes, 23 January 2014, 15.

⁴³ *Loc. cit.*

⁴⁴ Memorialization processes in the context of serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law: the fifth pillar of transitional justice, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, 9 July 2020. As appears from the title of this Report, what is being defined here as a "fifth pillar", in the framework of transitional justice, is a matter related to "memorialization processes in the context of serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law". Given the significance of forms of artistic expression in that regard, one may consider this fifth pillar to be related with the artistic field. The other four pillars are: the right to access the truth, the right to access to justice, reparation, and guarantees of non-recurrence.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁶ *Loc. cit.*

isolate themselves from society's other mechanisms in the face of this "toxic political culture". Justice alone, like the absence of justice, is not sufficient for the requirements of memory. That is why "transitional justice processes" must move away from a purely technocratic approach and forge bonds with civil society.⁴⁷

This is why, in the recent past, at the end of the Second World War, in 1945, the trial of and judgments pronounced regarding Nazi major war criminals by the International Military Tribunal formed in Nuremberg, were, in their own context, the beginning of a "process" rather than an "outcome" in and of themselves. This fact can be verified in the social "re"construction policies implemented until today in Germany.

I have studied above and tried to establish a conceptual foundation based on observations and interpretations that can be viewed as reinforcement of international human rights law. Thus, in the framework of the Memory and Arts project, I aim to support current art practices, these artistic forms and an approach which views their diversity as empowering regarding the expression and consideration of various situations of injustice from a more or less distant past on a collective scale.

Without rejecting it on a political ground, I cannot say that I view any effort for pioneering or opening up horizons in this field with blunt optimism. I have already assessed the grounds for this point of view in the first sub-section of this article, in articulation with excerpts from the Turkish Constitution. Of course, this issue depends on the degree of action which every artist as individuals invest in their artistic language, as much as on its social dimension. Still, I would like to draw a conclusion by touching upon this individual aspect of the question, and drawing attention on new, current definitions in the contexts of law, art, human rights and memory.

*"What can be the role of artistic and cultural practices in the hegemonic struggle? In the current stage of post-fordist capitalism, the cultural terrain occupies a strategic position because the production of affects plays an increasingly important role. Being vital to the process of capitalist valorization, this terrain should constitute a crucial site of intervention for counter-hegemonic practices."*⁴⁸

This quotation from Chantal Mouffe bears significance from the standpoint of artistic and cultural practices, as much as it does in a sense that is related to the specific properties of democratic politics. This in turn can be designated as the principle of "plurality", or in a more politico-legal way and framework. Rather than the dismissal of passions and emotions outside of the realm of public life, and their jostle into the private sphere, Mouffe talks about the "sublimation" of "those passions by mobilizing them towards democratic designs, by creating collective forms of identification around democratic objectives".⁴⁹

This remark is not based on the presumption of an optimistic expectation. Rather, it is linked to the observation of the tendency to substitute aesthetic with moral values and to present this as though it were the outcome of political values. It is also rooted in the thesis that states that artists "can help subvert the existing configuration of power by constructing new practices and new subjectivities".⁵⁰

We may strengthen this interpretation by supporting it with Rancière's analysis in reference to Aristotle. This analysis is based on the distinction between "voice" and "speech". "Man, said Aristotle, is political because he possesses speech, a capacity to place the just and the unjust in common, whereas all the animal has is a voice to signal pleasure and pain. But the whole question, then, is to know who possesses speech and who merely possesses voice."⁵¹

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁸ Mouffe, *Dünyayı Politik Düşünmek*, 16.

⁴⁹ Mouffe, *Dünyayı Politik Düşünmek*, 29.

⁵⁰ Mouffe, *Dünyayı Politik Düşünmek*, 124. In my opinion, while stating that "'Fiction' [...] is not a term that designates the imaginary as opposed to the real; it involves the re-framing of the 'real', or the framing of a dissensus. Fiction is a way of changing existing modes of sensory presentations and forms of enunciation; of varying frames, scales and rhythms; and of building new relationships between reality and appearance, the individual and the collective" in his analysis of "fiction", Rancière opens the way for such an expansion. Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: Politik ve Estetik Üzerine*, transl. Mustafa Yalçınkaya (Istanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2020), 139-140. / *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, transl. Steven Corcoran (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010).

⁵¹ Jacques Rancière, *Estetiğin Huzursuzluğu: Sanat Rejimi ve Politika (Aesthetics and its Discontents)*, transl. Aziz Ufuk Kılıç (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012), 28. Also see Judith Butler, *Savaş Tertipleri: Hangi Hayatların Yası Tutulur? (Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?)*, transl. Şeyda Öztürk (Istanbul: YKY, 2015). Above all the introductory chapter titled "Precarious Life, Grievable Life" and the concept of "differential distribution of precariousness and grievability".

As Rancière indicates, the fundamental question does not only consist in the identification of a difference between humans and animals. If the political occurs with the existence of "common speech", the configuration of this location, in Rancière's words, is its reshaping as a distribution of the sensible (*partage du sensible*). For instance, the "making visible of what is invisible", the making audible of the words of that which, of those who can only have a "voice" but are, or were, deprived of the power, the mastery of "speech".⁵²

This conceptual foundation is the materialisation of a political stance defined in the previous pages, especially from the perspective of international human rights standards, as art's and artists' "right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity", whose content and operation range encompass past –and of course present– situations of injustice and rights violations.

Can such an artistic/political stance be considered an act of disobedience? Despite the variations according to the political environment where it unfolds, the main framework of this definition may be viewed as significant within the scope of the right which I have touched upon earlier. However, as I analysed in the first sub-section of this article, contradictions arise within the legal framework of the right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity between "artistic creativity" and "strict observance of objectivity in art", "the right to disseminate art" and the prohibition to use "the right to disseminate for the purpose of changing either one of the first three articles of the Constitution". This seems to induce suspicion and restlessness on the part of hegemonic powers, especially towards the "creativity" element and component of this freedom.⁵³

At times, we may come across situations that do not only qualify as "a freedom being exercised", but are reminiscent of what was designated in ancient Greek thought as *parrhesia*, the conceptual framework of which I have touched upon in the paragraphs above.⁵⁴

Briefly epitomised from Michel Foucault, the person who uses *parrhesia*, that is, the *parrhesiastes*, is expected to possess particular characteristics, but is also playing a dangerous "game". Because between a person who speaks and a person who is being spoken to, with regards to a profile of parties that befits this definition, there must be an unequal relation of power. The side that accepts to take that risk, i.e. the *parrhesiastes*, assumes the responsibility of establishing a dialogue where they tell a truth candidly, in a critical tone, being conscious that it is their task to do so, to the (always) stronger side. That person is also conscious that this may eventually place their life at risk.⁵⁵

In the framework of "Memory and Arts", I wished to mention this quotation and analysis in order not to overlook this concept, which has been the subject of much discussion amid the art milieu regarding the specific political relation between the status of the artist and the forms of artistic expression. If such an analysis may contain room for further deepening in terms of conceptual framework, focusing on an approach where international developments related to human rights and updated legal standards are key bears primordial importance.

I have touched upon the way in which the right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity encompasses several ranges of rights in the introductory paragraph of this article. Overall, however true the connectivity between this right and other ranges of rights may be, the medium which has been the subject of an analysis oriented on the concepts of "artistic expression" and "creativity" and a rigorous watch for the protection of rights, has, since 2009, been enhanced at the hands of one of the rights protection mechanisms within the UN Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur

⁵² Rancière, *Estetiğin Huzursuzluğu*, 29.

⁵³ Regarding this issue, see above, the first sub-section of this article.

⁵⁴ Regarding this question, see Michel Foucault, *Hakikat Cesareti: Kendinin ve Başkalarının Yönetimi II (The Courage of Truth: The Government of Self and Others – Lectures at the Collège de France 1984)*, transl. Adem Beyaz (Istanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2018) and Michel Foucault, *Doğruyu Söylemek*, transl. Kerem Eksen (Istanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2005). / *Fearless Speech*, ed. Joseph Pearson (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001), 9 and following.

⁵⁵ Among current artistic practices, some defend the views, or trigger debate about the thesis that art intrinsically bear such a role, either through their artistic activities or in conceptual terms. For instance: Süreyya Evren and Erden Kosova, "Parrhesia edimi ve sanatta siyasal olan (The practice of parrhesia and what is political in art)," *art-ist*, year: 3, issue: 5 (November 2006): 1-20; Burak Delier, "Sanat Bir Parrhesia Arzusu Değilse Nedir? (What is Art if not a Desire for Parrhesia?)," *Sanat Dünyasının Senaryoları (Scenarios of the Art World)* (Istanbul: KÜY, 2016), 75-85.

in the field of cultural rights, and these works been carried out under different designations. I believe it is necessary to stress this, as opposed to the understanding and approach that focuses plainly on "freedom of expression" only.

One topic which the current Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Karima Bennoune took great care to include in her works in the year 2020 were "Cultural Rights Defenders". To be fair, this topic was not absent from the previous Rapporteur's spectrum of actions, but this time, the identification of a range of rights by means of thematic reports devoted to this question constitutes a valuable effort. And these works could serve as a basis for a qualification regarding the artists who are and will be part of the selection/archive compiled in the framework of the "Memory and Arts" project, and the *Hafiza Merkezi* as well.

What I am trying to emphasise is the "Defense of Cultural Rights". As is now common knowledge, "Human Rights Defenders" (or Human Rights Activism) have come to constitute a well-defined and protected independent range of rights with regards to international standards of human rights law. So much so that a Declaration, compiling and regulating the standards regarding this range of rights, has been in effect amid the UN for more than 20 years⁵⁶, and that one of the Special Rapporteur mechanisms of the UN Human Rights Council is devoted to this question.⁵⁷

Special Rapporteur Bennoune asks: "*Who/What is a Cultural Rights Defender?*" in her speech titled "Defending the Right to Freedom of Artistic Expression"⁵⁸ and she answers: "*the concept of "cultural rights defender" [...] is a term I use to refer to human rights defenders who defend cultural rights, including artistic freedom, in accordance with international standards.*"⁵⁹

Defense of cultural rights is growing into an independent range of rights protection within the scope of human rights protection. It should be stressed that the group designated as "defenders" in that field is not made up of artists only. It is possible to define a personal and institutional framework broader than only artists, inasmuch as it befits the standards established in the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.⁶⁰

Accordingly, from the overall perspective of the exercise and protection of rights, the act of sharing artworks (or any given stage of their development for that matter, including preparation) related to rights confiscations, grave injustices and violations –in the language of current artistic practises– in any way with the public, represents an area that must undoubtedly be defined and protected within the scope of human rights standards.

The current developments regarding rights protection require that we conceptualise the emergence of new fields of rights protection and their generalisation. The Memory and Arts project may carry such a signification and function to constitute a medium which is not limited to having only the ability to "voice", but will pave the way for "speaking up" while being aware of the interaction between arts and politics.

⁵⁶ Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly (53/144), 8 March 1999.

⁵⁷ Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.

⁵⁸ "Defending the Right to Freedom of Artistic Expression", K. Bennoune, Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights (*Art-at-risk conference*, Zürich, Switzerland, February 28 2020).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

In her speech, Special Rapporteur Bennoune put particular emphasis on the risks and threats faced by cultural rights defenders throughout the world, and on how many among them were being detained on arbitrary grounds. In this context, along with other specific cases, she indicated how devastated she was at witnessing the liberation of Osman Kavala on 18 February 2020, after being detained since 2017, immediately followed by another arrest: "*I was dismayed by the cruel re-arrest of cultural rights defender Osman Kavala in Turkey on February 18.*" *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁰ Regarding this issue, see "Cultural rights defenders," Report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, 20 January 2020.

Histories of Ongoing Violence: Complicity and Implication

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**Banu
Karaca**

The collection of works that deal with atrocities and human rights abuses in Turkey that the Truth Justice Memory Centre (*Hakikat Adalet Hafıza Merkezi*, or short: *Hafıza Merkezi*) has brought together is still coming into being. Looking through the selection that has been thus far assembled, one comes across keywords that have become shorthand references for the history of violence in Turkey. To name but a few: the Armenian genocide, "enforced disappearances," "political murders" by unknown assailants, *coup d'états* (of different forms and accompanied by different dates), the "Saturday Mothers", "the displacement and destruction of villages", massacres and pogroms, some of which are remembered by locations and sites – the Ankara Train station, Maraş, Sivas, Adana, the Bilge Village, Dersim, Kızıldere, Zilan–, and the assassination of journalists –among them Musa Anter and Hrant Dink. Individually and collectively they stand in for unfaced pasts, for missing accountability, for loss, and histories both known and yet to be written.

I have been working on and with images on war and political violence for quite some time. The selection that the *Hafıza Merkezi* has put together has been especially challenging, although I have been following many of the images and performances assembled in their selection for years. Many of them seem like old acquaintances, even friends, as I have been able to accompany in different incarnations, iterations and various sites of display. Part of this challenge, it seems to me, was that the meetings of our working groups coincided with the war in Nagorno-Karabagh, a war waged on the side of Azerbaijan with the support of Turkey. What does it mean to think about artworks that contend with state violence under the conditions of war? News of a ceasefire in early November 2020 were followed by reports of grave human rights violations on the part of Azerbaijan: the execution of prisoners of war was accompanied by the destruction and plunder of Armenian cultural sites. At times, this plunder entailed efforts to claim that Armenian places of worship were actually the heritage of others. The latest link in a chain of a history of ongoing violence, the looting, misattribution of Armenian cultural artefacts and the destruction of Armenian cultural life followed an all too familiar script, mirroring the cultural and artistic erasures in the aftermath of the Armenian genocide.

A few years ago, when, against human rights conventions, migrant children were separated from their parents and put in cages at the U.S.-Mexican border and when bombs steered by drones continued to mark targets that killed civilians, among them often children, in Iraq; Iranian American poet Kaveh Akbar took to Twitter

to ask what he called a "daily question: "What does it mean to be a poet working in a language, a medium, a nation, that can produce this?" Indeed, what does it mean to create art in a "language" that is able to produce this much violence, openly, and constantly? This is of course a question that could be asked in the contexts of most nation-states, perhaps all of them. This question echoed in my mind while perusing –or trying to peruse– the archive: what does it mean to create art in "Turkish" not as a language but as a "key" or a national frame that advertently or inadvertently shapes the conditions of producing art, its circulation and perception?

A second issue that echoed in my excursions into the developing archive, was one that I have often encountered in my research –that of art from Turkey "being political". On the one hand, this notion that art from Turkey is primarily political bears orientalist inflections. It is often used to deny such artistic expressions first and foremost aesthetic considerations. Framed as a lack, it has long been ascribed to those who have been geographically and otherwise at the peripheries of the global art world, those of the "non-West".¹ Yet, formations of the political in artistic production from Turkey can also be read quite differently, by drawing on Hannah Feldman's insightful study *From a Nation Torn: Decolonizing Art and Representation in France*.² Covering the period between 1945–1962, Feldman shows how what is generally referred to as "postwar" French modernism was actually intensely informed by France's wars –by violence and terror– in the decolonising arena, particularly the war in Algeria. Feldman's intervention shows that the Eurocentric designation of postwar not only served to deflect French state violence by projecting it away from the European continent. As an art historical periodisation, it also obscured both the actual conditions under which art was produced during that very period and the kind of knowledge this art produced in return. Following Feldman, I would argue that in the case of Turkey, it is not possible to conceive a period or politics of post-war or post-violence. Unfaced and unaddressed, episodes of violence continue to shape everyday life, in ways both structural and eruptive, so much so that they foreclose even the fantasy of art as devoid of or exempt from politics. As such the conditions of ongoing violence have shaped artistic production from Turkey, its circulation, and perception, and continue to do so.

This also reverberated when coming across the works by Halil Altındere that are included in the current selection by the *Hafıza Merkezi*. Especially in the course of the 2000s Altındere's work was often categorised as "political". In an interview we conducted in 2007, he noted

¹ For the history of these asymmetries and how they manifest in the present, see Sally Price, *Paris Primitive: Jacques Chirac's Museum on the Quai Branly* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), and Banu Karaca, *The National Frame: Art and State Violence in Turkey and Germany* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2021).

² Hannah Feldman, *From a Nation Torn: Decolonizing Art and Representation in France, 1945–1962* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

that everyday life and its reflections were at the centre of his artistic practice. He understood the label "political" that was often attributed to both his own works and his curatorial endeavours as a way to describe his works as "narrative", sometimes even "coarse" or "vulgar" and "devoid of metaphor" or abstraction. Noting that these claims were frequently levelled against him, he argued that it was important for him that his artworks reach audiences, that viewers can enter a dialogue with the works. To centre everyday life for him meant that his works were rooted in the "political, societal, economic, religious and gender relations" out of which they emerged. In the context of the *Hafıza Merkezi's* archival assemblage, Halil Altındere's works offer an occasion to reveal, analyse, understand and transform the ways in which social forgetting *and* remembering are produced. One of the works that forcefully expresses the ways in which political memory and the everyday intersect is Altındere's *Kayıplar Ülkesine Hoşgeldiniz (Welcome to the Land of the Lost, 1998)*. It consists of postal stamps showing images of the politically disappeared, held up³ every week by the Saturday Mothers/People who demand justice for their lost loved ones (Figure 1). Among them is Hasan Ocak, who, in 1995, was abducted by security forces, tortured and killed. By intervening in the form of the state-issued, commemorative stamp that serves to codify history, Altındere works against the triumphalist narrative of the nation-state. Asking the viewer to remember differently, the stamps also raise the question of who one might be able to address, to reach if one were to remember those lost, that is taken out of our midst by state violence.



Halil Altındere, *Kayıplar Ülkesine Hoşgeldiniz (Welcome to the Land of the Lost)* 1998, Installation (stamp series)

³ Hatice Bozkurt and Özlem Kaya, "Holding Up the Photograph:" Experiences of the Women Whose Husbands were Forcibly Disappeared (Istanbul: Hafıza Merkezi, 2014). <https://hakikatadalethafiza.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Holding-Up-the-Photograph.pdf>.

Dispossession and Its Reverberations

In the remainder of this essay, I want to concentrate on the questions of complicity and implication that shape the politics of remembering and forgetting in Turkey. Located along the continuum between perpetrator, bystander and beneficiary, these relationships are both shaped by ongoing violence and have made this violence possible. Together with the politics of denial (see Tataryan in this volume) and impunity, both central to the advocacy work of the *Hafıza Merkezi* since its inception, complicity and implication in state violence have shaped the art world to an extent that still needs to be explored. One site at which the entanglement of state violence and the art world (including the knowledge production on art) can be anchored is the practice of dispossession that has accompanied the foundation of the Republic of Turkey and its periodic consolidation, beginning with the Armenian genocide (1915–1917).

Dispossession was central to the violence that enabled the transition from a multi-ethnic and multi-religious empire to a homogeneously envisioned nation-state and its periodic consolidation.⁴ Such processes encompassed confiscation and looting, and sometimes sales under duress and would fundamentally change property relations in –what is today– Turkey; they also made majorities and minorities within the modern nation-state form.⁵ It is important to remember that artworks, antiques and other cultural assets (e.g. religious artifacts) were part of the twin process of state violence and dispossession, for instance in the course of the Armenian genocide. As Armenians, Greek-Orthodox *Rum*, Assyrians and other Christians were murdered or deported, their belongings –if not subject to looting– were confiscated by the “Abandoned Property Commission” (*Emvâl-i Metruke Komisyonu*) and the “Liquidation Commission” (*Tasfiye Komisyonu*) ostensibly to be returned to them at their new location.⁶ Another landmark in what is often called the “Turkification of the economy,” that is the transfer of property and capital from subaltern groups to the state or those who were designated as its “proper citizens,” is the 1942 wealth tax. Officially a measure to curtail war time profiteering and filling the state deficit incurred in the course of the Second World War, this one-time

tax targeted primarily non-Muslims.⁷ In this case, dispossession entailed confiscations or auctions of business properties and private belongings, including artworks and antiques along with everyday household items in order to pay the state-mandated exorbitant levy.⁸ As historian Ayhan Aktar so aptly shows, newspapers of the time were filled with announcements of such auctions that were accompanied by triumphalist headlines on the cover page insinuating that somehow this kind of dispossession was a return of property to its “rightful owners” rather than state-led discrimination.⁹ In the aftermath of the wealth tax a considerable part of the Jewish and *Rum* populations emigrated from the country but violence and persecution did not end here, nor did the Turkification of the economy. The pogrom of 6–7 September 1955 which targeted non-Muslim places of worship, businesses, and homes in a covert state-led organisation made to look like a spontaneous “protest” against a purported bombing of Mustafa Kemal’s birth house in Thessaloniki. Witnesses of the days that followed the pillaging and looting of these homes, businesses, and places of worship, recount how “booty” gained by this violence was sold in impromptu street sales. The exiling of around 13,000 Greek-Orthodox citizens, mostly from Istanbul in 1964 presented another landmark in state-led dispossession as those forced to leave were only allowed to take 20 kilos of luggage and 20 dollars with them. What happened to their remaining belongings is largely unknown today, but traces can always be found. All of these events are part of an unfaced history of violence. For Theodor Adorno facing the past meant not only accounting for it, or taking responsibility, but addressing the very conditions that had made past violence possible.¹⁰ Such an engagement entails transforming the present in a manner that prevents history from repeating itself.

As I indicated above, dispossession is both a condition for certain groups to become minorities and a consequence of the very distinction between minorities and majorities. As such, dispossession not only marks the loss of property, of things and artworks, and rights but also their redistribution. Beyond the dichotomy of victim and perpetrator, this redistribution creates networks of beneficiaries and different forms of complicity and implication that –like the vio-

⁴ See Taner Akçam, *Young Turks' Crime Against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), and Barış Ünlü, *Türkülük Sözleşmesi; Oluşumu, İşleyişi ve Krizi (Turkishness Contract: Its Formation, Mechanism and Crisis)* (Ankara: DİPNOT, 2017).

⁵ See Gyan Pandey, *Routine Violence. Nations, Fragments, Histories* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

⁶ Bedross Der Matossian, “The Taboo within the Taboo: The Fate of the ‘Armenian Capital’ in the End of the Ottoman Empire,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, <https://ejts.revues.org/4411>, 2011: 3. See also Uğur Ümit Üngör and Mehmet Polatel, *Confiscation and Destruction. The Young Turk Seizure of Armenian Property* (London: Continuum, 2011), and Mehmet Polatel, Nora Mildanoğlu, Özgür Leman Eren and Mehmet Atılgan, *2012 Beyannamesi: İstanbul Ermeni Vakıflarının El Konan Mülkleri* (Istanbul: Hrant Dink Vakfı, 2012).

⁷ Ayhan Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi ve “Türkleştirme” Politikaları (Wealth Tax and “Turkification” Policies)* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000).

⁸ See Rifat N. Balı, *Varlık Vergisi: Hatıralar-Tanıklıklar (Wealth Tax: Memories-Testimonies)* (Istanbul: Libra, 2012).

⁹ Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi*, 232 and 235.

¹⁰ Theodor W. Adorno, “Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit” In *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft II*, 555–72 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997).

lence they are rooted in- is constantly disavowed.¹¹ Within these networks, citizenship –in the form of “Turkishness”- is constructed as privilege that is predicated on forgetting. It is also in this way, through violence and dispossession and its disavowal that the material conditions of forgetting are forged, in everyday public discourse as well as in knowledge production.¹² Although this is often obscured in the knowledge production on art, dispossession, be it through war, colonialism, genocidal or structural violence is actually constitutive for the art world, its institutions and the capital that sustains the art world, and hence also frames the perception of art.

Complicity and Implication

Some of the reverberations of the twin processes of state violence and dispossession and the material and cultural conditions they create, how they shape the possibilities and limitations of remembering and forgetting are taken up by artist Dilek Winchester in her ongoing series *Okumak ve Yazmak Üzerine (On Reading and Writing, 2007-)*. Turning to the daily practices of literacy, Winchester lays bare a set of ruptures and obscurations engendered by the republican switch to the Latin alphabet in 1928. Within the series, the work *İlk 3 Türkçe Roman (3 First Turkish Novels, 2009)* brings together three literary works of the 19th century (Figure 2): Vartan Pasha's *Akabi Hikâyesi (Akabi's Story, 1851)*, Evangelinos Misailidis' *Seyreyle Dünyayı (Behold the World, 1871)* and Şemsettin Sami's *Taaşuk-ı Talat ve Fitnat (The Love between Talat and Fitnat, 1875)*. All of them are phonetically written in Turkish yet they utilise Armenian, Greek and Ottoman alphabets respectively. Winchester not merely asks which of the three should be counted as the first “Turkish” novel but emphasises that these different practices of literacy existed alongside each other not so long ago. With the establishment of the Republic of Turkey they were not simply forgotten but became delegitimised ways of reading, writing (and speaking) and hence of relating to the world and one another. In her practice, Winchester traces and retraces the trajectories of the different languages and alphabets that once belonged to –what is today- Turkey, often by transcribing the texts letter by letter, as in the case of the abovementioned novels, thus learning to write and read anew.

The work *Blackboards (2013)* from the same series features texts written in Arabic, Greek and Armenian alphabets (Figure 3). As the sound recording that accompanies each blackboard reveals, the texts are once again phonetically in Turkish. Each of them features a childhood memory, in which the protagonist becomes aware that their language is not shared by the majority of the society, a moment in which they see themselves as “other”: the other kids at school do not have a “secret language” they only speak at home, a friend from the neighbourhood goes to a different school where they learn another language and alphabet, a message between parents that cannot be deciphered because it is not written with Latin letters. Winchester decided to have the blackboards read by a text-to-speech software. The alienating effect, she says, serves to underline how these practices of literacy have been severed from the community of voices they once belonged to, from their geography and from accounts of history. While these communities still struggle and –despite all hardships and discrimination- strive, most viewers are left with the question of why they are unable to read the blackboards unassisted despite them being in “Turkish.”

Winchester's works go beyond the mere evidencing of the destructive force that is expressed by the shorthand “Turkification.” They break through the violently constructed modes of forgetting of the pluralistic ways of expression established through literal and linguistic dispossession. This forgetting is not solely an erasure of what once was, a dropping out of view, but constructs such plurality as an impossibility in the past, present and future. At the same time, Winchester's series reveals how daily practices such as reading and writing in the national register are complicit in processes of state violence and dispossession and how they continue to produce implication. Revealing this implication also holds the potential to divest from “Turkishness” and its daily reproduction.

An increasing number of studies have been expanding on conceptions of victim and perpetrator, especially by focusing on the subject positions of complicity, of the beneficiary, and of implication. Literary scholar Debarati Sanyal notes that complicity, while

¹¹ Mahmood Mamdani, “Beyond Nuremberg: The Historical Significance of the Post-apartheid Transition in South Africa,” *Politics & Society* 43/1 (2015): 61–88.

¹² For a more detailed discussion of this dynamic and its impact on art historical knowledge making, see Banu Karaca “Bir Tuhaf Mülkiyet: Türkiye’de Sanat ve Mülksüzleştirme (A Strange Ownership: Art and Dispossession in Turkey),” *Ayrıntı Dergi* 32 (Fall 2019): 82–87.



Dilek Winchester, *İlk 3 Türkçe Roman*
(3 First Novels in Turkish)
2009, Installation



Dilek Winchester, *Okumak ve Yazmak Üzerine*
(On Reading and Writing)
2007, Installation

often used to denote implication in a crime, etymologically can also mean understanding or intimacy, especially in its French usage of *complicité*. *Complicare* in Latin, she notes, also means to “fold into each” other. Following Sanyal one could argue that official language, and connectedly, daily practices of literacy are constantly folded into the national frame and its history of violence (and dispossession), that they invite investments into the official politics of forgetting. These kinds of investments also animate the historian Michael Rothberg’s thinking on implication as a mode of responsibility that is not captured by legal frameworks which—at least potentially—adjudicate complicity.¹³

How can and does art take on responsibility, that is, how does art respond to the conditions of ongoing violence, face its own entan-

gements in it? Philosopher Jacques Rancière proposes that art—and aesthetic practices more generally—carry within them the capacity to redistribute the sensible, meanings and the ways in which we relate to one another towards more just futures. Rothberg suggests that memory has a vital part to play in the struggles against different forms of implication.¹⁴ To claim the emancipatory power of art means to struggle against the conditions of the production, circulation and presentation of art that have been shaped by violence and dispossession. The works that the *Hafıza Merkezi* has begun to assemble provide a resource for such a struggle against both ongoing violence and different forms of implication which it produces through the work of memory. Yet, it can only be a beginning in telling the stories of art from Turkey and how they contend with the conditions under which they

¹³ Michael Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), 7.

¹⁴ Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject*.

have emerged. Like all archival endeavours, it will have to face questions of scope and selection, the trappings of reduction that categorisations of artworks bring, and existing art historical narratives and the ones it (in)advertently (re)creates, that is with the implicit and explicit taxonomies that it produces and reproduces. And it will have to do so, it seems, –at least for now– under the conditions of ongoing violence, of war, and human rights violations that delimit ways of facing the past. The work that the *Hafiza Merkezi* pursues also entails a call to remember differently as we struggle for justice. The archive is an invitation to join and accompany this open-ended struggle. Such struggles and building the alliances that are necessary for them, just like attempting to begin to respond adequately can seem daunting especially in moments in which structural violence spills over into more direct and immediate violence, in moments that are especially dark. In such moments, I remember a conversation between feminist philosopher and prison abolitionist Angela Davis and Yuri Kochiyama (1921–2014) that is captured in the documentary *Mountains That Take Wing* (2009).¹⁵ Having dedicated her life to revolutionary politics, and feminist and human rights struggles, Kochiyama, then in her 80s, contemplates all the organising against injustice that still needs to be done. She asks Davis: “So, where do you think it has to begin?” Davis answers: “I think it begins wherever you are.”

We are here. And it is from here that we begin.

¹⁵ *Mountains That Take Wing – Angela Davis and Yuri Kochiyama: A Conversation on Life, Struggles & Liberation*, directed by C.A. Griffith & H.L.T. Quan (2009).



An Essay on the Representation of Violence and the Possibility of Confrontation¹ with the Past

**Nora
Tataryan**

¹ Translator's note: For lack of a better term, the original notion covering, in Turkish, a range of meanings encompassing facing, coming to terms with, acknowledging and confronting (... understand: truth, the past etc.).

How is state violence represented in contemporary artworks in Turkey? Is the artistic representation of violence possible? Does art carry such a responsibility as to represent violence? If it does, may this responsibility be conceived as a field of resistance? Such were the questions that popped into my mind when I heard that the *Hafıza Merkezi* had invited a group of researchers, including myself, to share their views on a selection/archive of artworks related to state violence. Indeed, while these categories may hinder different ways of thinking provided by art and aesthetics, they offer us a particularly well-suited corpus to analyse the tradition of violence in Turkey.

Within the framework of this essay, in light of the abovementioned questions, I will question the extent to which representation as a praxis can be a violent act per se, and that to which it reproduces the very language it rejects. In other words, I will analyse the conceptual repertoire which we come across when we address the questions of state violence and representation from an aesthetic perspective. Relying on a few specific examples, I will thus question how artworks conceived as a field of recognition can be articulated with the notions of partaking and responsibility.

The fact that artists who live in this geography relate to state violence through their works is by no means surprising. When we remember that the past addressed here still awaits recognition, it becomes easier to understand why the artistic field questions the meaning of these injustices, seeks answers to them and conceives artworks as a means to achieve facing the past. However, the time when we discuss these topics bears at least as much importance as the content of the discussion. First, the artworks in question –whether they were produced for this purpose or not– belong to a field: that of the art industry. Furthermore, both the artworks and the context discussed here are part of a broader context: that of a regime of denial. Not only did the state fail to produce satisfying apologies for either massacres, murders by unknown perpetrators, genocides or other violent practices, it continues to produce new forms of violence. Amid this deadlock, what could art –or the artworks included in this selection/archive– accomplish, which political science, anthropology, history or other disciplines cannot? What is there to learn from the aesthetic approach in terms of methodology?

As we examine works dealing with state violence, we come across a tension between historical truth and artistic truth. If we depict aesthetics as the field of a knowledge that is sensed, felt, not accessible through the reason, we may propound that such a tension is indeed of an aesthetic nature. The nature of artistic truth is a problem that has occupied the history of philosophy for centuries. Heidegger's discussion of the origin of the work of art was a milestone in this discussion: addressing together the origin of the work of art and the source of being, Heidegger asserts that art produces a new regime of truth rather than a mere representation.² In a similar way, when considering the *Hafıza Merkezi's* selection/archive, I think that focusing on the capacity of art to represent is less relevant than questioning the potential effects of the crises that art may trigger in given regimes of truth. Indeed, art's creative added value consists in provoking a crisis of the regime of truth implemented by state violence, rather than in attesting that historic events actually took place. One of the few thinkers who defined such a potentiality as the foundational component of their philosophy is Jacques Rancière. The philosopher imagines a society where –contrarily to the society of police– subjects are granted the right to conflict with themselves and the capacity to create a rupture within given regimes of truth is equally distributed among them.³ In this regard, no image may exist on its own, each one is integrated in a certain representational regime, but this very order indicates a structure that can always be cracked open from the inside, whose parts can always be reconfigured in such a way that produces new meanings. This operation of rupture is named *dissensus*⁴ by Rancière. Within such a disposition, the artist's role becomes to weave together a new sensory fabric to allow for this disconnection to occur.⁵

Considered in the light of artworks relating to state violence, this approach leads us to the following observation: if we consider the potential of these artistic productions to create a dissensus, it seems that the more they pull away from the claim of representation, the closer they come to indicating the acuity of the problem. If we remember once more that these works are caught within a regime of denial, we may interpret such an approach as the operation of housing/sheltering the relevant historic material in a different way, of placing it in a different semantic pool than that which it would normally belong to. Therefore, even though the concern for representation still carries the risk

² Martin Heidegger, *Sanat Eserinin Kökeni (The Origin of the Work of Art)*, transl. Fatih Topakoğlu (Ankara: Deki Yayınevi, 1950). / in *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and transl. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

³ Jacques Rancière, *Özgürleşen Seyirci (The Emancipated Spectator)*, transl. E. Burak Şaman (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2011). / transl. Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2009).

⁴ Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 38.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

of being cornered by the language of power, this field too, thanks to aesthetic's capacity to generate crisis, continues to hold the potentiality to house a truth of another nature. However, in a regime which bans certain voices from the public sphere, it would not make sense to assert that such a task could be achieved easily. Still, is there not something we can learn from this way of thinking? I shall attempt to do so in the second part of this essay, relying on a few concrete examples.

I have hinted above at the tension between artistic and historical truths, which draw nearest to each other in the artistic form of testimonial videos. Yet, this tension also opens up space for such concepts as responsibility and partaking. However, as I touched upon in the beginning of this essay, this space runs the risk of conjuring the very discourse it stands against, by succumbing to the concern for representation. In order to exemplify this danger, we need only watch Kutluğ Ataman's *Tanıklık* (*Testimony*) video.⁶ This work was shown both in the 2007 Toronto Luminato Festival and in the 2010 Istanbul Biennial, alongside Atom Egoyan's work titled *Auroras*. Therefore, before discussing *Tanıklık* itself, it is more relevant to start with *Auroras* and the atmosphere achieved by the common exhibition of these works.

The film titled *Ravished Armenia/Auction of Souls*, shot in Hollywood in 1919, was an adaptation of *Ravished Armenia; the Story of Aurora Mardiganian, the Christian Girl, Who Survived the Great Massacres* (1918), a book written by the genocide victim Arshaluys Mardiganian, based on her memories.⁷ The editors of the book and screenwriters of the film, Henry Leyford Gates and Elanor Brown Gates, took upon the task of writing a scenario that would revive the events which befell this woman who fled the genocide in 1915 and went to America in the hope of finding her brother. During the making of this film, which bears traces of a desire to please Western viewers, Arshaluys Mardiganian re-experienced on set the traumas she went through in an exaggerated manner. There, she was not only wounded physically, but also went through a mental breakdown. Although the film was not preserved, we know from Anthony Slide's book titled *Aurora: From Çemişgezek to Hollywood a Woman, a Life, a Film*⁸ how Arshaluys Mardiganian's pain was instrumentalised and turned into a project in the service of a pornography of violence. As for Egoyan's video titled *Auroras*, it is a critique of this highly problematic film and its attempt to produce a "super-survivor"⁹, which sheds light on the impossibility of testimony –at least in the way it was fantacised in the film. *Auroras* shows a group of women speaking to the viewer from different screens. These women read Arshaluys Mardiganian's story out loud, completing one another's sentences. At times, the narration complexifies, becomes incomprehensible, and the voices become inaudible as they overlap. We then experience how difficult it is to bear witness to this suffering and to listen to such a story.

On the other hand, Ataman's testimonial video, exhibited together with *Auroras*, follows a single testimonial thread, in contrast with Egoyan's video installation. However, this time, the witness we are hearing is unable to produce a coherent narration due to memory loss. Mrs. Kevser –sister Kevser as Ataman calls her– was the nanny of the artist and of his father. After learning that Mrs. Kevser was an Islamised Armenian, Kutluğ Ataman interviewed her to talk about her past. Throughout the video, we watch Ataman asking questions to Mrs. Kevser, showing her photographs, while she struggles to remember the past. Occasionally, the artist even compels Mrs. Kevser to remember, but it is impossible for her. As transpires from the passage which I am quoting beneath, Ataman draws a parallel between Mrs. Kevser's oblivion and his own darkness, and therefore Turkey's collective amnesia:

"When I was a little five year-old boy, sister Kevser would tell me a story every night. The bedroom was pitch dark. The only proof of her presence was her voice. Through Kevser's stories, I met with the Phoenix, the bird on whose back I flew over the Caucasus Mountains for months. When I said "gak" to the Phoenix bird, it gave me water, when I said "guk", it tore a piece from its thigh and gave me meat. When I landed on the other side of the mountain, I fought with a giant so tall that his head reached the clouds, I severed the heads of dragons which re-grew them as they fell. Years later, in the 1970s, when I came across the word 'Armenian', used

⁶ Kutluğ Ataman, *Tanıklık* (Testimony), single-screen video. Toronto: Artcore, 2007.

⁷ Atom Egoyan, "Forward," *Ravished Armenia and the Story of Aurora Mardiganian*, ed. Anthony Slide (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014).

⁸ Anthony Slide (ed.), *Aurora: Çemişgezek'ten Hollywood'a bir kadın, bir hayat, bir film* (*Aurora: From Çemişgezek to Hollywood a Woman, a Life, a Film*) (Istanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2017).

⁹ Atom Egoyan, *Auroras*, single-screen video installation. Toronto: Artcore, 2007.



as an insulting expression, I heard rumours that Kevser was an Armenian (I don't remember by whom they were whispered). How was it possible? The only person I could ask was my mother, and as soon as I did, her face wore an expression of unease. The only thing she could say was "hush!", and that was enough for me to understand that I should never bring this up again. I would not spread mean gossips about sister Kevser, so I kept silent. After all, everyone liked her. Today, just as I did as a little boy listening to sister Kevser's stories, I still fight giants and seven-headed dragons in a pitch dark room. Who was sister Kevser? *Tanıklık* expresses my own darkness, sister Kevser's voice is my guide. About herself as much as about myself.¹⁰

The impossibility of witnessing Mrs. Kevser's testimony, which Kutluğ Ataman equalises with his own darkness, and which we watch throughout the video, is problematic from two perspectives. First, whether this is what caused her memory loss or not, Mrs. Kevser, as an Islamised Armenian, represents a past which cannot and will not be remembered, and therefore a truth which is impossible to bear witness to. However, instead of addressing this very impossibility, Ataman chooses to compel his subject. The state of collective amnesia which Ataman equalises with his own darkness is grounded in the same logic which triggered Mrs. Kevser's Islamisation as she lived under such a regime. Therefore, it is not an analogy which binds these two situations, but rather a cause and effect relationship. The second problematic aspect in this video about Mrs. Kevser's Islamisation is the absence of any commentary

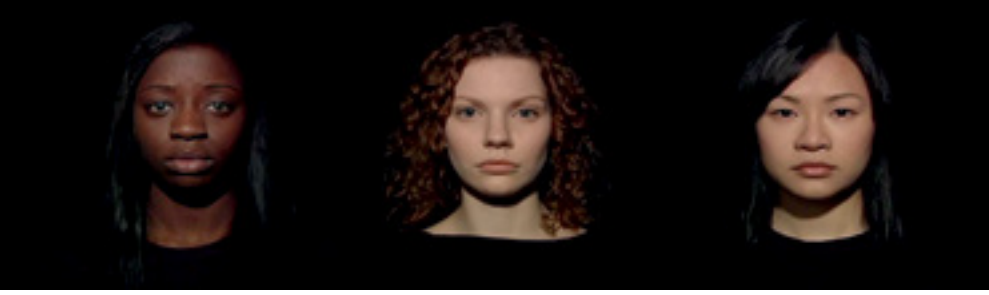
that would indicate the artist's thoughts on responsibility, partaking or at least his own positions about producing a work on such a hard issue. In this respect, the exhibition of *Tanıklık* alongside Egoyan's *Auroras* is an indication of a paradox, rather than a correspondence. Indeed, while the former shows an artist compelling an Islamised Armenian to speak, the latter touches upon the impossibility of testimony as carried out by a single person. Otherwise formulated, while *Auroras* pushes the viewer to a point of unrest, Ataman coerces Mrs. Kevser before the eyes of his viewer and therefore fails to offer a genuine experience of confrontation with the past.

Generally speaking, we are used to viewing subjects who have witnessed state violence, as depicted in artworks, in the position of victims. As is the case in Ataman's video, this is because of the viewers' expectation that they will come across a truth and go through a transformation, which may then create a possibility of recognition of the past. If we remember that Ataman's video was produced in 2007, in a context when the literature concerning confrontation with the past was still scarce in this geography, and its lexical repertoire very limited, we will better understand how the present criticism targets neither the artwork or the artist themselves, but rather the shaky ground on which the work is coming into existence.

Amid the selection/archive compiled by the *Hafıza Merkezi*, I also came across artworks which bluntly disrupt this type of victim's narration, and upset the notions of confrontation with the past of their times.¹¹ However, I would

¹⁰ "İmkânsız Değil, Üstelik Gerekli: Küresel Savaş Çağında İyimserlik (Not Only Possible, But Also Necessary: Optimism in the Age of Global War)," İKSV 10th International Istanbul Biennial, last accessed 09.02.2021, <http://10b.iksv.org/sanatici.asp?sid=27>.

¹¹ For instance, *Perde* (*Curtain*, 2016) the work produced by Nalan Yırtmaç, which depicts a child throwing a stone, in reference to the Uludere massacre; *Ateş ve Kılıç Arasında* (*Between Fire and Sword*, 2015), the exhibition of portraits of Armenian women guerrillas by Aret Gicir; or, more recently, *Boşver* (*Nevermind*, 2017), the work consisting of a re-writing of the news reports printed in the aftermath of the Reina attack in the form of a deck of cards, allowing the spectators to experience the relation between newswriting and power by Larissa Araz, are all examples of such artworks.



like to insist on this point: the representation of violence in artworks relating to state violence, whether they build up a narrative of victimhood or not, is as much a result of the artist's will as a product of the regime of denial they are caught in. That being said, is it possible to escape this regime? Or rather: is it possible to imagine such an escape on the part of the artist, while preserving the subjective integrity of either the subjects of the works or their viewers? Can testimony or confrontation with the past be a comfortable experience?

I would like to conclude this essay with two examples that can be analysed in light of these questions. The first one consists in İz Öztat's artistic practice, while the second is the video installation by Burak Delier titled *Maya (Yeast, 2020)*.

The historical figure of Zişan, which İz Öztat describes as a ghost, and her own alter ego haunting her, occupies an important place in the Öztat's artistic practice.¹² Zişan is a fictional character, and Öztat brings to the viewer's attention the works which emanate from this character's imaginary archive, and sometimes develops collaborations in order to interpret them. This paves the way for a questioning of the artist's control over the archive. Instead of building a holistic subjective narrative, Öztat imagines possibilities of anachronical and potentially contradictory testimonies, by using a figure whose relation to truth is articulated, from the outset, at a different level. Thus, she uses the principles of fiction to reinterpret the idea of an archive that operates around the principle of truth. In other words, what we are confronted with through Öztat's practice is the impossibility of a coherent representation of the past.

As Banu Karaca argued in this volume, in her essay titled *Histories of Ongoing Violence: Complicity and Implication*, it is obvious that we are not commenting enough on the notion of partaking regarding the production, exhibition and circulation of artworks. In this respect, the spectator's partaking in the form of violence being represented is one of those unaddressed topics. However, confrontation with the past can only be conceived within such a context of partaking. Otherwise, as is the case in the example of *Tanıklık (Testimony)*, we are facing works where the comfortable position of the viewer is never disturbed, works that actually reproduce the very violence they represent/oppose. In this regard, I would like to mention a last example of a work that, in my view, does not offer such comfort to the viewer.

Maya (Yeast, 2020), the video installation by Burak Delier exhibited in the *Ek Biç Ye İç (Plant Chirp Eat Drink)* collective's space in Feriköy, shows us the production process of a loaf of bread: a person whose face is invisible kneads the dough before leaving it to ferment and eventually cooking it. During the bread leavening process, we see abstract images projected upon it. Only when we read explanatory exhibition notes by Fawz Kabra do we understand that the rays of light falling upon the rising bread are images of violence being shown to it.¹³ As a part of the work, this bread is

¹² İz Öztat, "Çete-i Nisvan Beyannamesi (Declaration of Women's Gang)," *Express*, issue: 161 (March 2018): 24.

¹³ Fawz Kabra, *Maya (2020)*, *A Few in Many Places*, Protocinema.

offered to the spectator. At this point, it is of course impossible to predict what feelings the viewer will experience, whether they will taste the bread or not. Yet, in any case, facing the idea of ingesting a piece of bread which has been leavened with images of violence, the viewer will have to decide whether or not to internalise this violence and to question their position. Ultimately, it leaves them confronted with an uncomfortable experience.

As I stated in the beginning of this essay, I sought to question the extent to which representation as a praxis can be a violent act per se, and reproduce the language that it rejects. In addition, I maintained that the artwork can open a more free space for criticism regarding the issue being addressed only insofar as it gives up its eagerness for representation. In that sense, in this essay, I did not attempt to distinguish between the artworks which manage to achieve this and the others; instead, I proposed an interpretation that takes into account the regime of signification they were caught in. What does such a reading teach us in methodological terms? Casting a look at state violence and the issue of representation from an aesthetic perspective reminds us that the way these works' mechanisms will be translated into other fields is at least as important as the recording of state violence itself. By achieving such a perspective shift, instead of works that are unquestionable because their topic is "right", we will refer to artistic practices which hold the capacity to create breaches within given regimes of truth, following Rancière's approach. Herein, the operation consisting in disrupting established interpretations and subjectivities may be a methodological aspect of arts and aesthetics worth for us to borrow.

Obviously, it is more comfortable to imagine state violence as a distant phenomenon, which we have no part in. However, when confrontation with the past is at stake, it is necessary to give up this comfortable position in order to avoid reproducing this violence. Herein, I find it important to insist on interpretations which allow for our assuming responsibility as subjects who are both producers and consumers of these works, and on building such a lexical repertoire. I strongly believe that art and the selection/archive addressed in this volume create possibilities to imagine new grounds for discussion, give up the idea of holistic representation, and offer a significant methodological contribution in order to address these issues.



Zişan, *Felaket (Catastrophe)*
1923, Ink on paper

Ziřan, Cezire-i Cennet / Cinnet Haritası (Map of Cennet/Cinnet (Paradise/Possessed) Island) 1915 - 1917, Ink on paper



Ziřan, Çete-i Nisvan, Çete-i Nisvan Beyannamesi (Women's Gang, Declaration of Women's Gang) 1925, Print on paper





Burak Delier, *Maya (Yeast)*
2020, Video



Burak Delier, *Maya (Yeast)*
2020, Installation (Bread and Video)

Planning and Statufying Memory

**Tanıf
Bora**

In one of his novels, Greek writer Vangelis Hatziyannidis mentions how some people are busier *planning the past* than the future.¹ I believe this paradoxical expression (*planning the past* or *memory*) to befit the ruling AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – Justice and Development Party)'s policies regarding culture and symbols particularly well.

Since its very beginning, the AKP's rule has been deeply invested in the *restoration of memory*. This investment's aim was to rebuild the mythology regarding the foundation of the republic and to overhaul the country's official memory. Instead of viewing the republic as a rupture, a milestone, it committed to emphasising the continuity between it and the past, especially the Ottoman Empire period, to 'producing' a memory that processed the Ottoman period's glory. The nostalgia behind this course of action was obvious; a nostalgia that claimed to be founding things anew. In lieu of the nation state and its citizenship, or a secular view of "Turkishness", this nostalgia produced an ethno-religious identity essentially based on Islam. As a result, by loading the 'true' "cultural codes" (the term "code" is obviously a touchstone in the beloved bio-essentialist terminology) into collective consciousness, the 'authentic' memory would thrive and the country's identity be purged.

I have called the phenomenon memory restoration, yet it could also be named *counter-memory*, because this construction of a glorious past was undeniably carried hand-in-hand with the pursuit of a goal: that of disclosing, by confronting it, the incorrectness, the alienating fallacy of a will to defeat and alter memory. Therefore, *calling for remembrance* was just as important as cursing those who *sought forgetfulness*. The title of islamist writer Mustafa Müftüoğlu's series in twelve volumes, the first volume of which was published in 1975, followed by countless re-editions and re-prints, mostly in the last ten to fifteen years, summarises this state of mind perfectly: "Yalan söyleyen tarih utansın. (Shame on the lying history.)" In her work titled *Yeni Osmanlılık (New Ottomanism)*, Nagehan Tokdoğan has cast light on how this counter-memory performance has mobilised such feelings as envy, hatred and resentment.² The feelings of humiliation, envy and disgust, induced by the loss of the empire and the confrontation with the "superior" West, manifest themselves in the rebuttal of the "Western" perception of history which the republic's official historic account is thought to have appropriated. According to the occasionally nationalist-conservative, occa-

sionally islamist-conservative interpretation, the official, or Kemalist, memory, equated with the "CHP mindset", rests on an alienated (by means of westernisation), corrupted conscience.³ This 'wrong' memory, together with the alienating effect it has had on the country's population, is thought to be the direct perpetrator of a victimisation. In turn, this victimisation feeds legitimate feelings of hatred and rancor. The unearthing, the recallment of the nation's "core" history by means of exposing the "lying history", and the memory restoration that ensues, is a claim of resurrection, of revival. A *claim of resurrection* that is promised, and *substituted*, by a rapturous atmosphere of revenge.

I have made use of the concept of performance, talked of substitution above. The memory restoration practice implemented by the AKP's rule is performative; it turns discourse into action, makes it displayable, puts it on stage. It is also substitutive; it transforms an unexperienced, a "second-hand", in a manner of speaking, a forged, glorious past into atonement for the failures and resentments felt today. In his book studying the memory war waged by the AKP's rule, Reyhan Ünal Çınar also refers to a substitution, signifying the transformation of a historic fiction into an object of consumption (the "Nostalgia Ersatz"), and calls our attention to how the conservative audience is being turned into a mass of "as many consumers, clients, likely to buy merchandise wrapped in "neo-Ottomanist packaging".⁴

Memory battles

Now let us take a closer look at some of the battles fought in the framework of the above-mentioned memory war. Let us try to identify the prominent symbols and cultural performances in a few clear-cut memory restoration arenas.

First and foremost, for the sake of continuity, I shall touch on the theme of Istanbul's conquest –or rather its reconquest. Indeed, the victory of the RP (*Refah Partisi* – Welfare Party)'s candidate for mayor of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in the 1994 local elections, has been interpreted as the reconquest of Istanbul. Shortly after the election, the claim that the city was "in need of a new conquest" was pressed.⁵ Ever since Erdoğan's mandate, municipalities dominated by the RP – and later on by the AKP – have strived to rub out Istanbul's cosmopolitan and Byzantine heritage, bringing the Ottoman-Islamic identity forward instead. The commemorations of the conquest of Istanbul have become the pinnacle of this ef-

¹ Vangelis Hatziyannidis, *Dört Duvar*, transl. Yasemin Aydın (Istanbul: Kıraathane, 2019), 62. / *Four Walls*, transl. Anne-Marie Stanton-Ife (London: Marion Boyars, 2006).

² Nagehan Tokdoğan, *Yeni Osmanlılık (New Ottomanism)* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2018), 101 and following.

³ The ideological providers of the counter-memory that I am attempting to examine exist in both islamist and nationalist historiography. Some of their motifs differ while others converge.

⁴ Reyhan Ünal Çınar, *Ecdadın İcadı (The Invention of the Ancestors)* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2020), 71 and following, 85 and following.

⁵ Büke Koyuncu, *Benim Milletim (My Nation)* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014), 65 and following.

fort to highlight this aspect of the city's identity. In the process, the strategy implemented consisted in presenting the theme of the conquest of Istanbul as a process that had established a peaceful and serene environment, where all communities could co-exist under Ottoman-Muslim sovereignty. This "memory planning" undoubtedly reflected the hegemonic claim pressed by the political current that evolved by mutating from the RP into the AKP. One typical sample from this strategy, which has left its mark on the AKP's first years in power, consists in the miniature park called Miniaturk, inaugurated by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in 2003. Alongside predominant Ottoman-Islamic artefacts, pieces belonging to the Byzantine and republican periods are also exhibited there.

Later on, in the 2010s –as a consequence of the AKP's rule abandoning their conservative-liberal discourse aiming to "embrace everyone" and adopting an authoritarian-fascistic tendency based on a violent sense of threat– a nationalist-conservative narcissism fueling resentment and power fantasies directed against the West and "enemies inside and outside" became prominent in the commemorations of the conquest of Istanbul. The neo-Ottomanist discourse emerged as an expression of those feelings. From 2015 on, the commemorations of the conquest started to be carried out in the newly constructed, gigantic Yenikapı Square, supported by heroic speeches. Prior to that, the inauguration of the Panorama 1453 Historical Museum in 2009 had already constituted a hint at this evolution. This museum describes its own purpose as enabling its visitors to "discover and grasp the spirit of this day when the Sultan Mehmed II came with soldiers by the thousands, accompanied by chants of Allahuakbar and Mehter marches".⁶ Massive paintings depicting the siege and military operations in an abundance of details create a sort of war graphic novel-like impression. Regarding the conquest, this museum claims nothing close to it having "opened a new age" or "allowed for various communities to live in peace and serenity alongside one another". Rather, it is entirely devoted to the pride in and heroism of the act of *conquering*. The visuals' panoramical –that is, without beginning or end– characteristic gives the "dream of conquest" an ever-lasting feeling.⁷ After all, by unearthing a "genetic" essence and dusting it off, a reactivation meaning is being assigned to the cultivation of the memory of the conquest and the Ottomans. A "revival" meaning...

Within the "revival" discourse, there is an industrious effort for the Ottoman period to be remembered. The Ottoman theme is given the honours in the catalogues of the cultural activities of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality –of course, the period we are referring to ended with the AKP's dominion over the said municipality in the summer of 2019– as well as other local and national bodies. If we were to give two examples of these from activities organised in Istanbul, we would notice that this interest ranges from "Mecca and Medina in the Ottoman Period" to the American Natives' "connection with the Ottomans". Both events were photography exhibitions co-organised by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and IRCICA (Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture), the former in 2015, the latter in 2011.

Abdülhamid II is yet another theme of choice. One of the reasons for this popularity lies in the oldest layers of the Islamic counter-memory struggle against the common acceptance of this figure in both the Unionist⁸ writings and Kemalist historiography as the autocrat ruler who sealed the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. According to this interpretation, which played an important role in the rise in popularity of Necip Fazıl Kısakürek (1904–1983), the ideologist recognised by the Islamists as their "Master", Abdülhamid II kept the empire on its feet under very hard conditions thanks to his extraordinary political genius, overlooked no endeavour in order to protect the whole Muslim and Turkish region, all the while strengthening the state's infrastructure. Abdülhamid II became popular by the end of the 2010s, when Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's political mission was compared to his. According to this rationale, Erdoğan, defending the state's survival against the dissent instilled by the ruthless "enemies inside and outside", was actually reviving Abdülhamid II's mission. As a matter of fact, an Islamist writer confessed his intention of writing a book where Erdoğan would be designated as Abdülhamid the Third.⁹ Let us point out two of the numerous cultural

⁶ "Panorama 1453 Tarih Müzesi (Panorama 1453 Historical Museum)," last accessed 29.01.2021, <https://www.panoramikmuze.com/tr>.

⁷ Tokdoğan, *Yeni Osmanlılık*, 211–212.

⁸ Translator's note: The term refers to the "Committee of Union and Progress" (*İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*), a secret organisation within the Ottoman intelligentsia which evolved into the foremost faction of the Young Turk movement, seen by some as the forerunner of the republican camp in Turkey.

⁹ Adnan Demircan (interview), *İhsan Süreyya Sırma Kitabı (İhsan Süreyya Sırma)* (Istanbul: Beyan Yayınları, 2018), 241.

events held about Abdülhamid II in the second half of the 2010s. One was the exhibition of "The Sultan Abdülhamid II's Crowning Jewels", held in 2014, which showed the gifts sent to him for the 25th anniversary of his ascent to the throne.¹⁰ The second was the "Abdülhamid Han's 100th Anniversary Commemoration Exhibition", held in 2018 in order to commemorate the 100th anniversary of his death. This exhibition displayed personal belongings of Abdülhamid II's, as well as his father's and uncle's. The exhibition's curator, Nejat Çuhadaroğlu, summed it all up nicely: "Weapons, swords, pistols, epaulettes, and very interesting works offered to him as presents...".

In 2017, Manzikert emerged as one of the prominent battlefields of the memory war. 2017 was not a 'round' anniversary: the Battle of Manzikert had been fought 946 years earlier. However, at the time, the AKP's rule was busy laying out a sharp (as well as xenophobic) hostility rhetoric in the name of the "local-and-national", resting on a thick impression of being threatened by "enemies inside and outside". A convenient occasion to flatter the abovementioned nationalist-conservative narcissism and its fantasies of power, Manzikert, considered as the beginning of "Anatolia's coming in the bosom of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis", started to be commemorated with unprecedented pomp. This commemoration was also a step forward in the ongoing strategy of founding an alternative memory against the accustomed national holidays such as the April 23, May 19, August 30 and October 29 –deemed infected by the republic and Kemalism. Moreover, Erdoğan himself highlighted the significance and continuity that he assigned to the Battle of Manzikert by asserting that he was fighting the same enemies today as the Sultan Alparslan had fought at the time. The media close to the government then told us that we were engaged in the same sacred cause today as the fighters of the Battle of Manzikert had been, "seeking settlement with world powers". In the years that followed 2017, the large commemorations celebrated in Manzikert hosted several exhibitions about pre-republican Turkish-Islamic history. For instance: in 2020, the Municipality of Selçuklu transferred its exhibition "From the Sacred Towns to the Dome of Islam" to Ahlat, one of the commemoration locations. Numerous exhibitions about Manzikert were also

held across the country. Most of these exhibitions displayed samples of ornamentations from the Seljukid period, which were crafted using the techniques of coloured glaze, underglaze and mosaic.¹¹ We are also told that the Manzikert exhibition held in 2020 by the Cultural Centre of the Municipality of Kepez, Antalya, displayed a portrait of the Sultan Alparslan, a chronology and "paintings" of the battle, as well as "archaeological findings such as arrow heads, daggers, spear heads and pieces of swords from the surface layers of the battlefield".¹²

While the 'level' of commemoration of the anniversary of the Battle of Manzikert is still far from being comparable to that of a new national holiday as it became expected from 2017 on, the event used to be commemorated earlier as well. As for the "victory of Kut al Amara", which started to be commemorated in 2016, it is all the more interesting in terms of memory planning as its integration was unprecedented. The noisy commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the victory of Kut al Amara on 30 April 2016 was a move by the anti-Western, anti- or *contra-imperialist* wing of the neo-Ottomanist history revisionism. The Battle of Kut al Amara, which put a halt to the British Army's march on Bagdad, constitutes one of the rare successes –although it did not result in a lasting "gain"– in the course of the First World War obtained by the Ottoman Army. While it was being commemorated in its 100th anniversary as a piece of heroism which "showed how our people staked a powerful claim to our country in spite of all sorts of hardships", as the President of the Republic Erdoğan himself put it, the most emphasised statement was how "for years, there had been a conscious attempt to erase this victory from the people's memory." Historian Mustafa Armağan wrote that this victory, which was commemorated by the army until 1945, had then been erased from sight as a result of Turkey's falling in the Anglo-Saxon sphere of influence after the Second World War. Whereas, in fact, according to the same author, the victory of Kut al Amara carried the honour of "having caused the biggest humiliation" to the British Army until then.¹³

The emphasis placed on Kut al Amara serves to highlight how the country owes its continuity to wars waged in the spirit of the jihad long

¹⁰ "II. Abdülhamid'in 25. Cüls Hediyeleleri Sergisi Açıldı (The Exhibition on the Enthronement Gifts for Abdulhamid II)," Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey, September 2014, last accessed 29.01.2021, <https://basin.ktb.gov.tr/TR-121948/ii-abdulhamidin-25-culus-hediyeleleri-sergisi-acildi.html>.

¹¹ "Belde-i Muhayyereden Kubbet-ül İslam'a Sergisi Malazgirt Zaferi'nin Kutlamaları İçin Ahlat'ta Yerini Aldı (From the Sacred Towns to the Dome of Islam Exhibition Has Been Inaugurated in Ahlat for the Commemoration of the Manzikert Victory)," Municipality of Selçuklu, 23.08.2020, last accessed 29.01.2021, <https://www.selcuklu.bel.tr/haberler/guncel-haberler/2625/belde-i-muhayyereden-kubbet-ul-islam-a-sergisi-malazgirt-zaferi-nin-kutlamalari-icin-ahlat-ta-yerini-aldi.html>; and "1071 Malazgirt'ten 1299 Söğüt'e Anadolu Selçuklu Koleksiyonu Sergisi Açılışı Gerçekleştirildi (the Anatolian-Seljuk Collection Exhibition –From 1071 Manzikert to 1299 Söğüt- Has Been Inaugurated)," Republic of Turkey, Governorship of Samsun, last accessed 29.01.2021, <http://samsun.gov.tr/biz-cok-asil-bir-milletin-evlatlariyiz>.

¹² "Anadolu Şehitler Müzesi'nde Malazgirt Destanı Sergisi (the Manzikert Victory Exhibition at the Anatolian Martyrs Museum)," *Sabah*, 10.08.2020, last accessed 29.01.2021, <https://www.sabah.com.tr/antalya/2020/08/10/anadolu-sehitler-muzesinde-malazgirt-destani-sergisi>.

¹³ Mustafa Armağan, "Kutü'l-Amare Zaferi neden unutturuldu? (Why was the victory of Kut al Amara erased from memory?)," *Yeni Şafak*, 30 April 2017. A pool of historians teamed up to produce a collective book on the subject: See *Kutü'l-Amare 1916 – Olaylar, Hatıralar, Raporlar (Kut al Amara 1916 – Events, Memories, Reports)* (Istanbul: Kronik Kitap, 2016).

before the Dardanelles, the April 23 or the May 19.¹⁴ (Regarding the Battle of the Dardanelles, there is a competition between two historical myths: that of Kemalist historiography, highlighting Mustafa Kemal's heroism and military genius, against that of a jihad owing the victory to the conscience of belonging to a religious community and the power of faith.) What stands out in the Kut al Amara 'campaign' is the partisanship of the counter-memory construction; the predominance of the narrative of a *struggle against a conscious attempt at memory erasement*. During the commemoration ceremonies of the Kut al Amara victory, authorities from all ranks emphasised how this glorious event had been "hidden" for years and scowled at "those who sought to erase" it. Let us examine two occurrences. These were the words of the Mayor of the Bursa Metropolitan Municipality, Recep Altepe: "This victory has been concealed for many years. But now, gems long kept hidden are being brought to the surface one after another. We are proud of our forebears." The pride felt in our ancestry is being corroborated as the hidden "gems" are being brought to the surface of memory. Now let us recall the words of Erdoğan Tok, the Mayor of İlkadım, Samsun, in 2018: "Unfortunately, there is an attempt to hide, to oblivate, to keep this splendid victory away from the memory of the Turkish people and its new generations... But it can't be forgotten, it won't be forgotten, we will not allow for that to happen." In 2016, a theatre play in the shape of a historical reenactment of the Battle of Kut al Amara was staged at the Istanbul Lütfi Kırdar International Convention and Exhibition Centre. Ever since 2016, Kut al Amara has served as the theme for exhibits in countless towns across the country, as well as painting and poetry competitions intended for primary school and high school students. We are told that most of these exhibitions consisted in photographs, although a few featured maps of the region, portraits of some of the generals who took part in the battle (sometimes Mustafa Kemal, sometimes Enver Pasha as well), telegraphs and "mock-ups".¹⁵

Some of the battlefields of the memory war waged by the AKP's rule extend to the republican period. Those are battles fought for the sake of 'rectifying' the republic's historiography, distorted by the "custodial CHP mindset" or the "pro-Western-alienated elites", of 'nationalising' memory and recalling erased victimisations. One example which stands out is the May 27 1960 military coup and the arrests and executions carried out on the island of Yassıada in its aftermath. Considering the concept of the people's will as the foundation for the absoluteness of the legitimacy of a government elected against "custody", the AKP takes the May 27 coup as a bearing in order to operate this theme. A broad platform regrouping foundations and associations supporting the AKP government, interpreting the mass protests surrounding the Gezi Park in 2013 as a coupish "operation" intended against the will of the people, has updated the memory of the May 27 by launching a support campaign under the slogan: "The Men of the People". Posters bearing the slogan "The Men of the People" showed Adnan Menderes, Turgut Özal and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. All three were heroes of the people's will; the first was brought down and hung by a coup; according to some claims, the second's death had not occurred naturally, while the third's authority was being challenged by "forces inside and outside". In 2013, Yassıada, the island where the leaders of the Democrat Party were imprisoned and executed after the May 27 coup, was renamed "Democracy and Liberty Island". On 27 May 2020, a Museum of the May 27 was inaugurated. The whole island was reshaped into a pile of buildings, including a heliport, hotel, convention centre, mosque and parking lot. The museum displays the files of the 27 May trial, the chairs and microphones used by the defendants, animated wax statues of judge Salim Başol and prosecutor Altay Ömer Egesel and members of the court who conducted the trial, "a look-alike of the house where Adnan Menderes was born", the cell where Menderes was imprisoned and a replica of the wreck of the plane inside which Menderes survived a crash in London in 1959. In the open-air areas, along with numerous "statues and objects", plaques have been hanged, such as this one, bearing, under the title "Fair Trial", an inscription of the hadith: "Ruling one hour with justice is more beneficial than praying for a year". Two abstract 'pieces' displayed in the museum, devoid of any documentary value, are worth a commentary. One is

¹⁴ Çınar, *Ecdadın İcadı*, 68.

¹⁵ "Kut'ül Amare Zaferi'nin 100. Yılı (the 100th Anniversary of the Kut al Amara Victory)," *Anadolu Agency*, 29.04.2016, last accessed 29.01.2021, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/pg/foto-galeri/kut-ul-amare-zaferi-nin-100yili-icin-gorkemli-anma-programi->; "Büyükşehir'den, 'Kut'ül Amare' Sergisi (the Kut al Amara Exhibition by the Metropolitan Municipality)," *Hürriyet*, 25.05.2016, last accessed 29.01.2021, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/buyuksehir-den-kutul-amare-sergisi-37285529>; "Kut'ül Amare Zaferi Sergisi (Kut al Amara Victory Exhibition)," *Yeni Şafak*, 24.05.2017, last accessed 29.01.2021, <https://www.yenisafak.com/hayat/kutul-amare-zaferi-sergisi-2679790>; "Samsun'da Çanakkale ve Kut'ül Amare Sergisi (Kut al Amara and Çanakkale Exhibitions in Samsun)," *Samsun Klas Haber*, 17.03.2018, last accessed 29.01.2021, <https://samsunklashaber.net/dunya/samsun-da-canakkale-ve-kutul-amare-sergisi/>.



Panorama 1453 Historical Museum



*July 15 Martyrs Memorial
2017, Denizli*



*July 15 Martyrs Memorial
2017, Bilecik*



July 15 Museum

an assembly of suitcases mounted on a wall as a way of representing the 592 members of parliament trialed on Yassıada. The other one is a statue titled "Undelivered", consisting of letters encased in barbed wire, along with a long quill, representing the letters written by the detainees, undelivered to their recipients for lack of eluding censorship.¹⁶

Another initiative related to the memory of the republican period which, however noteworthy in terms of its 'message', has not resulted in a campaign, unlike those mentioned above, was the "Vocational Institutions' Corporate Transformation Meeting and Memory Exhibition" inaugurated in the fall of 2019 by the Minister of Education at the Tophane-i Amire Culture and Arts Centre. Such an appropriation of the Vocational Institutions, founded during the CHP's one-party period, moreover by none other than Hasan Âli Yücel, the very personality who symbolises the cultural policies implemented at the time, is definitely worthy of interest. Emine Erdoğan, introduced as "the wife of the president", who pronounced the opening speech, recalled her mission in the following terms: "it is our duty to keep the memory accumulated under these domes alive", and went on, describing the function of the Vocational Institutions, making their remembrance worthy of being nurtured, as "cultural shields" against the growing sound of the footsteps of globalisation narrowing in in the 1950s". Obviously, the "various fabrics and ornamental patterns unique to Anatolia"¹⁷, which constituted the contents of the exhibition, are considered as a casing, encapsulating that which is "authentic" (or, in the words appropriated by the AKP and its ally the MHP (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* – Nationalist Movement Party) from the second half of 2015 on, "local-and-national"¹⁸), against globalisation and cosmopolitan culture.

July 15

Examining the July 15 2016 coup attempt and its backlash is also worthy of interest. This event has been the object of an intense emotional investment, the ruling party having committed to mould it into an epic and placing it at the very centre of its memory planning policy from day one.

In her book *Yeni Osmanlılık* (*New Ottomanism*), Nagehan Tokdoğan states that the

backlash against the July 15 coup attempt has led to "a major rupture in the emotional climate characterised by the victimhood discourse, a constitutive trait of the AKP's political DNA, by allowing a brand new, updated narrative which we could identify as that of victoriousness and self-worship to supersede a historical narrative dominated by defeat and oppression."¹⁹ The July 15 was designated as a moment of resurrection of the nation. Despite never falling short of proudly highlighting its own "uncompromising stance" against the coup, the ruling party, led in that sense by its leader Erdoğan, has hailed the people who took to the streets that night to protest the coup and went as far as to confront and even fight off the armed putschists (251 citizens lost their lives that night), in other words the "Turkish nation" who defended the people's will, as the heroic subject of a new epic. Tokdoğan interprets the mass "democracy watches", held day and night in the aftermath of the coup's failure on the main squares of all 81 cities across the country, as rituals of celebration of a national narcissism. Events flattering this collective narcissism have then gained a lasting status; as a matter of fact, the July 15 has been added to the existing national holidays under the name of "Day of Democracy and National Unity".

Let us try and break down the construction of the remembrance of July 15.

First, let us first examine the matter of naming. The name of Istanbul's Boğaziçi Bridge has been changed to "July 15 Martyrs Bridge", that of Ankara's Kızılay Square to "July 15 People's Will Square", that of the road leading to Ankara's Esenboğa Airport to "Martyr Ömer Halisdemir Boulevard" and that of the Niğde University to "Martyr Ömer Halisdemir University"²⁰. The Genelkurmay (General Staff) Crossroads in Ankara has been renamed "July 15 Martyrs Square". Not only in both major cities, but in every town and district across the country as well, squares, avenues and parks have been renamed after the July 15.

The permanent hanging of huge signboards on Ankara's Kızılay and Genelkurmay Squares, bearing only the phrase: "July 15 epic" ("15 Temmuz Destanı") is in itself an 'interesting' operation of constituting a site of remembrance. Besides, July 15 memorials have been erected all across the country. The biggest of them is situated at the exit of Istanbul's Boğaziçi Bridge, to-

¹⁶ "Yassıada, Demokrasi ve Özgürlükler Adası adıyla yeniden açıldı (Yassıada has been reopened under a new name: Democracy and Liberty Island," *EuroNews*, 27.05.2020, last accessed 29.01.2021, <https://tr.euronews.com/2020/05/27/erdogan-yass-ada-da-yap-lan-is-yarg-lama-degil-bir-hukuk-cinayeti-ydi>.

¹⁷ "Olgunlaşma Enstitüleri Kurumsal Dönüşüm Toplantısı ve Hafıza Sergisi (Vocational Institutions' Corporate Transformation Meeting and Memory Exhibition)," Istanbul Directorate of National Education, 12.10.2019, last accessed 29.01.2021, <https://istanbul.meb.gov.tr/www/olgunlasma-enstituleri-kurumsal-donusum-toplantisi-ve-hafiza-sergisi/icerik/2780>.

¹⁸ Tanıl Bora, "Yerli ve Millî (Local and National)," *Zamanın Kelimeleri* (*Words of Our Times*) (Istanbul: Birikim Kitapları, 2018), 192–206.

¹⁹ Tokdoğan, *Yeni Osmanlılık*, 222–230.

²⁰ Sergeant Ömer Halisdemir, who, on the night of the coup, killed Brigadier General Semih Terzi –who had come to the Special Forces Headquarters in order to take command– before being shot dead himself, is portrayed as one of the main heroes of the July 15.

gether with the adjacent 11-acre Martyrs Park. The memorial built in less than a month in Ankara's presidential complex comprises four figures, symbolising the rallying cry of "a single nation, a single flag, a single motherland and a single state", as well as 81 human figures holding Turkish flags in their hands and symbolising Turkey's 81 provinces; lithographic portraits, along with their names, of those who lost their lives on the night of July 15, are also carved on the memorial's inner surface. Other memorials standing out comprise Bursa's Martyrs Memorial²¹, consisting of one single block of marble weighing 107 tons, upon which the names of the July 15 martyrs are inscribed, Denizli's July 15 Martyrs Memorial²², representing citizens standing in front of a tank, and Bilecik's Memorial²³, representing a hand bearing the star and crescent, raising four of its fingers, pierced by bullets.

From the very first months that followed the coup attempt in 2016, and on each one of its anniversaries ever since, July 15 exhibitions have been held across the country. Those exhibitions have mostly been held by municipalities. But numerous exhibitions have also been held by high schools and universities.²⁴ An exhibition was held in Istanbul's airport in 2020.²⁵ Most of these exhibitions' content consisted in photographs of that night. They were sometimes accompanied by documentary elements such as newspaper front pages, or timelines giving hourly accounts of the events. Paintings also occupied an important place; as we understand, an important part of these were produced as photo-realistic or graphic novelish interpretations of photographs. One professional example of these consisted in the watercolour and acrylic illustrations produced by Iranian painter Reza Hemmatirad.²⁶ Quite rarely, attempts at "collage"²⁷ were made, such as "that of the photographs of those who became martyrs during the July 15 coup attempt perpetrated by the Gülenist terror organisation on materials produced during their technology and design class" by a group of high school students. Let us also note that an installation of sorts, constituted by cars that were crushed by tanks that night, were displayed within the scope of the July 15 exhibitions held in 2020 by the Municipalities of Istanbul's Üsküdar and Bahçelievler districts.²⁸

The July 15 Martyrs Memorial and Museum inaugurated in 2019 in Istanbul's Üsküdar-Kuzguncuk district can rightfully be considered as the most ambitious and comprehensive remembrance site regarding the July 15.²⁹ The management of the museum, which was built on a 1500 square meters area allocated to the Directorate General of Cultural Assets and Museums by the National Treasury, has been entrusted to the July 15 Association. The museum features a huge inscription reading "Do not forget" on the

²¹ <https://iaahbr.tmggrup.com.tr/06d986/806/378/0/22/800/397?u=http://i.ahaber.com.tr/2017/07/14/107-tonluk-mermerden-15-temmuz-aniti-1499996844517.jpg>

²² <https://i2.milimaj.com/i/milliyet/75/1200x675/5da0ddb745d2a0b7788bf31e.jpg>

²³ https://www.belekomahaber.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/19956129_956055711204055_8343287397706342388_o.jpg. The rabbi'ah (four) sign, made by folding the thumb inside the palm of the hand and raising the other four fingers, takes its name from the Rabaa al-Adawiya Square in Cairo, Egypt, where it was used by Muslim Brotherhood supporters during protests against the overthrow of Mohammed Morsi in 2013. The sign was appropriated by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan who, at the time, had launched a campaign to found a counter popular legitimacy against the Gezi Park protests. In the following years, the sign became broadly used by AKP members and supporters. An open palm also brings to mind the hand symbol which appeared as a sort of "halt" sign on the famous posters used by the Democrat Party before the 1950 elections, which read: "Enough, the nation speaks".

²⁴ A news report about the exhibitions inaugurated in all 81 cities of Turkey in July 2017 can be found at: https://www.ntv.com.tr/galeri/sanat/81-ilde-15-temmuz-sergisi,70HeONxGhky7EwBwN5_QEA/Nx2p3j_3_UGzLlOe8MxT-g.

Some of the exhibitions are accessible online: <https://sks.uskudar.edu.tr/15-temmuz>.

²⁵ "İstanbul Havalimanı'nda '15 Temmuz Zafer Fotoğrafları' sergisi açıldı ('July 15 Victory Photographs' exhibition opened at Istanbul Airport)," *Anadolu Agency*, 14.07.2020, last accessed 29.01.2021, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/15-temmuz-darbe-girisimi/istanbul-havalimaninda-15-temmuz-zafer-fotograflari-sergisi-acildi/1909990>.

²⁶ "'Okçular Tepesi - 15 Temmuz Kahramanları' sergisi açıldı (The 'Okçular Hill - Heroes of July 15' exhibition has opened)," *Milli Gazete*, 05.11.2016, last accessed 29.01.2021, <https://www.milligazete.com.tr/haber/932344/okcular-tepesi-15-temmuz-kahramanlari-sergisi-acildi>.

²⁷ "Sivas'ta 15 Temmuz şehitleri anısına sergi açıldı (Exhibition in Sivas for the commemoration of the martyrs of July 15)," *Sivas Memleket*, 04.01.2017, last accessed 29.01.2021, <https://sivasmemleket.com.tr/egitim/sivasta-15-temmuz-sehitleri-anisina-sergi-acildi-h38941.html>.

²⁸ "'15 Temmuz Demokrasi ve Milli Birlik Günü Sergisi (July 15 Democracy and National Unity Day Exhibition)," Municipality of Üsküdar, 14.07.2020, last accessed 29.01.2021, <https://www.uskudar.bel.tr/tr/main/news/15-temmuz-demokrasi-ve-milli-birlik-gunu-sergi/1841>; "'15 Temmuz'da tankın ezdiği otomobil sergileniyor (The car crushed by the tank on July 15 is on display)," Municipality of Bahçelievler, 06.07.2020, last accessed 29.01.2021, <https://www.bahcelievler.istanbul/bahcelievler-de-tay/20/281/15-Temmuzda-tankin-ezdigi-otomobil-sergileniyor/>.

²⁹ "Hafıza 15 Temmuz Müzesi bir yılda 500 bin kişiyi ağırladı (The July 15 Memory Museum has hosted 500 thousand visitors in a year)," *Anadolu Agency*, 13.07.2020, last accessed 29.01.2021, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/15-temmuz-darbe-girisimi/hafiza-15-temmuz-muzesi-bir-yilda-500-bin-kisiyi-agirladi/1908530>.

walls of the ground floor and another one reading "What you are about to see is your story" on the second floor.³⁰ White doves hanging from the ceiling represent the July 15 martyrs. Videos projected on giant screens, 3D videos, biographies of the martyrs that can be accessed from touchscreens as well as a large collection of objects complete the museum's documentary contents: personal belongings of those who lost their lives or were wounded on the night of the July 15; Ömer Halisdemir's military hat and dagger; the cell-phone belonging to TV journalist Hande Fırat, which Erdoğan used to address the people live on television; ordinary citizens' belongings such as motorcycle helmets, keys, wallets or cell-phones pierced by bullets; ammunition used by the putschists; shoes belonging to citizens killed that night lined up along a staircase leading to a window... the museum has been assigned an obviously didactical function. In the section devoted to "Information about the history of coups and colonialism", we are told that "coups attempted against the people's will result in economic crises, political instability, sociological disarray, dependency on the outside and estrangement from national policies". A corner titled "Those who stood against injustice and colonialism" has been arranged; it presents the visitors with "information" regarding "such" personalities as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Abdülhamid II, Alija Izetbegović, Mahatma Gandhi, Simón Bolívar, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. Such a didactical content indicates a will to assign a universal meaning to the July 15.

Martyrs

A citizen visiting the July 15 Martyrs Memorial and Museum told the Anadolu Agency: "I am a fellow countryman of Ömer Halisdemir's. Therefore, I am immensely proud that such a brave man became a martyr so heroically. If I had had the chance to become a martyr there as well, I would consider myself to be extremely happy." Let us take this opportunity to open a parenthesis about the ethos of martyrdom.

Martyrdom plays a key role in the constitution of national memory across the globe; martyrs are the self-sacrificing heroes nations owe their existence to. One can rightfully argue that, as a result of a high sense of threat and fear for existence, and therefore of a state of vigilance, martyrdom, as an element that justifies sacrifice and emergency, is an evergreen myth in Turkish nationalism. Without a doubt, on its own, the unconventional warfare or "terror" war with the

PKK which has been going on –gaining or losing intensity over particular periods– since the second half of the 1980s, along with the thousands of deaths it has caused, has been a factor keeping the "matter" of martyrdom vivid, a horrendous problem. On the other hand, as a result of the poignancy of martyrdom and of the pride involved in the discourse on it, it has also impeded debate and discussion on these topics... The discourse which not only sanctifies martyrdom as a rank but, as the visitor of the July 15 Museum did, considers it as something worth yearning for, contributes to its normalisation. It should be added that the myth of martyrdom has had a founding role in the construction of memory implemented by the Islamist movement in Turkey from day one.³¹

When taking this background into account, we may 'understand' why so many public spaces and streets bear martyrs' names, why so many martyrs' statues are currently being erected in Turkey. As a matter of fact, martyrdom occupies a central place in and constitutes a substrate for all the remembrance issues we have examined so far. Almost all the names of the newly planned remembrance sites, museums and statues related to July 15 contain the term "martyr". The Cultural Centre of the Municipality of Kepez, which we have already mentioned in regard to the Manzikert exhibition held there, has been renamed: the Anatolia Martyrs' Museum.

Let us examine another example from an event that is linked to one of the nationalist-conservative memory policy's privileged areas of interest, which one could define as secondary: the massacres which Muslim communities in the Balkans have been the victim of. In recent years, the Srebrenica massacre, which occurred during the Bosnian War, has become the subject of a series of exhibitions, mainly consisting in photographs and caricatures. These exhibitions were held by municipalities of towns where an important proportion of the population's ancestry was formed by migrants from the Balkans. The Memorial of the Turkish, Bosnian and Albanian Martyrs, commissioned by the Municipality of Istanbul's Bayrampaşa district, one which corresponds to the abovementioned characteristics, in 2009, the 15th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre, is particularly noteworthy.³² The inclusion of the Bosnian and Albanian martyrs alongside their Turkish counterparts opens up a horizon which can benefit, according to the observer's intention, either the conscience of belonging to a religious community or the neo-Ottomanist nostalgia. At-

³⁰ As we understand, this phrase is inspired by –or rather plagiarised from– the famous quotation: "What is being told is your story". This phrase, used first by Roman poet Horatius (Latin: "De te fabula narratur"), owes its modern fame to its appearing in the introduction of Karl Marx's *Capital*.

³¹ Asım Öz, "Anlam Kaybının Telifisi İle Siyasî Konular Arasında: Türkiye'deki İslamcılığın Şehitlik ve Şahitlik Anlayışları Üzerine Bir Tasvir Denemesi (Between Atonement for Meaning Loss and Political Positions: An Essay at the Depiction of the Perception of Martyrdom and Testimony by Islamism in Turkey)," *"Öl Dediler Öldüm!" Türkiye'de Şehitlik Mitleri ("They told me to die, I did!", Myths of Martyrdom in Turkey)*, ed. Serdar M. Değirmencioğlu (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014), 71.

³² "Türk Bosna ve Arnavut Şehitleri Anıtı Törenle Açıldı (The Memorial of the Turkish, Bosnian and Albanian Martyrs Was Inaugurated With a Ceremony)," Municipality of Bayrampaşa, last accessed 29.01.2021, <http://www.bayrampasa.bel.tr/icerik.asp?is=0q11241q10q10q10q10q10q1hadq1qpis>.

tila Aydiner, the mayor who delivered the inauguration speech, declared that "every corner of Anatolia and the Balkans is full of martyrs... if we are able to live serenely in these parts, we undoubtedly owe it to our martyrs". The star and crescent, the lily – the symbol of Bosnia and Herzegovina– and the eagle –the symbol of Albania– are all represented on the seventh and last step of the stairway constituting the letter waw (representing the state of the servant left alone in worship before God in Islam) in the 3,5 meter-high Martyrs Memorial produced by sculptor Mustafa Yılmaz. The fact that the letter waw represents "the Turkish, Bosnian and Albanian martyrs who have drunk the syrup of martyrdom and their mourning families" has been 'notified'.

We must stress that the ubiquity of the myth of martyrdom constitutes the construction of memory's *leitmotiv* in a sense. The myth of martyrdom possesses a politico-psychological flattening effect on time, unifying the past-present-and-future. This in turn results in paving the ground for a cyclicity of memory, for a leveling of all events: all the historical events worth remembering, which should not be forgotten, turn into an opportunity to commemorate the martyrs (our martyrs) and to remember our indebtedness to them.

Extreme-symbolism

I have strived to share observations about the aspect of the conservative construction –or planning– of memory as it transpires in cultural events; now let us lean point-blank on this aspect.

We should not forget the complaints that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan himself has voiced out regularly since 2018 as to how the AKP's rule, despite having gained influence in a variety of fields, has not succeeded in doing so in the cultural area. The 'distinctive trait' of this grievance is that, however regularly signified, its reasons, or, more importantly, its 'scope', are almost never discussed. One exception may be the question mark assigned, in the memorandum titled "Local Administrations' Cultural Programmes: Problems and Solutions" drafted by SETA, a think-tank known for its proximity with the government, to "how competent [...] the municipalities which, in terms of quantity, do undertake a great number of events and programmes, [are] in terms of quality".³³ The benchmark of the denunciation of the lack of cultural influence is yet again resentment. Grievance over a cultural elite ("a handful of privileged people"), designated as "White Turks", pro-Western-wannabes and leftists 'holding the reigns of power', forbidding different voices to be heard by means of cronyism, ideological bigotry and vanity, is a complaint some seem to take pleasure in reiterating. The same complaint can easily serve –and has done so on several occasions– to incriminate the circles in question.³⁴

The slogan and presentation of the Yeditepe Biennial held in the spring of 2020 can be seen as shedding light on how the "we have fallen short of becoming culturally influent" complaint actually rests on a resentment discourse. "You Have an Art of Your Own". The slogan hints at a claim: that of proposing an alternative to the understanding of art left in the hands of the pro-Western-wannabe privileged clique thought to have usurped authority over culture. In her analytic essay of the biennial, Begüm Özden Fırat diagnoses that the emphasis placed on the gap between the understanding of art that belongs to the "others" and the rest gives itself off as the subtext of the event's presentation.³⁵ It is not hard to identify the Istanbul Biennial, held by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts since 1987 as the "others"'s "alienated" art event. Against the latter, the Yeditepe Biennial's promise of "artworks and performances appealing to our aesthetic perception, reaching to our very genetic codes" bespeaks "an aesthetic community buried deep inside our DNA" as Fırat puts it. The notion of "genetic codes" –or "cultural codes"– cherished by nationalist-conservative thinking, through the consideration of the human and cultural heritage as a force to be translated into action, a raw substance to be processed, serves to build an organistic determinism. The aim is for the artistic images to stir up "ancient culture" images stored in collective memory, thus activating the abovementioned genetic codes.

³³ Turgay Yerlikaya, *Yerel Yönetimlerin Kültür Ajandaları: Sorunlar ve Çözüm Önerileri (Local Administrations' Cultural Programmes: Problems and Solutions)*, issue: 261 (November 2018), https://setav.org/assets/uploads/2018/11/261_Belediyeler.pdf.

³⁴ If I should be allowed to refer to an article of my own about this issue: Tanıl Bora, "Kültürel Hegemonya (Cultural Hegemony)," *Birikim*, 15.02.2017, <https://birikimdergisi.com/haftalik/8174/kulturel-hegemonya>.

³⁵ Begüm Özden Fırat, "Senin Bir İhtimalin Var!: Yeditepe Biennial, 'Gelenekli' Sanatlar, Hamiler ve Başka Bir Dünya (You Have a Possibility!: Yeditepe Biennial, 'Traditional' Arts, Patrons and Another World)," *e-skop*, 28.05.2018, <http://e-skop.com/skopbulten/senin-bir-ihhtimalin-var-yeditepe-bienali-%E2%80%9Cgelenekli%E2%80%9D-sanatlar-hamiler-ve-baska-bir-dunya/3810>.

Before going further, let us open another parenthesis: in the presentation of the Yeditepe Biennial, held in collaboration between the Presidency of the Republic, the Municipality of Fatih and the Foundation for Classic Turkish Arts, the expression "under the patronage of the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey" stands out. Especially after the 2017 constitutional referendum and the establishment of a "presidential government system", countless cultural events held by local administrations, associations and foundations close to the ruling party have started to bear the same tag: "under the patronage of the Presidency of the Republic". This tag must indicate a financial contribution. Again, undoubtedly, at least in conservative circles, it must be a source of legitimacy and prestige –amounting to a certificate of 'halal art' so to say! Besides, it must be added that this endorsement bestows an officialness, an air of 'state ceremony' to these events.

As she examines the aesthetic contents of the Yeditepe Biennial, Begüm Özden Firat asserts that "the primary mission was defined as displaying classic artworks in innovative ways and encouraging such art production as would result in new, different modes of expression within the field of traditional arts." As opposed to that, she stresses that the works of modern artists who have long strived to uphold the task of "reviving traditional arts through the point of view of contemporary art" have been almost entirely ignored by the biennial. Rumeysa Kiger too considers that, while the works by traditional master artists were being priced "outside of all decency", artists who produced "innovative and different" works were not supported.³⁶

One of the thematic exhibitions comprised in the Yeditepe Biennial was titled "Flawless Repetition".³⁷ The exhibition displayed works of calligraphy, illumination and miniature following "the chorus of geometric rhythm". This could have been the title of the whole biennial. Repetition is the fundamental principle of the classicist (and neoclassicist) understanding of art, which follows the example of works and themes thus brought to perfection. Here as well, an attempt to revive memory is decipherable. Once again, through the mediation of art imagery, images of memory able to activate "the genetic codes of our ancient culture" are being pursued. Apart from these repetitions, the biennial granted much space to ornamentations produced with

traditional motifs and techniques –calligraphy or marbling– sometimes applied on unusual pieces of furniture. Other works standing relatively far from the spirit of "repetition", which we could define as "innovative" in that sense, such as a functionless gateway shaped like a rib cage featuring geometric patterns, or some other abstract works, although not inexistent, were quite rare nonetheless.

I would like to hop on without further ado to a cultural event focusing forthright on political memory: the February 28 exhibition held in 2020 by KADEM (the Association for Women and Democracy). In the introduction of his account of the exhibition, Samed Karagöz, a writer in conservative culture and arts magazines, wrote: "Frankly, I had a doubt when going to the exhibition. I feared that I would see naive, provocative works grossly imposing their messages on the viewer."³⁸ Thus, he confesses that such a 'convention' had recently developed. Among the cultural events aiming at the construction of a conservative memory, the exhibition titled "You Are Prettier This Way", with the way it opened up to the abstract, in other words with the way it distanced itself from a 'flat' symbolism, constituted a blatant exception.³⁹

For instance, the February 28 exhibitions held by the AKP in numerous cities consisted merely of photographs and newspapers front pages.⁴⁰ Of course, unlike "You Are Prettier This Way", one should remember that these were not artistic events. Then again, it should be noted that the artistic and the documentary oftentimes mix, sometimes even co-exist, under the main heading of "exhibition" in the conservative cultural events milieu.

Within the spectrum of the conservative construction of political memory (or its planning, the term I gave preference to in this essay), what we observe is a dominion, even a substitution, of the documentary over the artistic. This is even true of events presented as purely artistic. The headline of the press report on the opening of Denizli's July 15 Memorial, which translates as "The July 15 photograph was made into a memorial", perfectly sums up this perspective: in the dominant understanding, artistic creation is viewed as the exact rendering of reality/truth. We have previously mentioned the prevalent use of graphic novelish style in paintings and illustrations relating to July 15 –this is due to the same

³⁶ Rumeysa Kiger and Selçuk Orhan, "ideallerden ihtiraslara: Kurulamayan kültürel iktidar (From Ideals to Ambitions: The Cultural Rule that Could not Be Founded)," *K24*, 02.05.2019, last accessed 29.01.2021, <https://t24.com.tr/k24/yazi/ideallerden-ihtiraslara-kurulamayan-kulturel-iktidar,2277>. Perhaps a reminder of how Reyhan Ünal Çınar highlights the commercial nature of the "Ersatz (substitution) nostalgia" understanding, compatible with neo-Ottomanism's "pragmatic management logic exclusively focused on its own power", is appropriate here. See this article's 4th footnote.

³⁷ All the works presented in the Biennial are accessible through this link: <http://www.yeditepebiennial.com/tr/2018/sergiler>.

³⁸ Samed Karagöz, "28 Şubat sergisi (The February 28 exhibition)," *Milliyet*, 29.02.2020, last accessed 29.01.2021, <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/yazarlar/samed-karagoz/28-subat-sergisi-6154458>.

³⁹ The online exhibition is accessible at: <https://www.boyledahaguzelsin.com/>.

⁴⁰ "AK Parti'den '28 Şubat'ın Manşetleri' sergisi ('The Headlines of the February 28' exhibition by AKP)," *Anadolu Agency*, 28.02.2018, last accessed 29.01.2021, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/ak-partiden-28-subatin-mansetleri-sergisi/1076212>; "'28 Şubat'ın Manşetleri Sergisi' açıldı ('The Headlines of the February 28' exhibition opened)," *Akşehir Postası*, 01.03.2018, last accessed 29.01.2021, <https://www.aksehirpostasi.com/28-subat-in-mansetleri-sergisi-acildi/17726/>.

understanding.

"Erecting the memorial of something", "opening the museum of something", not only as actions but as discursive performances as well, constitute powerful symbols of the construction of memory on their own. The act of turning something into a memorial, a museum, independently of its content, of its 'quality', operates as a memory act on its own –at least as far as the belief goes. The fact that none of the names of the sculptors who produced the abovementioned projects were indicated probably goes to show how the act of statufying erases the importance of the statue itself.

Commenting in the local newspaper on a statue of Alparslan recently commissioned in the small town of Akçakoca, Ergun Aşçı alleged that it would be better suited to define this statue as a piece of "urban furniture"!⁴¹ Indeed, nothing connects the historical figure which the statue represents with the location; as a matter of fact, its subject was probably picked from a standard, anonymous catalogue of "historical Turkish heroes".

This reminds me of how often the verb "statufying" is used by Necip Fazıl, the founding ideologist of the islamist movement in Turkey, who came to be identified under the cognomen "the Master". Necip Fazıl often writes of the act and duty of "statufying" the values of individuals or of movements. In his writings, statufying is a way of hinting at a value's, a thought's sanctification, immortalisation. For instance, he wrote of the statufication of the cause of Islam by assigning it an ideological framework, or of "the statufication of the truth of ideology", or of "statufying the goal and intention".⁴² In his most heralding text, *The Weave of Ideology*, the most programmatic verb, "to statufy", is used no less than twenty times. For instance, he expects for the MSP (*Milli Selamet Partisi* – National Salvation Party) to statufy the awaited spiritual revolution "from the ground up to the sky".⁴³ He also considers that wise religious scholars, whom he respectfully mentions, statufy the "metamorphosis of knowledge into spirit"⁴⁴ or "statufy the frame of mind of maxim of patience and tolerance".⁴⁵ According to him, with his grace, his virtue, his dignity, the Sultan ("the grand ruler") Abdülhamid, statufied a grandiose duty, a lofty idea. The latter also statufied "a new type of civil servant".⁴⁶ Besides, he deems the uniform statufying,⁴⁷ considers that the security forces are statufied by a successful operation.⁴⁸ He addresses praises to Menderes by pledging that "your deserving for marble and bronze may be statufied in the hearts of 21 million Turks"⁴⁹; he sums up what should be done in terms of language policy in these terms: "plunging the statue of the Turkish language in bronze".⁵⁰ In his short book about the horse, he defines his goal as "statufying the horse, along with all its history, its poetry, its spiritual and superior manifestations".⁵¹

In conclusion, to him, the image of statufying conveys a will, as well as a *determination* to symbolise and 'represent'. This symbolism shoulders the meaning and importance, the grandeur and even holiness granted to what is being represented. If we think reversely, the statue 'convention' that exists in the conservative culture and arts milieu and in the realm of memory construction can be explained by this symbolism: it is expected of a statue –as well as of other forms of artistic representation– to symbolise a cause, a will, unequivocally, plainly, without leaving room for interpretation, to "statufy". In this respect, the examples of grotesqueness examined above should not be considered as odd. Perhaps we should name this the *extreme-symbolism*. Not leaving room for mediation, abstractness or interpretation... As Nora Tataryan, taking

⁴¹ Ergun Aşçı, "Sultan Alparslan Heykelinin Dikilmesinin Ardından (After the Sultan Alparslan Statue was erected," *Akçakoca TV*, 13.12.2020, last accessed 29.01.2021, <https://www.akcakocativ.com/ergun-asci/2923-sultan-alparslan-heykelinin-dikilmesinin-ardindan>.

⁴² Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, *İdeolocya Örgüsü (The Weave of Ideology)* (Istanbul: Büyük Doğu Yayınları, 1986), 96. Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, *Hadiselerin Muhasebesi 1 (Accounting of Events 1)* (Istanbul: Büyük Doğu Yayınları, 2010), 34. Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, *Çerçeve 5 (Framework 5)* (Istanbul: Büyük Doğu Yayınları, 2010), 68.

⁴³ Kısakürek, *Çerçeve 5*, 129.

⁴⁴ Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, *Çerçeve 4 (Framework 4)* (Istanbul: Büyük Doğu Yayınları, 2010), 167.

⁴⁵ Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, *Son Devrin Din Mazlumları (The Religious Victims of Recent Times)* (Istanbul: Büyük Doğu Yayınları, 2008), 267.

⁴⁶ Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, *Ulu Hakan II. Abdülhamid Han (The Grand Ruler Abdülhamid II Han)* (Istanbul: Büyük Doğu Yayınları, 2003), 96, 126, 134, 144, 181, 203, 249.

⁴⁷ Kısakürek, *Çerçeve 4*, 9.

⁴⁸ Kısakürek, *Çerçeve 4*, 184.

⁴⁹ Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, *Başmakalelerim 1 (My Principle Articles 1)* (Istanbul: Büyük Doğu Yayınları, 2008), 94.

⁵⁰ Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, *Çerçeve 1 (Framework 1)* (Istanbul: Büyük Doğu Yayınları, 2010), 307.

⁵¹ Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, *At'a Senfoni (Symphony to the Horse)* (Istanbul: Büyük Doğu Yayınları, 1984), 214.

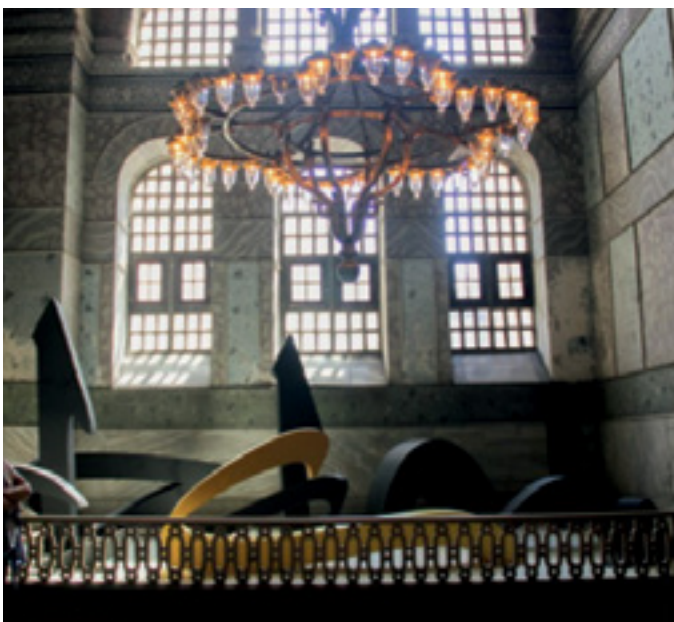
inspiration from Rancière⁵², reminds in her essay in the present book, such an extreme-symbolism hinders aesthetic's capacity to create *unrest*, to cause a *rupture*, a *crack* in the plane of significance... eventually, perhaps, leaving almost no room for *art* itself.

⁵² Jacques Rancière, *Estetiğin Huzursuzluğu*, transl. Aziz Ufuk Kılıç (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012), 23-47. / *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, transl. Steven Corcoran (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009).

Zehra Karakoç, *Geometrik Desenlerden Taşyıcı Kaburgalara (From Geometric Patterns to Supporting Frames)*
2018, Installation



Ömer Faruk Dere, *Bağ (Bond)*
2018, Installation



Hilal Büşra Cebeci
Dreamcatcher is Feeling Blue
2020, Installation





**The Body in Hope
Slips Into Uncanny
Spaces or a Praise
of the Void**

95

**Zeynep
Günsür Yüceil**

I would like to start by thanking the *Hafıza Merkezi* (Truth Justice Memory Centre). I thank all those who have worked on this project both for starting this archive work and for opening space for a plurality of thought by bringing us altogether.

As I started strolling through the archive, while I went on looking again and again at the artworks that caught my attention, I witnessed how concepts which I had been revolving around for quite some time came up once more. I have been giving much attention to artistic practices that are not contingent upon policies regarding the act of watching or being watched, defined through particular ideological codes, or easily plasterable and classifiable. I both follow these with mental curiosity, trying to delve intellectually deeper in them together with my students and also, for 20 years, together with the dance collective named *Hareket Atölyesi* (The Movement Atelier)¹, have been striving to look towards areas which we absolutely "do not know", through the performances we have physically conducted research upon and staged professionally. Therefore, I can say that I strive to wander both among the rational layers of the mind and what we might define as the body's sub/unconscious memory. However, I would like to stress something here: not being either an art critic or a historian, I responded from a much more subjective perspective. I tried to read the artworks based on their effects on my own body.

Those who work with their body know this well: it is not easy to strip it of its own memory or clothes, woven together with the cultural-social-political codes integrated without our notice throughout our life. We are inclined to speak/move in the accustomed way, and try to avoid the spaces that we do not know, or more precisely, that have not yet surfaced in the stratum of our conscience. The irony of it that is that, no matter how hard we try to stay aloof from them, these dark/undefined spaces will always come find us at the speed of light.

One of the works of the *Hareket Atölyesi*, *aHHval* (*circUMstances*), which is also included in this archive, is the product of this very movement of hide-and-seek. In my PhD thesis, I have attempted to read Turkey's modernisation process through dancing bodies, and I have always had a feeling of incompleteness, of lacking something even after I completed it. But I must confess that I felt somewhat relieved after staging *aHHval* (*circUMstances*) which was a bodily research, apprehending Turkey's cultural-political history from a civil point of view and entire-

ly from the perspective of women. As such, it was structured so as to incorporate constant interruptions, decrements, voids, overlaps and incompletenesses.²

However, in this presentation/essay, I will not be looking at the abovementioned work but at works by other artists who enthrill me, even though I realise that in doing so, I am pursuing similar concepts. If I were to formulate these concepts and questions, I would say that I have been looking at some of the artworks selected on the basis of a will to "*gather works which cast a look at Turkey's interrupted collective memory and tackle topics which still give way to rights violations today*", the fountainhead of both the archive and selection, along these lines:

→ I wished to review artworks using the methodological principle I borrowed from Hal Foster, by "rethinking the political".

→ I have tried to follow these questions as guidelines: is it possible to oppose taming policies, either surreptitiously made to be interiorised or appropriated through specific ruling strategies in the different planes of life? What are the proposals put forward by artistic interventions in this respect?

→ Lastly, I wished to discuss the possibilities generated by the act of looking and ways of seeing pertaining to Turkey's geography, namely, the sense of wonder.

Hal Foster writes that "*To rethink the political, then, is not to rule out any representational mode but rather to question specific uses and material effects.*"³ He adds that, when looking at artistic interventions in order to be able to escape from the voracious grabbing strategies and reencoding power of the capital, we need to take into consideration that "*Indeed, it may be the task of political art not only to resist these operations but to call or lure them out by means of "terroristic" provocation—literally to make such operations as surveillance or information control vividly public— or, conversely, to deny the power of intimidation its due.*"⁴ He then makes a distinction between political art and art with a politic: "one might distinguish between a "political art" which, locked in a rhetorical code, reproduces ideological representations, and an "art with a politic" which, concerned with the structural positioning of thought and the material effectivity of practice within the social totality, seeks to produce a concept of the political relevant to our present."⁵ The archive contains numerous artworks

¹ www.hareketatolyesitoplulugu.com.

² <http://hareketatolyesitoplulugu.com/ahhval/> (for instance, one of *aHHval*'s performances staged a text from Tanil Bora's book *Türkiye'nin Linç Rejimi* (Turkey's Lynch Regime), narrated as though it were a tale by a young and beautiful girl whose whole body was wrapped up and imprisoned in pink ribbons.)

³ Hal Foster, *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (New York: New Press, 2005), 137.

⁴ Foster, *Recodings*, 149.

⁵ Foster, *Recodings*, 151.

which I think correspond to the definition (clarified by Foster's distinction) of art with a politic. However, I will only be focusing on a few of these, for obvious reasons of time and space limitations.

I would like to consider Halil Altındere's *Mirage* (2008), Hera Büyüктаşçıyan's *Ada* (*The Island*, 2012) and Berat Işık's *Delik* (*Hole*, 2012) in the context of the bodies in hope (or the situations where we become disembodied) slipping into uncanny spaces. To me, Hale Tenger's work *Rüzgârların Dinlendiği Yer* (*Where the Winds Rest*, 2007) stands somewhere between the uncanny and the void. There, we still face the uncanny but one step forward, we might encounter the uncharted, the void. I consider the void as being related to the will to go toward the uncharted and the beginning of anonymousness. I see Evrim Kavcar's work titled *Dikkat Boşluk Var* (*Beware of the Void*, 2015) as a physical intervention, both placing before our eyes that which is tragic and also very amusing as it is this very same void's material appearance. I like to see Şener Özmen's *Canlı Bir Güvercine Barış Nasıl Anlatılır?* (*How do you Tell of Peace to a Living Dove*, 2015) and İz Öztat's *Zişan'ın Utopie Dosyası'ndan Bir Seçki* (*A Selection from Zişan's Utopie Document*, 1917/2013) as what I have defined as the praise of the void: artistic interventions allowing for a new life possibility by pulling an essentially painful experience toward the uncharted, and making it anonymous. As for *Solum* (2015) by the TAL Dance Company which, although outside of the archive, I wanted to include it in the present response, because it conveys concepts pertaining to the very place I have tried to come closer to within the framework of bodily research.

In the chapter of her book, *The Senses Still*, titled "The Memory of Feelings"⁶, when defining what a performance is, Nadia Seremetakis writes that: "Performance is also a moment where the unconscious levels and accumulated layers of personal experience become conscious through material networks, independent of the performer"⁷, before adding that: "This performance is not performative. It is a poesis, the making of something out of that which was previously experientially and culturally unmarked or even null and void."⁸

I find this state of being unmarked highly interesting. In the course of bodily researches, the unknown places generally represent a passage, paving the way toward the uncharted. Situations left unmarked by the codes of the socio-cultural environment we were raised in, well-defined political frontiers and ways of thinking or the gender gestures and attitudes interiorised through the taming of social life. In her book, *Unmarked*, we witness as Peggy Phelan talks of her search of a subject which would elude the ideology of visibility. According to Phelan, *visibility* is closely related to political power, therefore a marked image. Those that are represented by marked images are always marginalised and their visibility, put in Foucauldian terms, causes them to become increasingly categorised, detained, pinned down so to say. Therefore, Phelan suggests that eluding "representation" –eluding the marked image– as a conscious choice might be a good strategy. As a matter of fact, we know that the artists who operate in the field of "performing arts" (which gained momentum mostly in the West) have deconstructed –that is, literally destroyed, submitted to inner demolition before mounting in new ways– the existing modes of representations. A sort of combat strategy, developed in the context of what Tanıl Bora has brilliantly named the "battlefields of remembrance" in his recent talk. That being said, how can one exit the world of images purposefully established and affixed in this geography? Are there areas where we differ from the West in terms of ways of seeing and being seen?

However deeply the project of a society expected to be modernised by means of westernisation might lie beneath the final period of the Ottoman empire and in the heart of the Republican ideology, how do we abandon ourselves to viewing through the practices which we have bodily internalised? According to Zeynep Sayın, the central perspective founded in Europe during the Renaissance tames the invisible, turns it into a space that is viewable, controlable, and grants the viewer ascendancy in a sense. Whereas in cultures which do not draw or think in central perspective terms, the image cannot be apprehended as an image of truth, distance is preserved, abided by. According to Sayın, in Islamic culture, the importance of avoiding the view and the impossibility of exhibiting oneself is prominent.⁹

⁶ C. Nadia Seremetakis, "The Memory of the Senses, Part I: Marks of the Transitory," *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity*, ed. C. Nadia Seremetakis (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁹ Zeynep Sayın, *İmgenin Pornografisi* (*The Pornography of Image*) (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2003).

Carrying Sayın's quest further in the framework of her research, Özlem Hemiş speaks in her book *Gözün Menzili: İslami Coğrafyada Bakışın Serüveni* (*The Eye's Range: The Adventure of View in Islamic Geography*) of "a culture eluding a representation rooted in the principle of making the invisible visible, producing works by emulating not the object itself but rather its wherein."¹⁰ She quotes from İbn Arabi: "I am surprised: how can an eye see itself?"¹¹, "While the eye looks in order to draw lessons, the heart's eye is left in wonder."¹² According to Hemiş, wonder is a concept worth a closer look when wending one's way toward "the comprehension of representations, and viewing strategies pertaining to these parts"¹³. In this respect, I should indicate that the selection that I made from the *Hafıza Merkezi's* archive was based, apart from the abovementioned criteria, on how these works sparked such a wonder in me.

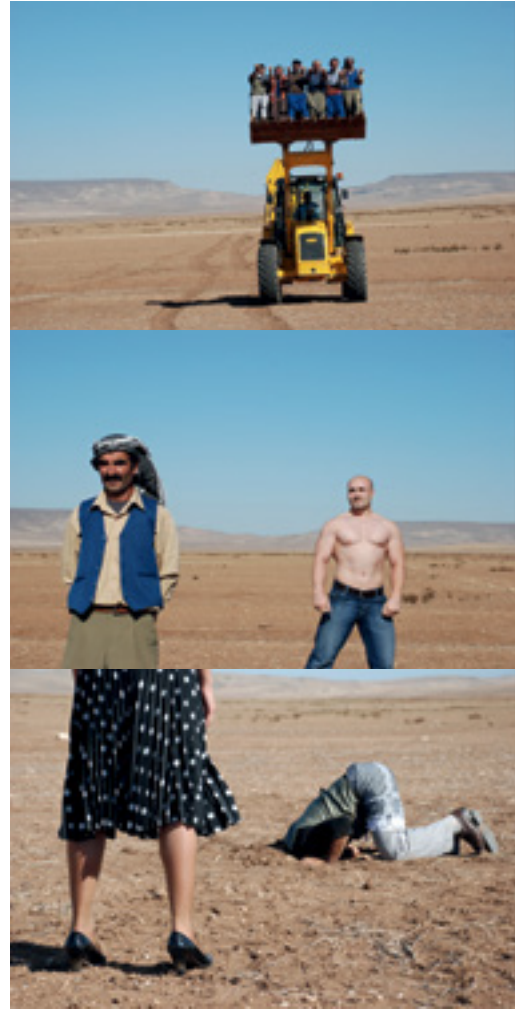
"They explained that, as long as there is not 'a strong response' to a traumatic event, emotions will 'stick to the memories' and will not be released. Reaction will be released by means of an action, which can range 'from crying to taking revenge.'¹⁴

Halil Altındere's video work titled *Mirage* starts off with a shot of an endless emptiness, accompanied by the howling of wind –cut– then, in a shot beginning on the ground, we notice something appearing in the distance, which we later identify as a mechanical digger, coming closer from different angles, carrying six men praying. We understand that they are praying only when they come near, from the sounds they make and the way they hold their hands open toward the sky. We watch them from the rear, being carried in the air by the digger –cut– again, a shot beginning on the ground pans to the side, letting us see a woman from the rear, wearing black high-heeled shoes, thin stockings and a spotted skirt. A few steps further, lies the body of a man wearing a keffiyeh, his head buried in the ground, whose face we cannot see. As the camera points at them from up in the air, the shot ends –cut– a shot beginning on the ground pans to the side, letting us see a man in full length wearing a keffiyeh, looking straight at the camera and, right behind/beside him, another man, bare chested, "working out". While the slightly older man wearing the keffiyeh merely stands glancing, the man "working out"

against the endless emptiness/moorland strikes several poses –cut– in a shot beginning on the ground before panning to the side, we see the same six men we saw earlier on the digger, this time praying while sitting on the ground –cut– someone is standing, trying to pour water from the bottle he is holding over the head of the second person, sitting on the ground. As the water runs down –cut– we see a pregnant woman lying on the ground near a pond, and a man bent over, her giving her artificial respiration –cut– as the camera tilts from Hasankeyf to the sky, the shot ends.

These images are both very familiar and undefined: men wearing keffiyehs, praying on top of a digger, teetering as the machine advances on the empty, endless terrain. An image of an ordi-

Halil Altındere, *Mirage*
2008, Video



¹⁰ Özlem Hemiş, *Gözün Menzili: İslami Coğrafyada Bakışın Serüveni* (*The Eye's Range: The Adventure of View in Islamic Geography*) (Istanbul: Vakıfbank Kültür Yayınları, 2020), 357.

¹¹ Hemiş, *Gözün Menzili*, 310.

¹² Hemiş, *Gözün Menzili*, 339.

¹³ Hemiş, *Gözün Menzili*, 8.

¹⁴ Bessel A. van der Kolk, *Beden Kayıt Tutar: Travmanın İşleşmesinde Beyin, Zihin ve Beden* (*The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*) (Ankara: Nobel Yayıncılık, 2018), 182. / (New York: Viking, 2014).

nary woman with her high-heeled shoes and skirt, but, immediately behind her, the body of a man whose head is entirely buried in the ground. The calming, soothing image of water, but, immediately next to it, the body of a pregnant woman whom they are trying to save from drowning. Hope manages to surface tenuously in this transnatural world but, on the other hand, these bodies slip through the familiarities into uncanny spaces and situations. A sort of timelessness dominates, which is why we find ourselves within a sort of "mirage" universe, without beginning or end. On the other hand, this is a universe we know very well, Hasankeyf. A while later, this universe will be flooded by the waters of the dam lake, disappear from sight, yet remain there underwater. While Altındere sows images before the flooding of the place, a rupture, a crack opens up within the plane of remembrance.

"Intimacies are shaped solely within the boundaries of neoliberal-global emotions, desires, thoughts and expressions, through the path they open, by their immediate and symbolic interventions."¹⁵

Hera Büyüktaşçıyan's *Ada (The Island)* is an installation. A chair is standing on a carpet, but it does so askew, one of its feet resting on a mound apparently situated under the carpet, which therefore we do not know the nature of, although we can infer by its shape that it is not an object but rather a living being, perhaps a dead animal, accumulated dust or a body which may have been living once, in short, an unidentifiable bulk. It is like a cross-section of a house, a moment in memory. The introductory text that accompanied *Ada* when exhibited in Arter, states: "it is as though what is not being said, what has become taboo, silently covered the dust belonging to a hidden past, causing the warm and soft floor we walk on to swell." In her text mentioned previously, Seremetakis devotes a whole chapter to dust itself.¹⁶ She states that: "Dust is the perceptual waste material formed by the historical-cultural repression of sensory experience and memory."¹⁷ While arguing that accumulated dust is connected with the uprooting of memory; she stresses that "Dust is not deposited only on the object but also on the eye. Sensory numbing constructs not only the perceived but also the perceiving subject and the media of perception; each of these are reflexive components of an historical process."¹⁸



I believe we may consider whatever it is that lies underneath the carpet of Büyüktaşçıyan's *Ada (The Island)* as a mound of the kind of dust which Seremetakis mentions, haunting our perception, our eyes and our hearts as we look. I am confronting the fact that this uncanny space, appearing in the middle of a symbol of a house may be quite close or, on the contrary, stand very far away.

Hera Büyüktaşçıyan
Ada (The Island)
2012, Installation (detail)

¹⁵ Cenk Özbay, Ayşecan Terzioğlu, Yeşim Yasin (ed.), *Neoliberalizm ve Mahremiyet: Türkiye'de Beden, Sağlık ve Cinsellik (Neoliberalism and Intimacy: Health, Body and Sexuality in Turkey)* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2011), 16.

¹⁶ C. Nadia Seremetakis, "The Memory of the Senses, Part II," *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity*, ed. C. Nadia Seremetakis (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 35.

¹⁷ Ibid., 35.

¹⁸ Ibid., 38.



Berat Işık, *Delik 2 (Hole 2)*
2012, Video

"Our perception reacts where intensity is evoked and produced – this can even be a blank space. An observation on the side-line, something lacking coherence, because it does not fit or denies visibility and completion."¹⁹

Berat Işık's work *Delik 2 (Hole 2)*, 2012) has gained spatiality by being projected at the very end of a corridor in the exhibition venue. The video presents us with footage from a hole being dug deeper and deeper. We learn from the exhibition's presentation text that Işık's camera, which "incorporates an almost endoscopic perspective" according to the same source, "whirls its way down the dark depths of an underground cave situated in the vicinity of Diyarbakır." The hollow that we face here is undoubtedly of a different nature than that of Evrim Kavcar's *Dikkat Boşluk Var (Beware of the Void)*, 2015), which I will be addressing further on. What we are faced with here is a dark void, which we become bodily involved in as we have no choice but to follow the camera down this path, starting with the cave's opening and descending toward its very depths. Yet here as well, although we contemplate it from the sheltered space where it is exhibited, we know it is out there somewhere, however far that may be. This uncanny hole exists out there, somewhere in the country's eastern end.

¹⁹ Heiner Goebbels, *Aesthetics of Absence: Texts on Theatre*, ed. Jane Collins (London: Routledge, 2015), 43.

"A gap... an interval in consciousness, in the body, between the bodies... a void being encompassed (with) in our experience of reality... an empty space, a hiatus... the keeping of room for movement, for relation... room to breathe."²⁰

As I stated in the beginning of this essay, to me, Hale Tenger's work *Rüzgârların Dinlendiği Yer* (*Where the Winds Rest*, 2007) stands somewhere in between the uncanny and the void. An intermediary space, which we could define as the liminal/threshold. In a dark room whose blinds have been closed, at the junction between the floor and the wall, a text keeps reappearing, flowing at the lowest point –the very bottom– of the wall: "Did we pull the dead from underwater/ We didn't pull the dead from underwater." This is a quotation from Edip Cansever's poem *Rüzgârların Dinlendiği Yer* (*Where the Winds Rest*), only with small interventions slightly altering two of the following verses: "Did you pull the dead from underwater / Did we pull the dead from underwater / We didn't pull the dead from underwater / We had pulled the dead from underwater." Fans are scattered across the room, their rotation causing a light breeze. Unfortunately, I was not able to hear its hum because the video did not include a sound track. I must say that I would have very much liked to listen to it.²¹ As we went about the room, between the fans, accompanied by these gushes of wind, amid the dead bodies that we haven't pulled –haven't been able to pull– from underwater, I felt as though we were being transported somewhere yet a little more undefined.

We who wander about this place together with the dead, have we managed to step onto a slightly more anonymous terrain perhaps? Somewhere in between, where those verses still reappear at the bottom of the wall, but where the winds can rest. Is it possible to head, to make a move toward this intermediary, this empty space where the same dead are no more underneath the water? In an interview, Hale Tenger spoke about ambiguity, about "*being clutched in a weird imaginary world in between the pages of the past left ajar*". I want to believe that the humming of the wind might have helped us imagine somewhere less ominous –or at least its possibility.

Hale Tenger, *Rüzgârların Dinlendiği Yer*
(*Where the Winds Rest*)
2007. Installation



²⁰ Tülû Ülgen, *kurmaca, yanılsama: oyunculuk, deneyim, hakikat arasında (fiction, illusion: between acting, experiencing and truth)* (Istanbul: Sub Yayınları, 2018), 70.

²¹ Obviously, experiencing the artwork from an archive recording is nothing like experiencing it *in situ*. Nevertheless, I thought I could have caught something closer to a live experience, had I been able to listen to the sound.

"An empty stage is just as much of a statement as a large theatre set.

...

How much spectacle can you endure?"²²

Evrım Kavcar's installation *Dikkat Boşluk Var* (*Beware of the Void*), consists in an iron structure spelling the word "boşluk" ("void"), mounted on the rocks at the top of a hill in Mardin, somewhere between the old town and the new town. When seen from different angles, the work presents us with an image of the void drawn on the void itself. Evrim Kavcar has also prepared a book documenting the experiences of the inhabitants of this region, exploring the void materialised in the gestures, the words addressed and sounds emitted toward the absence of those who were there before but not anymore. We cannot access the artist's book but as we understand from what has been written about it, it is an invitation sent to the inhabitants of the region. An experience where the void becomes too visible, gaining flesh and weight. The fact that three months after it was mounted, all that remained of the artwork was the letter "k", actually altering the work's nature and title to "boşluk'un K'sı" ("the D of the void"), is all the more meaningful.

How do we cope with void itself? Is an encounter with what the void represents possible? What is the meaning of the disappearance of all the letters but "k" in an iron structure mounted on the rocks of a hilltop? One of the texts addressing this work states that: "it considers a letter, the remain of a word torn down, as a metaphor for the personal and collective state of mind." What exactly is this individual and collective mental state? An act demanding enough toil and strength as to dismount iron from rocks, bend and twist it: not willing to see the word void, tearing it down until only one of its letters remains. On the other hand, the iron rod, flattened and stripped of its signification as a letter, is still standing there; it even seems as though ready to take off and fly: this line and the letter standing at its tip, making the letters of the word void invisible, yet remaining there, give me the impression of being about to be carried away by the wind. It also looks like an antenna in a way, ready to transmit sound and image waves from one place to another. As though it was about to transmit the sound and image of emptiness. As an object, it can be read in multiple ways. Another text stated that the work "strived to establish a contact with the present while looking at those who are gone and those who remain." To me, rather than establishing a contact with the present, this work resonates with parting ways with the past, destroying the image which carries it, eluding what emptiness indicates, may it be emptiness itself.

Evrım Kavcar, *Dikkat Boşluk Var* (*Beware of the Void*)
2015, Installation



²² Jonathan Burrows, *A Choreographer's Handbook* (London: Routledge, 2010), 194.

"Stillness is the moment when the buried, the discarded and the forgotten escape to the social surface of awareness like life-supporting oxygen

...

It is the moment of exit from the historical dust."²³

I would like to link this quotation with the works *Canlı Bir Güvercine Barış Nasıl Anlatılır?* (*How to Tell of Peace to a Living Dove*) by Şener Özmen and *Ziştan'ın Utopie Dosyası'ndan Bir Seçki* (*A Selection From Ziştan's Utopie Document*) by İz Öztat. Şener Özmen's video work *Canlı Bir Güvercine Barış Nasıl Anlatılır?* (*How to Tell of Peace to a Living Dove*) shows us the artist, wearing black clothes inside a black location –as a result, only his face and hands are visible– looking at a white dove moving in front of him. A little later, a text starts to be read aloud by the voice of a small boy –whom we understand to be the artist's/Şener Özmen's son Robin from the exhibition's introductory text. The impact of what I heard was striking: the reading by a child, in Turkish with an accent, of a text actually quite complex for his age in terms of sentence structure. The image moves from broad shots to closer ones from different angles. As soon as we hear the sentence: "good things could happen even here, dear white dove, and they do occasionally happen. They disperse very soon though, just like art, ether, and childhood" (which we understand to be the artist's own childhood), the image switches to a shot showing the artist alone. We watch as the artist asks "How can I tell you about something you don't know, haven't seen or experienced?" while observing not the entire body but only the wings fluttering appearing on screen. While we hear the text: "We stumble and break our necks somersaulting", we see the dove which performed a somersault a moment earlier now alone, accompanied by the sentence "peace must be fed". "I will set you free you, dear white dove, desperate dove" says the artist, "not politically" he adds, "for we are unable to talk about peace in a land like this, full of doves" and as he looks at the dove one last time, the video reaches an end.

This is a very familiar image, rather cliché: the white dove. But the artist himself met with it for real in a pitch black room. A mere observer, a viewer. A text about peace, obviously written by an adult, read aloud by the voice of a small boy. The room filled by the sound of the text, the dove and the presence of the man transport us to a different space-time. The text might not carry a hopeful meaning, yet to me, the voice of the boy in itself is a figure of hope. I witness the moment when a child positions the idea of peace, which someone now older than him / his father cannot talk about, in a space-time somewhere in the future. A future which he indicates through his very absence, with his mere voice. A future when the dust of history has been shaken off.

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Şener Özmen, *Canlı Bir Güvercine Barış Nasıl Anlatılır?* (*How to Tell of Peace to a Living Dove?*)
2015, Video

²³ Seremetakis, *The Senses Still*, 12.

The following may be added: "Social transformation is uneven. And it this unevenness, this non-contemporaneity of the social formation with it-self, that preserves and produces non-synchronous, interruptive articles, spaces, acts and narratives.... These are expressions of non-synchronicity which become material encounters with cultural absence and possibility... These islands may emancipate sensory experience from the social structure of silence... Against the flow of the present, there is a stillness in the material culture of historicity; those things, spaces, gestures and tales that signify the perceptual capacity for elemental historical creation.", 12.

As for İz Öztat's work *Zişan'ın Ütopie Dosyası'ndan Bir Seçki* (*A Selection From Zişan's Utopie Document*), Nora Tataryan indicates in her own essay that it constitutes a fictional archive. Yet another crack in the flow of history. İz Öztat describes this work as "a component in an ongoing process of imagining methods of recalling a repressed past". "Ever since 2010, I have been involved in an anachronic collaboration with Zişan (1894-1970)", she adds. Zişan is a historical figure. In her own words, İz Öztat is trying "through the creation of an anarchist family tree... to acknowledge a repressed past and to create different possibilities for the future" with this marginalised, exiled Ottoman woman. In her series *Ölüm Sonrası Üretim* (*Posthumous Production*), she indicates that she "used Zişan's works as a springboard" and "embarked on a collaborative journey toward the future". That particular reflection reminds me of the question which Umut Yıldırım asked during the talks: "Are we entitled to say that dispossession has hypothesized, neutered, precluded imagination? If so, are we entitled to ask whether imagining is a political action or not?" Together with Zişan, the character whose very presence was forcibly exiled and dispossessed, İz Öztat will not give up imagining.

İz Öztat, *Ölüm Sonrası Üretim Serisi (Başına Buyruk Yazı, Utopie)*
[Posthumous Production Series (Wayward Script, Utopie)]
 2013, Installation (woven reed, plant fibres)



"What can I add onto or withdraw from my body? How immediate and real is the urge to move? How far away is the movement from the body and what lingers between the two? Can I lie with my body? Can I suffer with my body? Can I destroy it?"²⁴

I would like to conclude this essay by commenting on a few images from the performance *Solum*. TAL is a dance company that has been carrying out research and performances through body-movement since its foundation in 2003 by the architect Filiz Sızanlı and engineer Mustafa Kaplan. The duo named themselves after the *Tiyatro Araştırma Laboratuvarı* (Theatre Research Laboratory) created within the Municipal Theatres by Beklan Algan, after meeting in 1996 during the research carried out by Mustafa Kaplan in TAL. They have presented their work *Solum* in 2005.

Solum is a Latin word which means both alone, only and country, earth, the ground on which we walk. The work *Solum* is composed of two solos. As per my current purpose, I would like to comment only on Mustafa Kaplan's solo here. I will be leaving out Filiz's solo for obvious reasons of time/space limitations, albeit with great regret, because I believe its multiple layers of meaning to be highly worthy of interest and comment. Still, analysing them in another context, regarding gender issues would be more appropriate.

In Mustafa's solo, we watch the gradual apparition of a harsh image, that of his face/ expression becoming increasingly slashed as he ties rubber bands around it. What images will our memory retain after this performance, which shows us, by means of this self-inflicted violence, a flow of songs and images stemming from personal memory, relating to migration, the military service, being raised as a man and as an individual in Anatolia, and, when finally the rubber bands are cut loose, leaving their mark upon this face, the character coming to the front edge of the stage, leaning his head down in prayer, singing the traditional folk song called *Feraye*²⁵?



Taldans, *Solum*
2005, Performance

²⁴ "Solum – 2005," Tal Dans, last accessed 07.01.2021, <https://taldans.com/repertory/solum/>.

²⁵ It is said to be the name of a nomad girl from Muğla – as well as a *Zeybek* from the region of Muğla in the *Nikriz* mode. ("Milas has been the capital of two civilisations throughout its history. First to the Kingdom of Caria, then to the Menteşe Principality. One of the Menteşe lords' -Yakup's- son İlyas was fond of hunting. While İlyas was going around from this mountain to the other for hunting, he came across a beautiful nomad girl around Göktepe. He asked her name, and the girl answered: Feraye... Feraye's brother Mistik objected to the marriage of these two young persons; he would not give up his objection against all insistence. Losing hope, Feraye let İlyas know that he could kidnap her from a specific place. Unfortunately, Mistik somehow sensed what was going on behind his back, followed and caught Feraye at their meeting place, and killed his sister who dared to run away. He then threw himself into the abyss. When İlyas arrived, he found Feraye's body covered in blood. It is unknown what İlyas did after this; the only known fact about this story is that it has become a folk song." <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/121626/halk-turkuleri-ve-oykuleri>, last accessed 18.12.2020. <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x16d6mx>, last accessed 18.12.2020.) Müzeyyen Senar: "First, I started to sing, then my orchestra joined me slowly in the song. However, there was one point that bothered me. I found what it was in the second iteration. Everything started to fall into place when I started to read 'Ferahi, the girl's name is Ferahi' as 'Ferai, the girl's name is Ferai'. Then I changed Ferai to Feraye and it stayed like that. The song Feraye was first played and sung at the Novotni Casino in July 1945." "The next Wednesday, I left Ferai to sing as the last song at Tokatliyan. I told the story briefly, thanked Naci Bey by pointing at him and ended the programme with this song. It was not even a month past that Feraye was sung everywhere." <https://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/cumartesi/cintay/2015/02/14/muzeyyen-ve-feraye>, last accessed 18.12.2020.

It is probably a state that appears in that serene moment of our memory, when our hearts find wonder in the joy of life that accompanies the pain of violence: *a state that denies the power of intimidation its due.*

A praise of
the void,
which
can give
birth to
everything.

The Memory of Antigone

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**Özlem
Hemiş**

*Tiresias: What glory is it to kill a man who is dead?*¹

Sophocles, *Antigone* [808]

While studying the performing arts works included in the *Hafıza Merkezi's* (Truth Justice Memory Centre) selection/archive, reflecting rights violations and state violence, I sought to unravel the multiple layers accumulated within the figure of Antigone. This surfaced in my mind as I thought of the many victims of a will not to settle for the dead but to torment, discipline and intimidate those who live by means of the dead's corpses; to kill the dead countless times, to impede and annihilate funerals. For this purpose, I have divided this text into three parts. In the first part, I will be opening up the layers which compose the figure of Antigone, following the axis of Sophocles' text while taking the traumas rooted in her ancestry into consideration. In the second part, I will be casting a look at what befell the figure of Antigone in Turkey. In a way, as we reflect on the memory of Antigone, I would like to see what the memory of Antigone in Turkey conveys through an inventory. Eventually, in the third part, I will be casting a closer look at the Antigones of the *Hafıza Merkezi's* selection/archive. One of the works included in the *Hafıza Merkezi's* selection/archive, *Bir Dağın Başı (Somewhere in the Mountains)*, the video crafted by Ferda Yılmazoğlu and *Pınar Pamuk in 2014*, which crosses paths with the plea for the right to bury and mourn –that we could define as one of the founding impulses of the rebellious figure of Antigone– echoes with this text's very core. In order to tell the "battle for bones" fought by the people who lose members of their family to murders by unidentified assailants and enforced disappearances in the Southeast (of Turkey), the symbolic ritual of the burial represented in this video, which focuses on two stories of disappearance, accompanying, recording the families in their search throughout the terrain in which they wander, in their own language, clings to the story of Antigone in a powerful way. The kinship between

the act of a young person who pays respect to the leftover pieces of cloth from an unidentified and unrespected dead body, and the act carried out by Antigone is as close as that which exists between the space of Thebai dreamt by Pasolini and the few villages of the district of Kulp in Diyarbakır.

The traumatic memory of Antigone

According to Marc Griffith, who prepared the Oxford and Cambridge editions of Sophocles' *Antigone* for publication, the version of the myth of Antigone prior to the tragedy does not include Sophocles' contributions to the myth.² Prior to Sophocles' tragedy, Antigone was not as prominent a mythical figure as, for instance, Medea. Antigone's "magic" was not only rediscovered by German Idealism, as it was alleged, it produced its effects from the very start, in its own times as well.³ Researchers believe that the original text of the *Seven Against Thebes* play, shaped by Aeschylus before Sophocles' *Antigone* on the same theme, underwent a modification after Sophocles' *Antigone*.⁴ The modification in question happened almost contemporaneously, as a result of the effect the tragedy had in the Dionysia, where it won the first rank in 441 B.C. We know that Athenians would have the texts of the plays transcribed sooner rather than later, because they thought that some adaptations or alterations by the actors happened during the representations following the competitions. We owe the tragedies available to us today to a few deliberately gathered anthologies.⁵ Let us not forget that the Athenian democracy was in its golden age when *Antigone*, considered by Hegel as a flawless masterpiece, was written. Sophocles was one of the most prominent political figures of his time. This play undoubtedly resonated with the ancient story of the Labdacids in a different manner for a people whose system was being remodelled than it does for us today.

Bearing the trace of her family's curse in her very name⁶ and somehow sealing it off in the play by means of her disappearance, Antigone is a member of the Labdacids, descended from Cadmus, the founder of Thebes.⁷ The chorus tells us of this family's fate:

¹ The quotations from Sophocles' *Antigone* refer to the translation by Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald. The verse numbers are indicated between brackets.

² Mark Griffith, "Introduction," *Antigone* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 7.

³ Joan Copjec argues that Hegel, Schelling and Hölderlin wrote of Antigone as though they were under her spell (Copjec, 2015:22). As a matter of fact, one may consider the texts woven about Antigone by the likes of Lacan, Heidegger, Irigaray, Derrida and Butler as creative echoes of the same magic, which was spawned by German Idealism.

⁴ See Griffith, *Antigone*, 7; Joachim Latacz, *Antik Yunan Tragedyaları (Ancient Greek Tragedies)*, transl. Yılmaz Onay (Istanbul: Mitos Boyut, 2006), 118; and George Thomson, *Aiskhylos ve Atina (Aeschylus and Athens: A Study in the Social Origins of Greek Tragedy)*, transl. Mehmet Doğan (Istanbul: Payel, 1990), 345. English edition: (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1916).

⁵ Latacz, *Antik Yunan Tragedyaları*, 48. The book follows the anthology depicted as "state copies", gathered by Lycurgus in the 4th century B.C.

⁶ The etymological roots of Antigone's name can be interpreted in various ways. *Anti* carries two different meanings: "counter" and "payment". As for the second part of the name, *gone*, derived from a root signifying family and lineage (*genos*), it carries such meanings as "offspring, generation, uterus, seed and birth" (cf. Gourgouris in Butler, 2007: 39). On the other hand, both Carol Jacobs (1996: 891) and Žižek (2016: 20) mention that some data has surfaced, indicating that motherhood was also hinted at in the name's root.

⁷ I would like to remind that the location where the action takes place in ancient Greek tragedies is seldom Athens or its surroundings. Neither are their heroes Athenians. We know that, among the ancestors of the two main lineages from which most tragedy heroes are descended, Cadmus was of Phoenician origin while Pelops was originated from Anatolia/Lydia. Most of the times, lineage curse concerns foreigners.

Pınar Pamuk, Ferda Yılmazoğlu
Bir Dağın Başı (Somewhere in the Mountains)
2014, Video



Pierre Paolo Pasolini, *Oedipus Rex*
1967, Film still

*I have seen this gathering sorrow from time long past
Loom upon Oedipus' children: generation from generation
Takes the compulsive rage of the enemy god.
[471-473]*

111

The Labdacids have received their share of two curse patterns from Greek mythology. The first is the dismemberment by the *Bacchae*, for failure of acknowledging the cult of Dionysos. Antigone's father's ancestor Labdacus, as well as her mother's ancestor Pentheus were both dismembered by the *Bacchae*.⁸ The violent image of their bodies torn to pieces is stored in the roots of the family's traumatic memory. The second occurs with the cursing of a mortal loved by the gods. Pelops, who was granted a second life by the gods, and gave his name to the Peloponnese peninsula, cursed Laios, son of Labdacus, for seducing one of his sons. As we know from the story of the Atreidai, the curse-hurling breath of Pelops is strong and sturdy. Pelops, who was brought back to life by the gods' benevolence after his father cooked and served him in order to put the gods to the test, has a brief, yet powerful encounter with Dionysos. As Byung-Chul Han puts it, "violence, as the first religious experience", is a fundamental element of both the gods and founding myths.⁹ Pelops and Dionysos possess the knowledge and experience of both sides. They were both felled and restored. They died and came back to life.

Within the dramatic structure of the events which tragedies preferably tell anew, we are faced with a whirlpool of curse/oracle; the development of the story consists in the rotation of this whirlpool. Antigone's grandfather Laius marries Jocasta, learns from the prophets of Apollo that he will have a son, who will kill his father and marry his

⁸ Pierre Grimal, *Mitoloji Sözlüğü: Yunan ve Roma (The Dictionary of Classical Mythology)*, transl. Sevgi Tamgüç (Istanbul: Kabalıcı, 2012), 67, 323, 412, 549-553, and 609-610. English edition: transl. A. R. Maxwell-Hyslop (UK: Wiley, 1996).

⁹ Byung-Chul Han, *Şiddetin Topolojisi (Topology of Violence)*, transl. Dilek Zaptçioğlu (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2016), 23. English edition: transl. Amanda DeMarco (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2018).

mother. The child is left to die, only to be found by a shepherd and given to a childless king; henceforth, the boy is called Oedipus. When Oedipus goes to the oracle of Delphi in order to better understand a rumour about himself which he overheard in the town he has become the prince of, he hears the prophecy told years earlier to Laius. He decides not to return to the city he has left in order to prevent these dreadful developments from happening. At a crossroads on his way out of Delphi, he has a quarrel with a man he does not know and kills him. Hurling curses at his murderer before dying, this man is none other than his father, Laius. Oedipus arrives at the doors of Thebes, guarded by a Sphinx. By answering the Sphinx's question, he saves the local people (incapable of such a feat) from its enslavement. The city's widow queen Jocasta and kingship are offered to this wise savior. Hereafter, Oedipus is married with his mother and has four children, who are his siblings as well: Antigone and Ismene, Polynices and Eteocles. An inquiry, caused by a prophecy requested to repel a plague besetting the city, reveals Oedipus' true identity. Jocasta kills herself when she realises whom she has married. Oedipus, on the other hand, punctures his own eyes, curses his sons who do not support him, and leaves Thebes together with Antigone.

Throughout this adventure, Antigone bears witness to two developments; her eyes, which had to watch the disintegration of her family in silence, have now become her father's. She shares his long exile with him. Antigone learns that the dead possess an exchange value when, after her uncle and brother call Oedipus back to Thebes, she witnesses her father's refusal and wish for King Theseus to keep his bones in Athens. After receiving guarantee that his bones will be safely kept after his demise, Oedipus surrenders to death. Antigone then returns to Thebes. This time, another hardship awaits her. Thebes is at war. Eteocles, who stayed on the throne when he should have left it to his brother, and the latter, Polynices, who comes to claim his own right to it with the help of a foreign army, both kill themselves in combat, thus fulfilling their father's curse. Their uncle Creon, who has become the king, honours Eteocles by burying him and forbids Polynices' funeral. This also means that properly mourning Polynice is forbidden. The failure to properly accomplish the burial ritual of the dead is a deep show of contempt and disgrace. By hindering those rituals, which are supposed to be upheld through numerous and detailed tasks by the men outside and women within the house,¹⁰ Creon tramples down on both the family of the deceased and Hades himself. That is exactly where Sophocles' *Antigone* starts.

The people's "harsh and unabated plights are tragedy's raw material", according to Campbell.¹¹ Thebes' very rock, soil, earth and what lies underneath are infused with a traumatic memory, made up of countless toils piled up on top of one another. The dismemberment of bodies in the space where Antigone's brother Polynices' corpse is left to feed birds and scavenging dogs is a means of communication between the gods and the people. It has been turned into a myth as the reflection of the will of rulers to be acknowledged, of their obstinacy and rage. In Sophocles' play, the ruling power has become a worldly entity, taking a leaf from the divine. In his famous tirade, in the first part of the play, Creon equates his own worldly rule with the divine authority, his grandeur with that of Zeus:

*I call God to witness that if I saw
my country headed for ruin,
I should not be afraid to speak out plainly;
and I need hardly remind you that
I would never have any dealings with an
enemy of the people.
No one values friendship more highly than I;
but we must remember that friends made
at the risk of wrecking our Ship are not real
friends at all.
[154-159]*

The knowledge of how to discipline the people by means of pain, destitution and punishment has been passed on from the gods; or rather, oppression has been legitimised by taking the gods as an example for the people. By eclipsing the fact that Eteocles has infringed a tacit agreement, Creon reciprocates the crime of coming "back with fire and sword against his native city and the shrines of his fathers' gods, [... of] spill[ing] the blood of his blood and sell[ing] his own people into slavery" [166-169] with his "law", without weighing the rightfulness of Polynices' claim.

The play opens with a prologue, where Antigone shares her decision of burying Polynices no matter how with her sister Ismene. Antigone will go against Creon's rule. She performs the symbolic ritual of covering her brother's body twice.¹² When caught during the second performance and brought before Creon, both engage in an oratory dispute where she will not leave the upper hand. She will not deny her actions; far from it, she stands firm behind them. Antigone's betrothed, Creon's last living son

¹⁰ Nicole Lorau, *Mothers in Mourning*, transl. Corinne Pache (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 18-19.

¹¹ Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* (London: Secker&Warburg, 1960), 50.

¹² Larau indicates that the participation of the women from the family, as well as its duration, in the burial ritual as performed in the cemetery in ancient Greece, was limited (1998: 19). In this respect, Antigone actually accomplishes a man's task. Therefore, Antigone's course of action, as Butler has highlighted, can be qualified as "manly". Apart from being "rebellious" in disrupting the traditional order of things, her actions are also anomalous in terms of gender (Butler, 2007: 21).

Haimon, strives to convince his father to forego his unjust decision by depicting in masterful rhetoric how his obstinacy is viewed from the outside, but fails to achieve his goal. Refusing to stain his hands with Antigone's blood, Creon sentences her to a slow death by having her locked in a cave. This princess of Labdacid descent meets her demise by committing suicide while locked alive in Thebes. As she heads toward death, she professes to be on her way to "be with my own" [715], finding solace in the idea that she will soon "see my father again, and you, mother, And dearest Polyneices –dearest indeed" [717–718]. In this womb-like cave, after addressing "Thebes, and you my fathers' gods, And rulers of Thebes" [731–732], Antigone, almost in a motion back to the beginning, accomplishes a ritualistic coming together. Antigone has been first her father's sister, then her father's mother following her mother's suicide, and buried her two brothers. She finally completes her harsh story, her own part in the long-lasting chain of curses in the ancestry of Thebes' founders.

As for Creon, he is made restless by the prescient words of the prophet Tiresias, depicting how he broke a law of nature. He hurries to the cave where he had Antigone locked with the intent of repairing his fault, only too late. We learn from the Messenger that Haimon, who was there, moved by his woe and rage, tried unsuccessfully to attack Creon before taking his own life, thrusting the sword he brandished against his father in his own chest. When she hears of Haimon's death, Eurydice, who lost another son to war, commits suicide as well. The first suicide by a woman in the family was committed by Jocasta, Antigone's mother. When looking back at Antigone's, followed by Eurydice's suicides today, these may be interpreted as the women's response to patriarchal order, but in those days when life was worshipped, this act would more probably have been considered as a reflection of women's weakness. After such devastation, all that Creon is able to do is blame himself. As for the chorus, representing the people, it walks away from the scene, reiterating an admonition for comprehension and common sense.

Sophocles' dramatic strategy is not driven by binary oppositions such as those pronounced by Creon as we saw earlier –good-bad, friend-foe, traitor to the nation-patriot- or elsewhere in the play, such as brightness-obscurity, household-city, woman-man, hatred-love, dirty-clean, customs-laws. Undoubtedly, these antagonisms fuel the dramatic conflict and provide endless opportunities for the play to flow, and for dispute to happen. However, the staging of impossible choices and/or the confrontation of the rightful with the rightful is precisely what creates tragedy. In this respect, this title by Lacan regarding Antigone is a much more accurate observation: "Antigone is caught between two deaths."¹³ The confrontation brought about by the tragedy between Antigone –who stands up for the laws of family and of ancient land, i.e. for the rights of the dead- and the laws established by men, advocated for by Creon –who appears from the very start as an accomplished statesman- may hint at such a dichotomous choice. Yet, one can easily infer from Creon's insistence on Zeus, and from Antigone's on Hades, that a preference is not wished for. Choosing one of these gods, either the celestial or the subterranean world, weighing the divine laws against the state's, only makes the tragic dilemma superficial. Indeed, Sophocles does not seem to be willing for a preference to be made; the quandary he lays out does not glorify either one of these choices. He states that those who will not listen to/hear/see their neighbour, who are deaf to the form of dialogue in the fields of politics, life or art –despite their use of "the laws then, and the lawmakers" [538], despite their claim to have been born "to join in love, not hate" [418]- will not be able to behold the stability that they aim for. In a sense, what we call life experience defines the amount of what we accumulate in terms of common sense. It tells us that since this ability was given to us, it is our duty to exercise it collectively. While dispensing these admonishments, the text's first chorus' song reminds humans of their humanity, and indicates a boundary: because "...He has made himself secure –from all but one: In the late wind of death he cannot stand." [293–294]. One naturally wonders, toward the end of the play, which situation is worse: going to the unknown world of death, hoping for an ultimate reunion with the loved ones, or losing all of them and being condemned to continue living while being the cause of their loss? In the very beginning of the play, Antigone admits to her "fault". On the other hand, at the end of the play, Creon admits to being responsible for the three suicides that took place. That is precisely where the relation established between the spectator, who has witnessed dreadful events, and the chorus bears special importance. The chorus, arguing that happiness can be achieved through common sense by obeying the gods' will, soothes the spectators' awe by giving them a roadmap of sorts. That is where Butler's words gain additional meaning: "Violence against those

¹³ Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis: 1959–1960*, transl. Dennis Porter (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 270.



Levent Yıldız, *Antigone*
2017, Video installation

who are already not quite living, that is, living in a state of suspension between life and death, leaves a mark that is no mark."¹⁴

Levent Yıldız' installation titled *Antigone*, exhibited in Aksanat in 2018, and included in the *Hafıza Merkezi's* selection, presents an ironic proposition by forming a chorus composed of Antigones. Yıldız displays footage from nine different *Antigone* films or plays through nine different screens simultaneously. Multiplied by image and sound, these Antigones bring together examples from different languages, and partly reveal the visual layers of the image of Antigone. On the other hand, they digitally transform a resistance symbol, a figure that became prominent by rising against power, into a cacophonous chorus. Sophocles' chorus, representing the people, might seem to express the same views regarding issues ranging from today's contemporary society to a completely different social fabric, the beginning of a process of dispersal of the subject before its individuation, the dissipation of the values pertaining to contemporary humans' universe. Yet, it also seems to hint at a collapse which is linked to other networks of meaning, and hampers communication. I must add that the very first time I looked at Yıldız' *Antigone*, it reminded me of the question raised and answered by Lacan: "What does one find in *Antigone*? Primarily, one finds Antigone."¹⁵

The memory of Antigone in Turkey

The *Hafıza Merkezi's* selection contains works from the visual and performing arts from

as many as 40 venues and events (festivals and biennials), spanning the course of the years 2000–2019. Among those, some works, such as *Bir Dağın Başı* (*Somewhere in the Mountains*, 2014), the video by Ferda Yılmazoğlu and Pınar Pamuk, Levent Yıldız' *Antigone* (2017) which I already mentioned, or Cengiz Tekin's *Untitled* (2008) video, however not related to any actual staging, are powerful works with strong references to Antigone. The stagings included in the selection consist of the re-writing of *Antigone* by *Stüdyo Oyuncuları* (The Studio Players), *Euridike'nin Çığlığı* (*Eurydice's Cry*, 2006), the production of Sophocles' *Antigone* (2012) by the Diyarbakır City Theatre and *Antigone2012* (2012) by Şermola Performans. The probability of Antigone stagings to carry a potential for being a platform, for being the voice of those silenced by authoritarian regimes disguised as democracies, has prompted me to look at what was left outside of this selection in the "theatrical" field. In a way, the inventory that follows took shape as a result of this curiosity.¹⁶

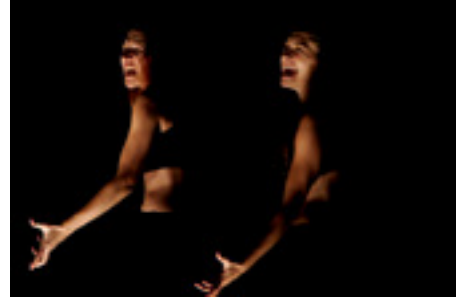
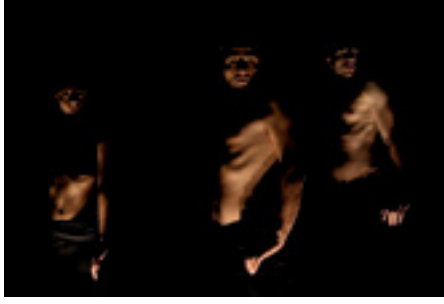
When probing into the memory of this terrain, the earliest piece of data related to *Antigone* we come across concerns a translation. Vittorio Alfieri's *Antigone* (1783), published in 1848 by the Lazaradiris printing house, is an Italian play translated into Greek in Istanbul. It is not clearly known whether the play was staged or not.¹⁷ We do know that Arusyak Papazyan, who was a prevalent female lead in Armenian theatres during the 1860s, was famous for her interpretations of Antigone but unfortunately, we lack any historical data regarding this partic-

¹⁴ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London and New York: Verso, 2004), 36.

¹⁵ Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 250.

¹⁶ This inventory was completed through the compilation of resources accessed in a short period, and does not include amateur theatrical works hardly accessible.

¹⁷ Metin And, "Eski İstanbul'da Yunan Sahnesi (The Old Istanbul's Greek Stage)", *Tiyatro Araştırmaları Dergisi*, issue: 3, Ankara (1972): 89.



Stüdyo Oyuncuları, *Euridike'nin Çığlığı* (*Eurydice's Cry*)
2006, Play

ular play's production.¹⁸ We also know that the Karayanni opera company, which also visited the *Yeni Tiyatro* (New Theatre) in their tour in 1889, had an *Antigone* in their programme. The company also went to Izmir but we lack information as to whether the whole opera or only a selection of arias was presented.¹⁹ We know that the Tavoularis and Pantopoulos companies, merged in 1900 at the Odeon Theatre, had a common production of Sophocles' *Antigone* in Greek.²⁰ In 1910, the Kyveli-Pyrst company also came to the Odeon Theatre for its own production of Sophocles' *Antigone*.²¹ Both the Rozalia Nika-Fyrst company in 1911 and the Kyveli Adrianou company in 1912 brought their own representations of *Antigone* to the Variety Theatre.²² Sadly, these findings, while indicating the existence in those years of an audience for plays staged in Greek, also underpin its absence nowadays. The gaps and incompleteness of these data actually shed light on the intentional amnesia that exists in the field of archive/record keeping.

Sophocles' *Antigone* was the first ancient Greek play presented under the aegis of the newly formed young republicans, looking up to the west, and was staged at the *Tatbikat Sahnesi* (Praxis Stage) by Carl Ebert for the 1941–42 season.²³ The text was included in the Ministry of National Education's classics series with its translation by Sabahattin Ali in 1941. Both the title of Yalçın Kaya's book, *Bozkırdan Doğan Uygarlık Köy Enstitüleri: "Antigone'den Mızraklı İlmihal'e"* (*The Village Institutes, Civilisation Born from Moorland: "From Antigone to Speared Catechism"*), and an anecdote recounted in it, show how Antigone's adventure in Turkish took off as the representation of an ideal. During his visit to a village institute, the president of the Republic İsmet İnönü asked a young girl he met there what she was carrying with her, and was very impressed when she pulled from her pouch a copy of Sophocles' *Antigone* alongside her provisions. He was actually enthralled by the image of this Anatolian girl reading a newly translated classic, which he viewed as a hopeful manifestation of the republican enlightenment.²⁴

When scanning through the State Theatres' archive, one notices that, apart from the first production of *Antigone* during the 1941–42 season, numerous versions of the play were staged across the years. These productions, which include Anouilh's (Ankara State Theatre) and Brecht's (Adana State Theatre) versions, were presented to the audiences of the State Theatres of Adana (Brecht, 2009–2010), Ankara (Anouilh, 1949–1950/1979–1980; Demirel 1974–1975; Sophocles, 2005–2006), Istanbul, Izmir (1992–1993) and Trabzon (Demirel and Sophocles, 1998–1999). The *Antigone* written by Kemal Demirel in 1966, which was translated into German and English, was included in the commemoration programme of the 25th anniversary of the Ankara State Theatre in 1974.²⁵ During the 2005–06 season at Ankara's İrfan Şahinbaş Stage, Ayşe Emel Mestçi staged

¹⁸ Şârasan, *Türkiye Ermenileri Sahnesi ve Çalışanları* (*The Turkish Armenian Stage and Its Workers*), transl. Boğos Çalgıcioğlu (Istanbul: bgst, 2008), 43.

¹⁹ And, "Eski İstanbul'da Yunan Sahnesi," 95.

²⁰ Ibid., 99.

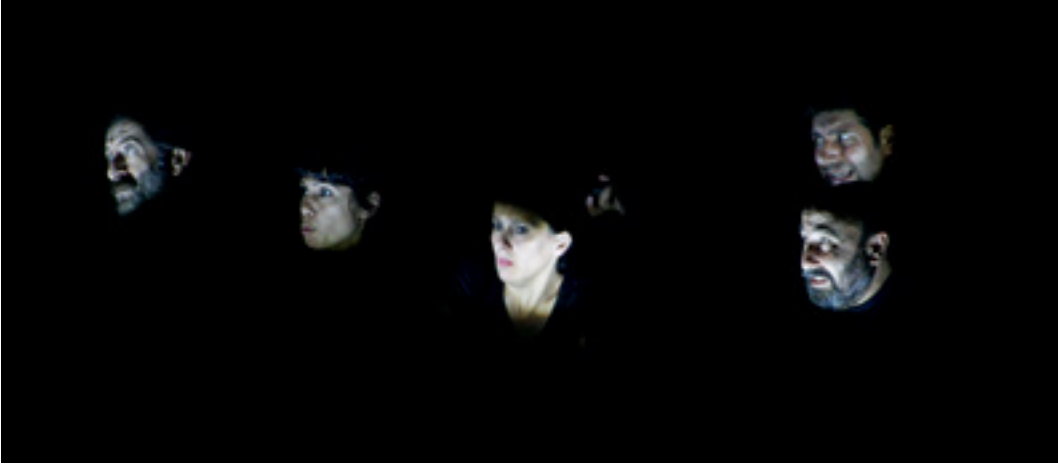
²¹ Ibid., 103.

²² Ibid., 105.

²³ Dikmen Gürün, "Sophocles in Turkish Theatre" (unpublished lecture produced during the Arc-Net XIth International Conference in Delphi, 2004), 3.

²⁴ Yalçın Kaya, *Bozkırdan Doğan Uygarlık Köy Enstitüleri: "Antigone'den Mızraklı İlmihal'e"* (*The Village Institutes, Civilisation Born from Moorland: "From Antigone to Speared Catechism"*), 2nd volume (Istanbul: Tıglat, 2001), 132.

²⁵ Gürün, "Sophocles in Turkish Theatre," 4.



Diyarbakır City Theatre, *Antigone*
2012, Play

a three hour-long *Antigone*, in its translation by Güngör Dilmen, which deeply transformed the text's inner dynamic. During the 2011-12 season, not only was *Antigone in New York* (Janusz Glowacki) staged for the first time in Turkey under the direction of Faik Ertener based on a rewriting, but Sophocles' *Antigone* was also interpreted under the direction of Kenan Işık in its translation by Sabahattin Ali. Kenan Işık's interpretation led to a first: the use of a lament by Aynur Doğan in a State Theatre. 2012 was definitely a prolific year, bringing unique initiatives regarding *Antigone* in Turkey, as it saw two *Antigone* stagings in Kurdish, which can be interpreted as a coincidental consequence of the "(Kurdish) opening" which occurred in those years. Since these two plays were included in the *Hafıza Merkezi*'s selection, I will soon have the chance to go into more details about them.

In other state-supported institutions, *Antigone*'s adventure was shorter-lived. *The Antigone of Sophocles*, written by Brecht, was staged in 1994 at the Bakırköy Municipal Theatre under the direction of Georgian director Robert Sturua, and included in the Istanbul Theatre Festival's programme. The only *Antigone* whose trajectory went from the Darülbeydi to the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality City Theatres was the production of Sophocles' *Antigone* directed by Macit Koper during the 2004-05 season. The same institution hosted *Antigone*, interpreted by Roberto Ciulli, in a production by the Theater an der Ruhr in 2005.

It is rather more difficult to identify and track *Antigone* by referring to the archives of private theatres. The first play which the Kenter siblings performed as the *Kent Oyuncuları* (Kenters) after they came to Istanbul, during the 1960-61 season, was Anouilh's *Antigone*. Later on, Yıldız Kenter directed a radio play version of Sophocles' *Antigone* for the TRT; this version is still accessible online.

Antigone is also one of the nine strong female figures appearing in *İçimdeki Çığlık* (*The Scream I Carry Inside*), the play composed of eleven texts, staged by Genco Erkal during the 1995-96 season. This production by the *Dostlar Tiyatrosu* (Fellows Theatre), co-directed by Mehmet Ulusoy and Özgür Yalım, where Jülide Kural interpreted all nine characters, was one of the most acclaimed theatrical works staged that year.

1997 saw the advent of a historical first in private theatres. Sophocles' *Antigone* was staged in both a private theatre and brought to the stage in a translation –that of Güngör Dilmen– from the Greek original for the first time. What further distinguished this production directed by Mahir Günşiray, was the interpretation of all the roles, including that of Creon, by women. The last staging in private theatres was that of Anouilh's *Antigone*, directed by Eraslan Sağlam at the Tatavla Stage (2016).²⁶

The sad story of the loss of a polyglot culture in the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the republic transpires throughout *Antigone*'s adventure in Turkey. We are entitled to consider that the figure of *Antigone* was turned into a symbol during the first years of the republic in light of the cultural policies designed at that period. Its potential for the purpose of conveying a critical insight began to be noticed, especially after the early 90s, but overall, it remained insufficiently put to use, despite befitting the country's atmosphere particularly well.

²⁶ Being unfinished, the theatrical works in preparation for the 2020 season were not included in the present study.



Şermola Performans, *Antigone2012 (Çardeh Sal Berê)*
2012, Play

The Antigones appearing in the *Hafıza Merkezi's* selection

One of the most impressive works in the *Hafıza Merkezi's* selection is *Euridike'nin Çığlığı (Eurydice's Cry)*, written and directed by Şahika Tekand in 2006. This work, a particularly creative example of re-writing of Sophocles' *Antigone* proposed by Tekand, premiered in the now defunct AKM (Atatürk Cultural Centre).

In Sophocles' *Antigone*, Eurydice speaks once and acts twice. She hears what is being said and exits the stage, asks what has happened and learns that her only son who had survived is now dead. We hear no more from her, and merely learn from a parenthesis that she leaves the stage silently. Later on, we learn that she has killed herself. Earlier in the play, Eurydice already lost a son to a battle between brothers, in a manner reminiscent of the sacrifice of Iphigenia at the beginning of the Trojan War. Still surrounded by the fog of loss, her mourning suddenly doubles, and she cannot stand the pain. The only answer she can give, with her body, to Creon, the person who is responsible for all this, is committing suicide. Her departure amounts to a colossal, incriminating question mark. By managing to build up a strong play from this silent figure, Tekand gives a voice to Eurydice, a character cramped within parentheses in the original text. She allows for her mourning, for her voice, withheld in the pit of her stomach, to come out in a scream. By doing so, she achieves a completely different effect than the silent being who quietly withdraws and eventually kills herself in Sophocles' play. The voices of all the women in the play, that of Antigone, Ismene and those in the chorus, almost become one; Eurydice's scream merges with Antigone's action. Eurydice's deed is as startling as Antigone's; she too demands change and, in order to pave the way for it, she offers her own annihilation. The play is staged on the basis of the precondition that the actor undergo the ritualistic threshold experience of tragedy. Eurydice is on the verge of achieving her own silent cycle. In the immediate aftermath of her tirade, she will "head to Hades, leaving the echo of her voice in the darkness", and surrender to the silence of her own death. Before departing, she builds up a curse pattern well befitting tragedies in her tirade: speaking "in the name of all the victims of all the cities of the earth, from the very heart of darkness, from beneath torture's sun", she curses "the lips sealed for years". It is as though she has become one with the earth (Gaia); seeing how horrendous it has become, she wishes to take back "the life she gave birth to". This is a scream which the Saturday Mothers/People may join in with all their might as it flies from the AKM right down to the front of the Galatasaray High School. As though the spirit at the heart of Antigone's tragedy had been breathed into another tragedy.

As mentioned previously, two performances in Kurdish, structured in entirely different ways, were added to the memory of Antigone in Turkey in 2012. The first was the production of Sophocles' *Antigone* at the Diyarbakır City Theatre, under the direction of Celal Mordeniz. Because of the impossibility to access the seized archive of the theatre, dismissed after an appointed administrator took over the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality, the limited information I could obtain on this play, which I could not view, was given to me by its director during our interview. Celal Mordeniz, the director of the first staging of *Antigone* in Kurdish, indicates that he followed René Girard's reading of Oedipus in his interpretation of *Antigone*. He adds that, consequently, he chose to establish a structure where each character would be interpreted by all the ac-

tors, where everyone would impersonate every character because he wished to underpin the conflict between identicals in a universe where individual differences have been erased. Butler too speaks of such kinships in her commentary on Antigone.²⁷ Mordeniz' preference also aims at eschewing a structure which follows the characters, for a better grasp of the feeling of the story's core.

Şermola Performans, which produces theatrical works in Kurdish in Istanbul, incubated three confrontational plays at its inception. After *Karabasan (Nightmare)*, which focused on the story of a woman who collects paper waste for a living, and *Disko 5 No'lu (Disco Nr. 5)*, which challenged us to acknowledge the horrendous detaining conditions of inmates of the Diyarbakır jail, *Antigone2012* is the third of these confrontational plays. As I pointed out earlier, there is an affinity linking *Antigone2012*, written and directed by Berfin Zenderlioğlu, and the video titled *Bir Dağın Başı (Somewhere in the Mountains)*. Zenderlioğlu composed her text with the help of the footage from the documentary by Veysi Altay, following a group of people in their search for the children and spouses they lost, based on confessions published in the Radikal daily newspaper in 2012. After they lose all hope of finding them alive, their struggle continues in order to find their remains and bury them in proper manner.

The play is built around a powerful idea. Among the siblings of 2012's Antigone, one is viewed as a martyr, the other as a terrorist by the state. The Woman carrying the memory of Antigone tries to find the remains of her brother, to provide them a tomb. In the pursuit of this goal, still barely 14 years old, she follows the trail of her brother's murderer, whom she comes eye to eye with, and goes as far as to marry him in order to accomplish her plan. The play takes place during this pair's, the Woman and the Man's wedding night. The grave which Antigone enters before dying and the 2012's Antigone's wedding night both convey a similar time/space atmosphere of brink. Zenderlioğlu creates the scene in such a way that the audience has no choice but to pay attention to two people lying on the ground. Thus, the audience experiences a feeling of uneasiness from the very moment they sit down to watch the play. This opening prompts the spectator to reflect on bodies stepped over by silence.

The image of dead bodies stepped upon by way of silence brings us to Cengiz Tekin's *Untitled* (2008) video. Part of the *Ateşin Düştüğü Yer (Where Fire Has Struck)* exhibition organised for the 20th anniversary of the Foundation for Human Rights in Turkey, the video shows a space where an anonymous dead body is being hurled and dumped by men in suits wearing black sunglasses, personifying the enforcers of Creonesque thought.



Cengiz Tekin, *Untitled*
2008, Video

The Man in the play is such a creature. We know that the relatives of this man being hurled on the ground will wait for him to come back home until all hope is gone, that they will follow his traces, ask the authorities, not abandon their search when no answers come, and at least strive to find his remains. As for the Woman in the play, she acts in the name of her mother and father, consumed by this endless wait. In the beginning of the wedding night, she manages to tie the Man, in a purportedly erotic game. Once the man is bound, she guides him to his own memories when he was 14 years old, setting up an atmosphere of interrogation. She tries to help the man recall his memories and answer the questions by placing his head inside an aquarium. (This aestheticised, sterilised form of a violence which has gradually become implemented is highly unsettling.) At one point, the Man disposes of his bonds and, by telling the Woman how he was aware of her plans from the start, changes the scene's balance of power. It is a confrontation without a winner.

When one learns that the notions of remembering, forgetting and missing, central to that of mourning, are all derived from the same etymological root in Kurdish, that of *bîr*, meaning a well, one better understands how pain is nestled in the language.²⁸ In the time of the play, the year 2012, a woman, an Antigone, is still begging for a grave for her brother. She is hop-

²⁷ Judith Butler, *Antigone'nin İddiası: Yaşam ile Ölümün Akrabalığı (Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death)*, transl. Ahmet Ergenç (Istanbul: Kabcacı, 2007), 45. English edition: (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

²⁸ See Nermin Saybaşıllı, *Mıknatıs-Ses: Rezonans ve Sanatın Politikası (Magnetic Voice: Resonance and the Politics of Arts)* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2020), 172.

ing to erect a stone by her brother's body, to take a bit of earth from the grave and carry it to her mother and father's grave, and to put a little more inside a bottle for herself, mix it with water and drink from it in order to soothe the pain in her chest and complete the cycle of mourning. In that sense, this play by Şermola Performans reflects a pain spawned by an unbreakable, permanent violence which resists time in this terrain. By stringing together the archaic with present-day, it acts as a reminder of the endlessness of violence.

As a matter of fact, only a short time, three years later, the winds of the "solution process" and "democratic opening" suddenly turned over; the dead body of Hacı Lokman Birlik was dragged, tied at the rear of an armored vehicle, further legitimising this state of things as "standard procedure" and using it as a means of disciplining the people. In the immediate aftermath, the corpse of Taybet Ana was left out on the street, that of 10 year-old Cemile hidden in a refrigerator. However, the care given to the burial of the dead in due process is dated back to between 90.000 and 100.000 B.C.²⁹ Mourning rituals are ancient, universally accepted operations. They are tasks performed not only for the departing but for those who stay behind as well. As those who suffer losses see their beloved ones off to the unknown or to probable emptiness, rituals help them understand and accept these entirely new situations they find themselves in, and go through painful steps together with the society they are a part of. Especially in the case of unnatural, violently provoked losses, tormenting those who survive by depriving them of the dead's body constantly sears the mourners' suffering and turns it into a never healing open wound.

For as long as a satisfying answer to Judith Butler's question: "What makes for a grievable life?"³⁰ stays that far away, the memory of Antigone in Turkey will obviously prevail, its load growing ever heavier.

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²⁹ W. M. Spellman, *Ölümün Kısa Bir Tarihi (A Brief History of Death)*, transl. Ahmet Bora Pekiner (İstanbul: Can, 2017), 34. English edition: (London: Reaktion Books, 2014).

³⁰ Butler, *Precarious Life*, 20.

The Possibilities of Memory and Posthuman Bodies: Techno-Monsters and Ghosts

**Aslı
Zengin**

What do we call a body? What makes something a body? Does what we call a body always pertain to a human or an animal? Once we focus our attention on such notions as violence, memory and testimony, what can we say about other forms of what we call a body, beyond human-kind, ahead of it? For instance, what does the posthuman body, or the posthuman embodied form of the state, of fascism, of genocide, of misogyny, of homophobia and transphobia correspond to? These were the questions which guided me as I perused the archive of contemporary art in Turkey through the last twenty years (2000–2019), brought together by the Memory and Arts project.

In this essay, I will examine the works which have encouraged me to ask myself these questions as a social scientist, and consider the body outside of the human-centric approach, taking other possibilities into account. I will try to understand the body as human-related, yet not entirely explainable by the human, within the framework of a togetherness, an aggregation, an assemblage which gathers other beings, objects and affects. By stepping outside of the common, human-oriented understanding of the body, the works which I have selected for this project examine the body's posthuman modes of being, of representation and of construction. Thus, I aim to point out the multiple modes of bodily construction, in other words the multiplicity of bodies regarding the memory and the testimony of violence in Turkey.

Methodologically, I have organised the selected works into two groups. The first group involves art pieces that mostly concern the relationship between technology, the machine and the body. I will examine these pieces with an approach inspired by scholarship like Donna Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto* (2006), which centres on the posthuman. The artworks I will concentrate on pertain mainly to cruel corporal forms and techno-monsters existing in Turkey's geography. The second group of artworks addresses the posthuman embodied ways of witnessing cruelty or resisting monstrosity. I will discuss body forms or corporeality brought about by ghosts, the disappeared, ruins, debris, wreckage, the void and stories as they engage in relationships with the material world.

Techno-Monsters

In her Introduction to *Representations of the Post/Human* (2002), Elaine Graham stresses that technology is not an abstract, monolithic or culturally universal force. In order to support this thought, she invites us to contemplate the place occupied by the digital, cybernetic and bio-medical technologies in our lives. The fiction which we call the human is now a being whose definition is constantly evolving, constantly being reinterpreted through these current technologies. Technologies do not only correspond to

empirical objects instrumentalised by humans. They also possess the capacity to establish and shape humans' existence. Hence, according to Graham, one may argue that technology possesses an ontological force: it can create multiple worlds, people and selves. The body too, just as the human does, is affected by this state of things, leading us to multiplicities, both conceptually and empirically speaking. First and foremost, the boundaries of the human body are being drawn anew. It is no longer possible to follow a traditional approach to the body, according to which the latter ends with its skin. To cite Graham once more, we bear witness as to how technology extends and breaks the skin. The skin no longer forms the body's limit. We are confronted not only with a posthuman situation, i.e. a situation beyond human, but also with post-corporal situations, i.e. situations beyond the body.

Haraway discusses the best examples of this in her *A Cyborg Manifesto*. According to Haraway, the cyborg is a hybrid, a crossbreed that comes into existence out of the combination of machine and organism. It is a creature consisting of both social reality and fiction. One might even say a species. According to Haraway, the cyborg is a form of existence bearing hopeful possibilities. At the same time, the cyborg is a gateway toward a possibility which transgresses and defeats the boundaries of the human as we know of, inducing both fear and satisfaction.

Reversing this approach in a way, I would like to discuss how, contrarily to what Haraway claims, the body blended with technology and machinery does not always carry liberating, groundbreaking and transgressive meanings, but sometimes may also become the most visible form of violence and torture. In order to achieve this, I will be focusing on the posthuman body forms through which the state shows itself to us, making use of technology and violence. I prefer to call the technology-based embodied form of the state "the techno-monster". We encounter the state violence enacted by techno-monsters on a constant basis in our everyday lives. In contrary to the tendency to see the state as a distant, abstract and sublime source of power, an approach to the state through the lenses of these techno-monsters actually enables us to understand it as a form of organisation which can become a part of our everyday life at each instant, interfere in our daily life in all sorts of ways and penetrate even our most intimate areas with various techniques of embodiment.

With the technology and machines which it deploys, the state can build monstrous bodies through which it can come into existence in the realm of life. *Bu Bir Toros Değildir* (*This is not a Toros*¹, 2009), the photograph by Ali Bozan, demonstrates one of these monstrous bodies.

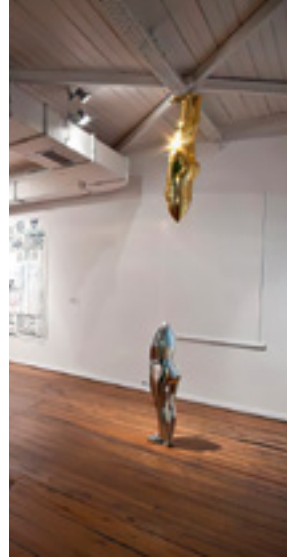
¹ Toros is a car model released in Turkey by Renault in 1989. Beside its widespread use among the civilian population, it has gained a reputation for being used by the Turkish National Police and Turkish Gendarmerie.

Ali Bozan, *Bu Bir Toros Değildir*
(*This is not a Toros*)
2009, Photograph



Köken Ergun, *TANKLOVE*
2008, Video





Elçin Ekinci, *Untitled*
2010, Installation

As we all know, the white *Toros* is a means of transportation, a machine, which brings to mind deep sufferings, especially in the Kurdish geography. By alienating the car's normal appearance through the extra doors he adds, Bozan actually underpins its meaning, astray from the accustomed one. He names the car in the picture "the *Toros Monster*". The additional door is actually a gateway to the state's dark corridors and chambers. A passage through which the state forces people into custody and disappearance. The white *Toros*' excessive number of doors swallow people, lose and destroy them. In that sense, the white *Toros* is not only a car, but rather a techno-monster, or monster-machine, which harms and terrifies people. One could actually call it an execution apparatus. Its white colour indeed has a lot to tell us. If we consider that the colour popularly attributed to ghosts is white, we can argue that this monster-machine serves a mechanism which transforms living bodies into ghosts. The white colour seems to recall the ghost haunting our daily lives or the whiteness of the dominant racial discourses. Or, if we consider that white is the colour of the shroud used to wrap the corpse for burial, it is also possible to regard the *Toros* as an instrument of winding and confining those it abducts and eliminates.

Köken Ergun's work *TANKLOVE* (2018) also gains meaning following the same logic. Ergun presents his viewers with a performative work based on a reenactment of the military show of force perpetrated on February 28 1997 in the early hours of the morning, in the shape of a tank convoy on display in Ankara's Sincan district. The way the military tank exhibited itself on the streets corresponds to yet another techno-monster body taken on by the state. As it moves in the streets, the techno-monster inscribes its domination in space. Touring the places of everyday life, it causes oppression, fear, tension and anxiety through its very presence. As we look at the tank, we can actually see one of the bodies of the state in its stark nakedness: a monster-machine infusing death and violence down to the deepest ends of the streets. In the process, death and violence carve their way in the shape of a constant threat in the very space of everyday life.

Pushing further, can something be said of those bodies which the state violence and killing have turned into cyborgs? In order to achieve this, I would like to give the example of Elçin Ekinci's sculpture installation, *Untitled* (2010). Remember Donna Haraway's definition of the cy-

Ali Mihrabi, *Duvarı Kırbaçlayan Makina*
(*Machine that Whips the Wall*)
2013, Installation



borg as a hybrid, a crossbred machine-body. In Ekinci's work, the sculpture of the child's body, united and unified with lead, reminds us of the countless children killed by the state, such as Uğur Kaymaz and Ceylan Önkol. 13 bullets, more than his own age, were found in Uğur's 12-year-old body after he and his father were executed in 2004 in Mardin's *Kızıltepe* district under the pretext that they were terrorists. The raw material of this half-bullet, half-child sculpture almost gives us the impression that it is composed of the very bullets that came out of Uğur's body. The sculpture is a remain of these machines which tear down a child's body with war technology. One can argue that this sculpture redraws the boundaries between war technology and the human, and even blurs them. Where does the child begin, where does he end, where does the bullet begin, where does it end, where does war begin, where does it end? All these questions haunt us as we look at this sculpture, without being able to answer them. We cannot assign clear-cut boundaries to either beginnings or endings. Our gaze hovers over the blurred borders of the body of a child designed, broken and eliminated by militarism and war technology. We find ourselves confronted, face-to-face with a child's body transformed into a bullet, with childhoods lived in the crossfire. It gives us an opportunity to remember that childhood does not bear the same universal and equal meanings for everyone.

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Another example of the cyborgification of bodies by the state is Şener Özmen's work *Bayrak (The Flag)*, 2010). In this photograph, we see a few men having stiff necks from looking up at a flag. Through this artwork, Özmen invites us to re-assess our understanding of the relationship between the state's ideology and cyborgness. In his interpretation of *Bayrak (The Flag)* published in the *Altüst* magazine, Abdulhalim Karaosmanoğlu comments on ideology as follows: "Through an ideological aesthetics that turns people into robots and uses their feelings and subjectivity for its own profit instead of plainly removing them, humankind, with the help of national anthems, is being customed into a community."² In other words, we are talking about a work which sees ideology itself and its operating process as technology. Here, bodies have lost their individual capacity for movement, or rather their individual movement capacity has been disrupted, worn out and assigned an immobile position by state intervention. We see mechanised bodies rather than embodied machines. One may define each one of these bodies as the state permeating people. Almost as it does in Metin Erksan's lo-

² Abdulhalim Karaosmanoğlu, "Kürdistan Sanatı: Şener Özmen (Kurdistan Art: Şener Özmen)," *Altüst Dergi*, 30.06.2015, <http://www.altust.org/2015/06/kurdistan-sanati-sener-ozmen/>.



cal adaptation of William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1973), *Şeytan* (1974), the state takes possession of bodies and achieves its own body through ours. Each body present in the image actually assumes the shape of a derivative of the gigantic body we call the state, and becomes a cyborg through the technology of ideology.

Pushing further still, what comes about from the fusion of the same violence and technology which contaminate our daily lives in a context devoid of humans? What does a form of violence signify when reduced to a technological perfor-

mance or merely a mechanical movement? We can contemplate Ali Mihrabi's work, *Duvarı Kırbaçlayan Makina* (*Machine that Whips the Wall*, 2013), in light of these questions. This work hails technology and machine as instruments for thought. What we are watching is actually a work of science fiction. It presents us with a violence technique produced by humans in the shape of the wall. We are placed face-to-face with a machine producing an imitation of a human function. It is a form of violence which people afflict on people, and on animals. Its connotations range from slavery to the current relationship



Sener Özmen, *Bayrak (The Flag)*
2010, Photograph

between people and animals. Which bodies and relationships does this demonstration of violence call to mind? Is there a body inside this artwork we are looking at or not? Is the body we are seeing inflicting violence or suffering from it? Where and how is the body attached to this work? A machine constantly whipping, without ever growing tired of it. Is it possible to consider this machine as a techno-monster too? Or, following a completely alternate interpretation, does it rather refer to a techno-resistance of sorts against existing borders and walls? This question of resistance brings me to the second group of works I referred to in the beginning of this essay.



Soner Ulu, *Cars*
2015, Photograph



Remains, Remnants and Ruins

Until this point, I have focused on the body forms brought about by the state in its relation to technology, machine and violence and its dehumanising function. Now, I will be evoking the testimonies, the stories, the words left behind by the remnants, ruins and wrecks of those people who were subjected to this violence. The objects, belongings and structures appearing in these works will concern the remains of those who have been dehumanised by the ruling power, and the process through which these remnants acquire life, that is, become embodied in a context of human-history and struggle.

In his work *Cars* (2015), Soner Ulu moves beyond humans and appeals to the power of objects in order to bear witness to the massacre which took place in 2014 in Kobane during the war waged against ISIS. That is why cars which have long lost all of their car attributes, or been dumped away, come to the foreground. The photographs show us wasted cars in front of torn down buildings. Each car stands, together with the places or buildings in front of which they are photographed, almost as a scream, expressing the violence which was experienced only a while ago. Ulu stresses how testimony can be achieved through lifeless objects, how cars can almost produce a voice, speaking of the material and the immaterial dimensions of violence, and even carrying violence within their own structure. As a result, we find ourselves almost as if looking at a corpse, left over from a living body.



Halil Altındere, *Mekap (Mekap Shoe)*
2013, Bronze sculpture

Another work is *Mekap (Mekap Shoe, 2013)*, Halil Altındere's bronze sculpture. The *Mekap* shoe model, which, in the dominant language, translates as "the terrorist shoe", is an object loathed, cursed, demonised and shown as something monstrous by the hegemonic power. By turning it into a sculpture, Altındere purifies it from these significations, moreover, exalts it. *Mekap* does not only remind us of the state's cruel techno-monster bodies and summon them for testimony, it also tells the story of the feet of counter-struggle, of guerilla, tramping the paths of resistance up in the mountains. Thus, we may read *Mekap* as the embodiment of the guerilla resisting the state's techno-monsters, literally stepping on them.

Sonia Balassanian's sculpture installation *Taşların Sessizliği (Silence of Stones, 2015)* proposes a similar conceptualisation of the body. Balassanian's work is made of the pumice stone extracted from the quarries situated on the Armenian side of the border between Turkey and Armenia, nearby the ancient city of Ani. It shows twelve sculptures of large heads, separated from their trunks, roughly carved, resting together on the ground. These dimension-wise imposing sculptures where bodies of earth, stone and flesh intertwine, also make up a symbol of how history weighs upon us. Twelve sculpture heads symbolising the past's weight are a hint at the Armenian socialist intellectuals arrested and executed on the Beyazıt Square in April 1915. With this work, Balassanian proposes a corporeal montage, blending and blurring the boundaries between land, geography and human bodies.



Sonia Balassanian, *Taşların Sessizliği*
(*Silence of Stones*)
2015, Installation

As for Neriman Polat's work *Elbise* (*Dress*, 2015), it leaves us face-to-face with another kind of body depiction. We face a dress hung in the middle of a room. It seems to hang there, together with the parts and lines of the body that it previously hosted. It is as though we were facing some sort of ghostly body that we cannot see. Yet, although we cannot see the body within the dress, we can feel it and perceive it. And as we feel it, we also realise that this body is no longer here, that it has gone, migrated elsewhere. While we look at the dress, we also look at the hollow which the body has left behind. The dress, which would have normally been brightly coloured, has been purposefully discoloured by the artist, and each one of its flowers turned black and white. A lament accompanies the dress. As it were, we are mourning while being forbidden to. Polat produced this work in 2015, at a time when the state raided the basements, penetrated people's houses, their very bedrooms, and tore everything apart, killing children and women indifferently in the Kurdish region. The same year, 57-year-old Taybet İnan, the mother of 11, was shot dead on her way back home after she visited her neighbour in the Silopi district of Şırnak. Her corpse stayed for 7 days in the street. These were the times when such an evil stalked the Kurdish region, striking even those who dared to take and bury her body. As we look at the dress, as we listen to it too, those who have not been mourned, not been lamented over reach us through the hollow they have left behind. As a matter of fact, reaching further beyond its own geography, the dress calls on us to feel the murders of other women too. It is as if an open invitation to contemplate in length the void left behind by all these women who were killed by men. As we

look at the hollow, we also listen to the lament. Our unease grows by the second. As we look at the void, we see and feel countless bodies of women who are actually not here with us anymore. We are left face-to-face with the gender of loss. It is as though we were looking at a gigantic funeral made up of hundreds of women.

Lastly, I would like to draw attention to Hera Büyüktaşçıyan's work *Önceki Günün Adasından* (*From The Island of the Day Before*, 2015). In this installation, a heap of notebooks covered in blue paper is piled up on top of one another on a table. Each of the notebooks bears the name of a *Rum* (Greek-Turkish) child who studied in this school. These notebooks form a cluster left unattended, made of the remains from the bodies of those they belonged to. Büyüktaşçıyan conceived this mound as an island, i.e. a topographic entity, but as I look at the notebooks, I can imagine all these pupils of the *Rum* School, paying attention to class, speaking with their friends, doing mischief, dozing off at their desks, raising their hands or buried in their books. These remains, in the shape of notebooks, now substitute for those *Rum* pupils who have been minoritised and whose numbers have plummeted because of racist and nationalist policies. The text which presented this installation in the 14th Istanbul Biennial in 2015 noted that it formed a bluish island growing just like a living organism in the following terms: "It creates an existential space both for the pupils who are here no more and for a society that has disappeared."³ As I look at this installation, I see an assemblage of the bodies of those children clinging together.

³ "Hera Büyüktaşçıyan: From the Island of the Day Before," İKSV, last accessed 25.01.2021, <http://14b.iksv.org/works.asp?id=31>.

Neriman Polat, *Eibise (Dress)*
2015, Installation



In Lieu of Conclusion

Techno-monsters and losses and ghosts reaching us through objects, ruins and void. All the artworks I have mentioned in this essay are related to the ways in which the memory, the testimony of violence reveal themselves to us through posthuman forms. The woman who could not be mourned, the child murdered as a terrorist, other children displaced from their schools and houses, executed revolutionary fighters, all have made their way to us through hollow, absence, remain or other posthuman, corporeal forms. That is why I have tried to highlight not only the human-oriented aspect of the relationship between memory and violence, but also those aspects that are human-related, yet not entirely explainable by the human. However, while we focus on these posthuman states, we should not forget the non-human conditions created by the state and social violence. In other words, I am talking about the ways in which the state dehumanises certain groups of people or denies them their humanness by means and techniques of violence. Hence, when we think of all this dehumanisation, how sufficient is the conceptualisation which we call posthuman, or beyond human? Can we think of the posthuman without a relation to the non-human, that which does not befit humans, in other words the *inhuman*? Or how can we think of it? As I leave these questions here for the taking, I remain persuaded that a lot more thinking has to be done on the intricate relation between posthuman bodies and bodies denied of their humanness.



Hera Büyüktaşçıyan, *Önceki Günün Adasından (The Island of the Day Before)*
2015, Installation



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The Time of Childhood: Home, Excavation and Memory

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**Umut Tümay
Arslan**



Lynn Randolph, *Millennial Children*
1992

"Facing the viewer, these millennial children ask if there can still be a future on this earth. [...] Smoking towers of a nuclear power plant loom in the background and a Stealth bomber dives toward the ground out of a lightningscorched sky. [...] Sober in their regard the children are not destroyed, but they are menaced by the apocalypse that engulfs the world. They are in the dangerous borderlands between reality and nightmare, between the comprehensive futurelessness that is only a dire possibility and the blasted futures of hundreds of millions of children that are a fierce reality now. These are the children whose witness calls the viewer to account for both the stories and the actualities of the millennium."¹

In the chapter titled "How Much Home Does A Person Need?" of his book *Beyond Guilt and Atonement*, Jean Améry objects to the idea that the nationalism's seizure of the term "home", and of the complex mental and emotional territory that forms around it, results in the negation of what home is.² As with his other objections, this too tends toward the "us" of critical-opponent thought. No doubt, the term home, and the

mental and emotional terrain that surrounds it, is filled with the likes of "embarrassingly sweet tones that are associated with [it]", "the banal wisdom of proverbs", "regional art and crafts", "regional literature", "regional foolery of all kinds", "intellectual inferiority" and "reactionary indolence".³ Within this nationalistic turmoil, all that is left for critical thinking is a psychopolitical position predicated on denial, such as that of being a "world citizen", at best incapable of transforming the terrain, or at worst pretending that the same nationalist terrain does not exist while being a part of it. Seemingly free from the relations of power as it gives the illusion of being able to speak from an empty, homogeneous, universal standpoint, the idea of world citizenship, morally immaculate, accommodates the current period particularly well. The temper of the epoch is not favorable to the idea of homeland." Thus spoke Améry.

Nationalism and the industrial society's progressivism have managed to fill the ground that formed around the idea of home so efficiently that the notion eventually seemed to refer only to what remained in the past, what was or would

¹ Donna J. Haraway, "Mutevazi_Tanik@İkinci_Binyil," *Başka Yer* ("Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium", *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium. FemaleMan@_Meets_OncoMouse™*) (New York and London: Routledge, 1997). / transl. Güçsal Pusar (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2010), 281.

² Jean Améry, "İnsan Yurda Ne Kadar İhtiyaç Duyar? ("How Much Home Does a Person Need?)," *Suç ve Kefaretin Ötesinde: Alt Edilmişliğin Üstesinden Gelme Denemeleri*, transl. Cemal Ener (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2015), 71. / *At the Mind's Limits. Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and its Realities*, transl. Sidney Rosenfeld and Stella P. Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 48.

³ Améry, "İnsan Yurda Ne Kadar İhtiyaç Duyar?," 71. / 48.

be relegated to the past. The questions of whether or not, and how much, people needed a homeland in the present, along with where that homeland was, were all evaded with answers that summoned folkloric, picturesque and outdated landscapes, tending toward reminiscing with exuberance. However, Améry insists on emancipating the homeland from the grip of romantic clichés and traditional concepts today, with "totally new and not determined by any conventional emotions recorded in literature"⁴. That homeland is not one that is or can be acquired afterwards. On the contrary, it forms at a young age, in parallel with our beginning to adopt and learn to make sense of the outer world; it is both present inside of us and a world we are inside of: "one learns one's mother tongue without knowing its grammar, one experiences one's native surroundings. Mother tongue and native world grow with us, grow into us, and thus become the familiarity that guarantees us security."⁵ If so, what is the language, the reality of homelandlessness, of homesickness like? What sort of reality does the loss of one's homeland, of one's mother tongue, and the transformation of the homeland and mother tongue into a hostile world produce? To begin with, such a reality possesses material aspects, easily observable with the naked eye: crossing borders clandestinely, going through border gates by procuring the necessary travel documents; their past lives abandoning, never to return, those kicked away from their country, those exiled. In his own exile, Jean Améry found something more than what most of those who are forced to abandon their homeland do. Above and beyond the loss of houses, of belongings, of meadows and hills, the loss of people; that of the language. While the friends who sat side by side in school, the neighbours, the wise, turn to as many "informers or bullies, at best, embarrassed opportunists", the exiled also lose their language.⁶ Améry expresses this loss of language on several planes: that of the language of his companions of misfortune always harping on the same subjects, of its contraction, but also that of the way all the German words' meanings changed for them; that of this language, which their comprehension of German reality rested upon, becoming hostile; that of their exclusion from it.⁷

The homesickness which took hold of Améry, as he himself indicated countless times, bears absolutely no trace of that sweet familiarity reminiscent of folk songs, of that sacredness glorified by emotional traditions. Just as the "memory of Auschwitz", homesickness simply never let go of him.⁸ This yearning which, as he himself put it, he "felt piercingly", can be described as an estrangement –nevermind the term's popularity– in Améry's case.⁹ "Suddenly, the past was buried and one no longer knew who one was."¹⁰ What Améry is touching upon is not only the loss of a sedentary world and the walk into that of the wanderer, the nomad, of exile; it is the transformation of the language and country he was born in into a hostile universe – as exemplified by his sudden realisation that he was speaking in the dialect of a region which an SS officer was a native of. As a consequence, his world, filled by a language which he thought not only was a part of him, but also that he was a part of, had turned him into someone incapable of saying "us" anymore. That is precisely where Améry gives a first answer to the question of how much one needs a home(land). The smaller the piece of one's homeland one carries after having left it behind, the more one feels the need for it. In the case of Améry, the homeland was lost entirely; because it turned into a place so foreign that he could no longer carry it inside himself, a language and world that plainly did not belong to him anymore. That is why he eventually depicts homesickness as the demolition of the self. For the person who suffers homesickness, the past, the "hostile homeland", becomes uprooted, defused, piece after piece, "[t]he combination of hatred for our homeland and self-hatred hurt".¹¹ The homesickness that resurfaced in the midst of the destruction of himself and his homeland made this pain unbearable, tells Améry. Historical practice, rather than psychoanalysis, could offer a cure for this yearning:

"What we urgently wished, and were socially bound, to hate, suddenly stood before us and demanded our longing. A totally impossible, neurotic condition for which there is no psychoanalytic remedy. The only therapy could have been history in practice. I mean the German revolution and with it the homeland's strongly expressed

⁴ Améry, "İnsan Yurda Ne Kadar İhtiyaç Duyar?," 74. / 50.

⁵ Ibid., 71. / 48.

⁶ Ibid., 64. / 42.

⁷ Ibid., 76-7. / 52-53.

⁸ Ibid., 65 / 43.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 75 / 51.

desire for our return. But the revolution did not take place, and our return was nothing but an embarrassment for our homeland, when finally the National Socialist power was crushed from without."¹²

The distinction between the act of breaking free of one's motherland willingly, honourably, by embracing cultural internationalism, and that of being forced to lose it, never to return. This distinction bears too much importance not to go unnoticed within Améry's writings. The objection to surrendering the idea of homeland to nationalism is also an objection to ignoring this distinction and to speaking as though it did not exist. If the experience of exile can be remembered as constantly "staggering on shaky ground", cultural internationalism, on the other hand, can only flourish on lands irrigated with the trust which only the homeland bestows: for one not to feel the need for a homeland, one must first and foremost possess one.¹³ The difference between André Gorz and Jean-Paul Sartre. Being a native Frenchman, enjoying the sense of trust endowed by the homeland, Sartre's ability to overcome his own patrimony, to even turn his back on it, not only was a lot easier, but also gave added value to his internationalism. Remembering that one may always overcome one's own self, and coming across powerful figures exemplifying this is undoubtedly important – as long as we do not forget how the economic chains of value are shaped by relations of power here. Gorz' (a half Jewish Austrian migrant, like Améry himself) "hectic search for identity", "longing for [...] that rootedness", must be considered in relation with this distinction.¹⁴ We need to be suspicious of those who claim to recognise internationalism or identitarianism wherever they see it. The way in which the time of childhood was left behind, that in which home and the homeland stayed in the past, their taking root inside of us or our incapacity to carry them with us all influence the need one feels for a homeland, one's questions and answers regarding the mental and emotional terrain surrounding their understanding of it. This homeland, which keeps popping up before us no matter how hard we try to keep away from it, is the time of childhood: "There is no "new home". Home is the land of one's childhood and youth."¹⁵

Artistic testimony, the angel of history, *fehlleistung*

When addressing his calls to German society, Améry failed to see the historic practice he was expecting as it took shape, or its power and potency to transform German reality and the German language. Perhaps the young Germans who succeeded in producing the hearing devices and eyeglasses which would enable them to access what he had written of were the cinematographers who, by publishing the *Oberhausen Manifesto* in 1962, pronounced the death of the *Papas Kino* (*Papa's Cinema*) in Western Germany. This young generation of directors, comprising Harun Farocki, Helke Sander, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Werner Herzog, Ulli Lommel, Wolfgang Petersen, Volker Schlöndorff, Margarethe von Trotta, Wim Wenders, Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, Helma Sanders-Brahms, Werner Schreier and Alexander Kluge, were willing to build the "New German cinema" by cutting all bonds with their forebears. Thomas Elsaesser allowed me to appreciate this rupture by proposing distinctions which shed light on this movement's significance in his eye-opening book, *German Cinema – Terror and Trauma: Cultural Memory Since 1945*.

The book deals with films related to the notion of the working through the past (*vergangenheitsbewältigung*). Life in the wake of the Holocaust and ruin in post-Second World War Germany. Elsaesser brings both the theory of trauma and the culture of memorialisation, as it unfolded in Europe's history, into question anew. The propinquity between the way the book apprehends films and its grasp of history is too important to go unnoticed: both are considered, not as pieces of museum collections frozen in time, but, on the contrary, in an approach open to constant renewal according to changing contexts. In that sense, it presents us with a form of understanding where current traumatic events compel us to redefine, to rethink our relation to the past, an understanding that takes into consideration this lurch toward the past from the present. Moreover, it examines the Holocaust, when considered in its singularity, together with our still bearing witness to countless examples that show Europe's insufficiency in dealing with the past. In bearing witness to this failure, from the historical amnesia generated by the "German economic miracle" of the 1970s –let us remember how Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (*Angst essen Seele auf*, 1974) was an objection raised against the consensus regarding this miracle and the belief that fascism had been overcome– to the enforced oblivion embedded in the culture of remembrance and memory. *Brutality in Stone* (*Brutalität in Stein*, 1961), the documentary by Alexander Kluge, which can be viewed as the

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 69. / 46.

¹⁴ Améry, "İnsan Yurda Ne Kadar İhtiyaç Duyar?," 71. / 46.

¹⁵ Ibid., 72. / 49.

starting point of the New German cinema, a film that chose to *remember not to forget*¹⁶ at a time when German cinema preferred to oblivate the past, objected precisely this culture.¹⁷

The concept which Elsaesser chose in order to discuss this apprehension of a past which we constantly go back to –or which constantly returns– belongs to Freud: that of *Fehlleistung*. This concept, which has been translated as *parapraxis* in English, signifies all manners of stumbling, slipping or dislocating occurring either in language, in memory or even physically. When it is activated in articulation with the working through the past, as is the case with Elsaesser, it becomes a particularly fertile ground, both poetically and politically speaking; because it allows one to see and identify the failures in the confrontation of the past, the latter's impossibility and the slips that occur when trying to achieve it. Bringing "defective acts" or "failed performance" to consciousness allows us to notice the insufficiency of a single interpretation, a single layer; it opens up the possibility of thinking –in relation to a dynamic field, stretching from the culture of denial to the relational movement of power, infiltrating everything, from the the phantom of fascism lying within the showcase of liberal democracy to the society of the spectacle and capitalist market culture– in an interrupted, fragmentary and tiered (according to my understanding) way.

This past has not passed in European history. When discussing this state of standstill, and asking questions about the boundaries of representation, Elsaesser also grants visibility to an aspect of New German cinema which allowed me to lay the foundations of the relation that I mentioned a little earlier. It is an aspect that surfaces when defining the difference between films that we can designate as belonging to the post-1990 didactics of confrontation with cultural memory and Germany's traumatic past, and the examples which the New German cinema presents us with. Toward the end of the 1990s, there was a tendency toward a positive representation of Jewish figures; on the other hand, nothing in particular distinguished the Jewish figures of the New German cinema. Some might be inclined to think that the latter group would be more prone to the working through the past. However, what we actually witness is such directors as Fassbinder, Farocki, Kluge and Sender including defective acts, and the impossibility of confrontation, in other words, all manners of stumbling and slipping, as a constitutive part of the representation. This perspective, conscious of its own inability to be master of the past, has managed to keep the past unforeclosed through the following creative way: the creation of dimensions, enactments, visual and sound relations that allow for the simultaneous staging of doing and being unable to, ability and inability, success and failure, success in failure, disrupting when uttering, and the defect in representation.¹⁸ In that sense, we should not forget the probability for the self-satisfaction of the post-1990 didactics of remembrance, prone to commemoration, and for a country proud of itself for having confronted its own past and overcome it, to become a mirror. Nor should we forget the following: works belonging or affiliated to the New German cinema –to name a few of the examples referenced in the book: *Sterne (Stars)*, Konrad Wolf, 1959; *Die Dritte Generation (The Third Generation)*, Fassbinder, 1979; *Das letzte Loch (The Last Hole)*, Herbert Achternbusch, 1981; *Aufschub (Respiration)*, Harun Farocki, 2007– have actually kept the past alive. For instance, according to Elsaesser, Farocki's *Aufschub* presents us with a highly powerful perspective bringing the failed performance to consciousness. The film is composed of the photographs shot by Rudolf Berslauer, a photographer sent to Auschwitz with his family in the autumn of 1944. These photographs were shot in the transit camp of Westerbork, designed for Jews from the Netherlands. These photographs, which were already used by Alain Resnais in *Night and Fog (Nuit et brouillard)*, 1955) are used here by Farocki, who took advantage of the absence of sound in such a way that the image continuity is broken through the use of intertitles in the shape of questions. According to Elsaesser, Farocki strives to bring interruption into the shield –immobilising the past– formed by the mess of knowledge that materialised around the Holocaust, the

¹⁶ See Eric Rentschler, "Remembering Not to Forget: A Retrospective Reading of Kluge's *Brutality in Stone*," *New German Critique*, no. 49 (1990): 23–41, last accessed 18.01.2021, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/488372.

¹⁷ In her commentary of Kluge's book *The Air Raid on Halberstadt, 8 April 1945 (Der Luftangriff auf Halberstadt am 8 April 1945, 1977)*, which consists in an account-memories of how Halberstadt, the city where he lived, was bombed down to a heap of rubble and debris when he was only 13 years old, the same book which Sebald referred to in the last talk of his *Air War and Literature*, Nurdan Gürbilek indicates that an anecdote which it contains is like the epitome of the national effort to remove the rubble: "Immediately after the bombing of the movie theatre, a worker was frantically cleaning up the debris with a fireman's shovel in order to be in time for the 2 o'clock screening." "Enkaz," *İkinci Hayat* ("Ruin," *Second Life*) (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2020), 48.

¹⁸ Thomas Elsaesser, *German Cinema – Terror and Trauma: Cultural Memory Since 1945* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 25.

institutionalisation of memory and the culture of remembrance that surrounds it. To open up room to think anew, for new information, to catch one's breath, to rest and to postpone by windind back, by returning to the same place again and again. To open up room for that which more evidence, more legal investigation will never fill up. For witnesses who have never encountered spectators capable of hearing or listening to what they are compelled to say.¹⁹

Farocki's archeological way of looking at archive images, operating a constant return to them, is a method which also allows for the recognition of the defective acts that form around images. According to Elsaesser's account, the girl staring at us relentlessly from inside a train in one of these images shot by Rudolf Berslauer was long thought to have been Jewish, and this image circulated under this assumption – until journalist Aad Wagenaar, by means of a meticulous research, shed light on how this unknown girl had both a name and a story. This girl, named Settela Steinbach, had come from the vicinity of Aachen and Maastricht, across Germany and Holland; she was a Sinti. Until this was uncovered in 1994, the image served to illustrate the ordeal of the Jewish people. These slips, which always occur, and will occur, in our relation with images, lead us to question the manners of thinking that emphasise learning from past mistakes, closing the past's file, proudly stating "never again" and to rethink the working through the past over and over again. A genocide can hide another; a manner of looking which *recognises* the genocide of the Roma and Sinti peoples can change the relation established with the image. In Elsaesser's words, images in a certain point in history do not easily come to a standstill; they travel with us, accompany us and sometimes even take precedence over us.²⁰

In 1966, the year when Améry's *Beyond Guilt and Atonement* was published, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, then 21 years old, wrote a play titled *Nur eine Scheibe Brot (Just a Slice of Bread)*. This play, composed of ten scenes, tells of Fricke, a young man who wants to make a film that does not fit with the official post-war narration of Auschwitz. Fricke is afraid to minimise the Holocaust, to trivialise it by turning it into a spectacle. However, it so happens that he eventually falls in the trap of producing a film that conveys all the traditional, emotional clichés of contemporary films. The end result –whom will it surprise?– is met with praises and prizes. This play by Fassbinder seems to hint at the existence of some, capable of hearing at least a part of what Améry wrote about the confrontation of the past, the politics of remembrance and memory and the search for a way to live together

after the catastrophe. Later on, Fassbinder produced a much more vividly debated antithesis to the normalisation of the memorialisation of the Holocaust by entrenched, familiar regimes of viewing and hearing, with its impoundment in what belongs to the past and the society's ability to go its way as though nothing had happened. The ability of the same people who once applauded the Führer to now applaud this film. In short, this trivialised confrontation which he contemplated the horridness of at a very early stage. David Barnett comments on the nonconformance of this "early" play by Fassbinder with the entrenched modes of representation in the following terms:

"Although Fassbinder was still young and inexperienced at the time of writing, the play approaches the subject of the Holocaust from a suprisingly mature perspective and asks the question of how one represents the unrepresentable. He points to the difficulties of opening up highly sensitive subject matters to unorthodox modes of depiction in order to circumvent official standpoints. He also draws our attention to the material problems in making a film about Auschwitz in which actors treat the job just as any other. While there are moments in the play that make it very much of its time, such as the generational clash between the idealistic Fricke and his uncle, Herr Baumbach, the aesthetic questions raised by the play remain current."²¹

That is why the conclusions drawn by Elsaesser regarding the relation between the New German cinema and the Holocaust, and being a catastrophe-society, are so relevant. No less relevant are the questions regarding representation raised by the directors of the New German cinema, who refused to adopt psychopolitic approaches that overlook the consensus between the perpetrators and the victims, the healing process or the relation between the vividness of this past and its current constitution. Those directors *chose to do otherwise*, and aimed to struggle with post-catastrophe without leaving behind, without the promise of salvation, of victory or pride. Or their formal discoveries, preserving the connection between expression and the inability to express.

The time of childhood, memory, excavation

This discussion on the production of artistic testimony by the New German cinema leads us to grasp the extent of the ethic-aesthetic-political potency of the land and time of childhood as Améry conceptualised it, that is, of the thought of home, homeland and geography, in establishing a relation between art and memory, and in

¹⁹ Elsaesser transposes from Paul Ricœur's *Memory, History, Forgetting* (publication in Turkish: Metis Yayınları, 2012). Regarding the points discussed here, see also another text by Elsaesser: "Returning to the Past its Own Future: Harun Farocki's Respite," *Research in Film and History, The Long Path to Audio-visual History*, No. 1 (2018): 1–20. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/14781>.

²⁰ Elsaesser, *German Cinema*, 164.

²¹ David Barnett, *Rainer Werner Fassbinder and the German Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 247.

thinking it by extracting it from the nationalist hubbub that coats it. There are other texts, other encounters that have led me there. Such as Benjamin's texts titled "Excavation and Memory"²² and *Berlin Childhood*²³, as well as other cinematographic examples, establishing different relations than the accustomed ones with the time of childhood, with the homeland and geography.

Benjamin's *Berlin Childhood*, which recounts a life and childhood not quite coalescing, also reminded me that childhood is something that starts to speak a lot more when under pressure: when waiting, in suspense, when uncertainty is particularly high. Benjamin worked on this book between the years 1932–1938, but it was only published posthumously in 1950. In his preface to the book (in the version published in 2000 – previous versions were published in 1950, 1955, 1972, 1974, 1977, 1982, 1985 and 1989), Rolf Tiedemann recounts that there was an important difference between the first version completed in 1932 and that of 1938. Until it was found in 1981 amid a pile of papers in the National Library in Paris, where Benjamin had concealed it before fleeing, the 1938 version was thought to have been lost. Tiedemann indicates that, when considering the data regarding the emergence and publication of Benjamin's childhood book, the whole process substantiates this phrase by Benjamin himself: "Writing history means granting the numbers pertaining to the years in question their physiognomy." *Giving a human face to numbers*. The passing of time has treaded on a childhood spent amid Jewish bourgeoisie, and the shadow of the Hitlerian state has fallen on the writings of the author who remembers his childhood. Tiedemann also recounts that the version of *Berlin Childhood* that appeared in the newspaper between December 1932 – July 1933 is similar to that which emerged from the Gießen typescript, which surfaced in a Canadian second-hand book shop in the middle of the 1960s. The trace of censorship is visible in these pieces published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, e.g. in the sentence: "Of all the high-class residences I have seen, this was the only cosmopolitan one." Tiedemann:

"Benjamin's last manuscript shows that he was not the one who took this sentence out... A positive view of world citizenship had already become prejudicial as soon as 1934 for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, which claimed to be an opposition newspaper in spite of everything. Just like earlier, in July 1933, it had been deemed prejudicial for the newspaper (because the newly appointed inspection council may realise that he was Jewish) to print Benjamin's writings under his reputable name, in spite of his being a longstanding columnist there: 'Reading Box' was published without mention of its author's name, and 'Cabinets' under the pseudonym of C. Conrad. The press clippings from Benjamin's archive bear these hand-written side notes: 'The author's name was unlawfully not mentioned' and 'The pseudonym was arbitrarily and unlawfully attributed by the redaction.' These also show how pitiful taking refuge in law, the revoking of which was being discussed at the time, had already become then, and how the author would eventually be forced to use the pseudonym he himself chose, 'Detlef Holz', in order to be able to have other parts of the book published in Germany, and earn the crucial, however subdued, royalty fees."²⁴

These childhood remembrance writings probe into a Berliner's childhood in the beginning of the twentieth century; they search for the meaning of the objects, the house, the city, the words and behaviours of the adults in the eyes of a child. The individual and the social, Benjamin's individual childhood and being a child in Berlin in the beginning of the 20th century, even being a child in the big cities of modernity, all merge with one another. They form a labyrinth, stretching from the game consisting in wearing words, as many clouds changing costumes, and discovering their resemblances, to his despair when wishing to resemble them himself²⁵; from his disguise and disappearance into his painting when manipulating gouache, mingling with inkpots and brushes, after the example of the Chinese painter who entered his painting and disappeared in it,²⁶ to the travel paintings displayed in the Imperial Panorama, a must-

²² Walter Benjamin, "Ibizan Sequence," *Selected Writings Vol. 2, Part 2 (1931–1934)*, eds. Marcus Paul Bullock, Michael William Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith, transl. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 576. <https://folk.uib.no/hlils/TBLR-B/Benjamin-ExcavMem.pdf>

²³ Walter Benjamin, *Bin Dokuz Yüzlerin Başında Berlin'de Çocukluk (Berlin Childhood Around 1900)*, transl. Tevfik Turan (Istanbul: YKY, 2020). / *Selected Writings Vol. 3 (1935–1938)*, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael William Jennings, transl. Edmund Jephcott, Howard Eiland and others (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005).

²⁴ Rolf Tiedemann, "Sonsöz," *Bin Dokuz Yüzlerin Başında Berlin'de Çocukluk ("Epilogue," Berlin Childhood Circa 1900)* (Istanbul: YKY, 2020), 105.

²⁵ Walter Benjamin, *Bin Dokuz Yüzlerin Başında Berlin'de Çocukluk (Berlin Childhood Around 1900)*, op. cit., 9. / 374.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 11 / 393.

see of the city at the time,²⁷ to the stooping, distressing, ravishing, imposing, hypnotising voice coming from the telephone receiver;²⁸ from the hope of escaping his mother's and father's house to the train travels nurturing these hopes;²⁹ from the awakening of sexuality to the old ladies reaching into his childhood;³⁰ from the situations and objects which pleased him to the experience of sickness as a child; from the hiding places in the house to its cupboards, from its dark curtains whence phantoms would come haunt his dreams to the luminousness of its brightest corners, from the sewing box to the doors, the corridors, the gatherings which took place in the house and the pieces of furniture; from the accidents and fires here and there across the city to the skating rink, accompanied by brass-band orchestras; from the objects in his grandmother's house to its being the only one that belonged to a world citizen among all the bourgeois houses he had visited, and yet, the typically bourgeois, ageless feeling of security that emanated from it,³¹ from the avenues upon which imagination stretched its gauze to the city resembling a gunny sack under the effect of Christmas holiday and the happiness it gave him³². In the very end, a hunchbacked man appears, as a metaphor compounding many figures of what the child dreads. Like a bailiff, this figure collects his share from the oblivion of childhood objects. Now the images running one after another are in this fellow's head. Even though he has completed his task, he continues to call after Benjamin.

The time of childhood laid out by Benjamin is not entirely shaped by the operation of leaving behind, or by remembrance. For instance, in one of the fundamental scenes regarding the child-adult hierarchy, the child remembers, childhood surfaces with such intensity that the hierarchy is knocked down and inverted. It is the memory of a moment when some teachers appeal to their physical or verbal authority. It is not a "chastising" scene. It is a moment that everybody has experienced during their childhood: "one of the shut gates that we all know from our childhood, behind which, we were assured, the way to later, real life lay open."³³ The gateway in question appeared in a song they had learned:

"To horse then, comrade, to horse and away!/
And into the field where freedom awaits us. /
In the field of battle, man still has his worth, /
And the heart is still weighed in the balance." Benjamin writes that when the teacher asked what the last verse meant and nobody answered, he told them "you will understand this when you are grown up." Benjamin's answer as an adult is: "Now I am grown up; I am today inside the gate that Herr Knoche showed me; but it is still firmly shut. I was not to make my entrance through that portal."³⁴

Some gateways, depending on our actions in life, on the choices we make, will always stay closed, just like they were in our childhood. Such a situation, where "I prefer not to understand", faithful to the rejection of the call to join the crowd, appears in the chapter about the Victory Statue. Some will be forgotten. "What makes that which is forgotten both promising and cumbersome is the trace of its disappearance, of its staying embedded inside us", Benjamin states. The whole of childhood will be able to fit within one object. Within one place. But there will always be experiences gone for good, like the first steps ever taken.

Of course, this book would not be published in Germany. As a matter of fact, the book would never be given its final shape. In Tiedemann's words: "It too, just like its writer, would fall victim to the 'butcher's bench' of history." The same is true of the last text that Benjamin "completed": "On the Concept of History."³⁵ What connects both texts, apart from their being "unfinished", is the gaze, seeing, and contravening with the connection between History, memory and the angels of victory.

In "Excavation and Memory", the text which he wrote in 1932 and, again, was not published until after his death, Benjamin wrote that memory is not a means to discover the past, but rather an environment. Language explicitly asserts this idea. Just like the ground, the soil where ancient cities are buried, memory is not a tool passing on what has been experienced, it is a location. When reflecting on memory, Benjamin seems to be following in Freud's footsteps. We

²⁷ Ibid., 16. / 346.

²⁸ Ibid., 24. / 349.

²⁹ Ibid., 30. / 387.

³⁰ Ibid., 31, 34. / 358.

³¹ Ibid., 56. / 369.

³² Ibid., 60. / 372.

³³ Walter Benjamin, "A Berlin Chronicle," *Reflections. Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz, transl. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 45.

³⁴ Ibid., 46. According to the editions, important differences appear in the text. Only the Suhrkamp edition's version of the text, contrarily to the "final version" of the Harvard edition, allows for this reading, giving this door a strong, existential meaning of a mystery that cannot be solved, a threshold that cannot be passed. The Harvard edition nevertheless stresses the idea of mystery regarding the effect the last two verses of the song had on Benjamin: "Two enigmas, to which life still owes me the solution." (Harvard edition, p. 360). The chapter in question is even titled "Two Enigmas", whereas in the Turkish edition, based on the Suhrkamp edition, it is titled "Herr Knoche ile Fraulein Pufahl." (Herr Knoche and Fraulein Pufahl). The reading made here must be understood in light of this note.

³⁵ See the following recently written texts: Samantha Rose Hill, "Walter Benjamin's Last Work," *LA Review of Books*, 09.12.2019, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/walter-benjamin-last-work/>; Clara Picker, "Benjamin's Last Will: A Response to Samantha Rose Hill's 'Walter Benjamin's Last Work'," *LA Review of Books*, 05.04.2020, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/benjamin-last-will-a-response-to-samantha-rose-hills-walter-benjamin-last-work>

ought to approach memory as would an archeologist. Excavation, the main technique used by the archeologist, tells us something about the activity of our memory in and of itself. Therefore, says Benjamin, "Whoever wishes to access the buried past must see themselves as an excavator, and act likewise. Such an excavator as will not be afraid to reexamine the same problem again and again, must grub as one does the soil, work as though removing the dirt from something, without fear of turning everything upside-down." The activity of excavating allows us to discover the invisible layers of a problem, on top of which soil has been accumulated. Therefore, the art of memory cannot be reduced to an inventory of the objects that have surfaced, of those that are plainly visible.³⁶ In the same way, archeology is not simply a technique used to investigate the past, it is the operation of knowing, of searching for the stories, the entanglement too, that may be the origin of the traces and symptoms which stand at the surface today. The art of memory must also give a picture of the subject remembering, just like a good archeological report must indicate not only the layers which contain findings, but also those that had to be overcome before accessing them. That is why the excavation of memory, thinking together with the relation, the exchange that binds the activity of remembrance with that of excavation, can transform our assumption regarding memory. That way, we are coming a step closer to being able to notice and identify how incapable we are to separate remembrance from forgetting completely, how memory does not expand linearly over time, how filled it is with crevices and cracks, its selectivity and slipperiness, the production of silences which is an active part of remembrance and eventually the processes of remembrance and forgetting, which are also their strategies of power. As a field of struggle, memory is embedded inside the current political relations. Therefore, a perspective that considers the forms assumed by memory not in a distant past but right now, that excavates memories, together with an archeological approach of memory, must include and examine the ties that link memory with materiality into its scope of research.³⁷ Then, the effort to understand how material culture bolsters the way specific readings of the past are made sense of in the present context as well becomes a part of memory studies.³⁸ If the material world is understood as the context in which the praxes of remembrance and forgetting are carried out, the material culture can be thought of as the historic-social coordinates which both draw hedges around what is thinkable, expressible and feasible and render it possible, from the economy-politics of memory to the way it is structured by power relations.

As I have previously indicated, cinema too can lead to this psychoanalytical, archeological and architectural understanding. Children who have witnessed crime, childhood as the earliest scene of the act of remembrance and narration; children growing into oppressors for having witnessed oppression; the hopelessness of not being able to fully control the children's world through the adults' world's authority; childhood, which inevitably returns, invited or not, when the memory of collective violence, crime and responsibility are at stake. Or that which one goes back to in a search to understand, to identify what not knowing, not understanding because of the frontiers, the curtains of the house one was born in, means. Perpetration and childhood. Children are both witnesses of what goes on in the cinematographic universe of testimony and silenced beings (*infante* is derived etymologically from the Latin *infans*, meaning those who cannot speak). These children figures can be viewed both as social archetypes and as phantoms, saying that "[t]he time is out of joint: time is disarticulated, dislocated, dislodged, time is run down, on the run and run down, deranged, both out of order and mad. Time is off its hinges, time is off course, beside itself, disadjusted."³⁹ The time of childhood can be viewed as in relation with an outage, not entirely included in the present, with the uneasiness felt at being complicit in a crime, in its collective perpetration, with the voice that returns again and again and whose claiming is still awaited, with a resistance against a comprehension of time consisting in leaving the past behind, letting *bygones be bygones*, looking to move on. It is like breaking out of a crisis situation in order to reflect on the encounter and the possibilities of struggle for justice, in a world where justice does not exist. The child we are talking about is miles away from the soothingness of the common child figure. Miles away from the frameworks that expect children to give us hope, to talk to us or to pity and protect us.

³⁶ Georges Didi-Huberman, *Kabuklar (Bark)*, transl. Samuel E. Martin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2017). / transl. Elif Karakaya (Istanbul: Lemis, 2018), 64.

³⁷ Maria Theresia Starzmann, "Engaging Memory: An Introduction," *Excavating Memory: Sites of Remembering and Forgetting*, eds. Maria Theresia, John R. Roby (Gainesville: University Press Florida, 2016).

³⁸ Starzmann, "Engaging Memory," 3-4.

³⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Marx'ın Hayaletleri: Borç Durumu, Yas Çalışması ve Yeni Enternasyonal (Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International)*, transl. Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 2006). / transl. Alp Tümertekin (Istanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2001), 18.

If the dominant perspective can be expressed as follows: "We want everything to talk with us, to open up to us", then the time of childhood is that which does not fully open up.

Benjamin wrote of the need for a methodology when excavating, for caution when thrusting the shovel into the dark ground. The foregoing examples, which I chose from the Memory and Arts selection/archive, carry great importance in regard to the methods and manners of performing this excavation work. When considering and choosing these works, I myself made use of the excavation method which I proposed to conceptualise as the *time of childhood* in the framework of this essay. I have tried to examine them through three lenses: collective memory as location, time of childhood and the remembering person in context. The first lens has to do with the manner of apprehending collective memory. If we should consider collective memory as a context, a location, it would be here, a heap of ruins and rubble where those that History has treaded upon lie, a field left off to plunder. Far from a series of stories giving birth to one another as they progress, eventually resulting in an accumulation, even further away from the past reaching all the way to the present, a single story making itself unique by expending the other ones, obliterating and eliminating them, the dismissal of what is expected from the past.⁴⁰ Those who prevail and those who are defeated do not share the same world of emotions here. This means that this location can be considered as a field where a division, a strife, a state of being exposed to one another, of weighing, confronting one another, occurs. Herein, I would like to draw attention to *Statues Also Die* (*Les Statues meurent aussi*, Chris Marker, Alain Resnais, Ghislain Cloquet, 1953), a film which searches for the faces of those defeated, the casualties of political history, which opens the racialisation of what is designated as artistic patrimony and wealth for debate and bears witness to the materialisations of French neo-colonialism from the standpoint of art criticism. This film, which produces a decolonising perspective, draws attention to the relation between the demand for everything to talk to us, to open up to us, and the colonialist point of view. The art that renders the visible field transitive toward that which stands outside of its range, that resists opening itself up entirely, that leaves the occupation of the present to its viewer, also enables us to grasp, to identify how we apprehend and interpret the connection between memory and the houses we were born in, the degree of reality, of materiality of this connection, what is here and now, as well as its own potentiality to determine our world of emotions.

Secondly, I believe that thinking together with the time of childhood, as the earliest layer of memory, will enable us to recognise what is collective within what is individual, what is impersonal within what is intimate, and the universal buried deep inside what is the most personal. I believe that it will allow for the foundation of a reflection regarding the ability to act not only on the basis of an individual discourse. Enable us to think the reception of childhood in relation with the uncanniness produced by the way the latter cannot be entirely condemned to the uninvited flooding of the outer world inside. The time of mounds appearing inside the house, pushing toward the outside, weakening the ground, beginning to protrude from underneath the carpet, the time of parasites. The political power of art, the power of the art of memory might lie somewhere there. A genuine friend-surface, looking at the people who continue to stumble, to miss, to deny, without passing a concrete judgement on them, sealing no alliance with either their egos or their actions. When contemplating, questioning these thoughts, I kept remembering Sarkis' works. His is a strong tie with the time of childhood. A constant strive to reach to the deepest layer, to see that layer and re-integrate it into a perspective. He recounts how, during the creation of *Tuz ve Işık* (*Salt and Light*), they had to rub out layers after layers of wall until they reached to the oldest stratum, and patched the cracks which consequently surfaced by means of the *kintsugi* method.⁴¹ An archeological and psychoanalytical understanding. The *insistence on repetition*, the lasting impression produced by something concealed but not forgotten, almost like a scene depicting the connection between psychoanalysis and the art of memory. In order for this impression to become visible, the representation system that enables me to perceive myself as normal here and now must be excavated and foraged, blurred, deformed, the scales must change, the visible field must be narrowed or filled by that which disturbs. The insistence on repetition also allows for encounters regarding defective acts, the impossibility of confrontation, slips and stumbles, for the disturbance of consciousness, for the carrying of the unconscious toward conscience, for the reflection on its own operation together with these stumbles.

Thirdly, the fact that the art of memory is not an operation which concerns solely what must be remembered, what was buried, silenced, but – perhaps even more – the person who remembers. That the art of memory is embedded within the current relations of power, the current material culture and economy-politics; that it is full to the rim of slits and cracks; that the operation of motioning the boundaries of what can be done, said and thought, depends primordially on the identification of these relations.

⁴⁰ Walter Benjamin, "Tarih Kavramı Üzerine (On the Concept of History)," transl. Nurdan Gürbilek, *Son Bakışta Aşk: Walter Benjamin'den Seçme Yazılar* (*Love at Last Glance: Selected Essays by Walter Benjamin*), ed. Nurdan Gürbilek (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2018). Walter Benjamin, "Tarih Kavramı Üzerine (On the Concept of History)," transl. Ahmet Cemal, *Pasajlar* (*The Arcades Project*), ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Istanbul: YKY, 2001).

⁴¹ Online interview conducted at the 23.5 Hrant Dink Site of Memory, 23 April 2020.

As I examined the archive through these lenses, I kept running across stone, chair and curtain; these were both materials used by the artists and words which helped me conceptualise the art of memory. The stone encapsulates that which was found through the process of excavation as much as that which it was thrown at, because we do not want it to ever return, the immobility of that which is immovable, unalterable, unwavering, or acknowledgement, self generation, self proclamation and testimony. The curtain conjures up the ideas of the foundation of a whole visible field, of the act of looking becoming an issue, of revealing and concealing, of intriguing; as for the chair, it leads one to think of the notions of occupying space, of existence *per se*, of not speaking on an even ground and of the symbolical places assigned to us.

The history and layers of destruction

The works that I have chosen to highlight here are forms of thinking the history of destruction. When placed alongside one another, they allow us to envision history as a heap of rubble and ruins, as plunder. They prevent us from encountering the past unmediatedly, as a whole, and from falling to the temptation of thinking that we have seen everything.



Sarkis, *Kırmızı Vitraylar Serisinden No:1 (From the Red Stained Glass Series No:1)* 2020, Stained glass

As is the case with other photographs belonging to the same series, the parts of this photograph *From the Red Stained Glass Series* (2020) regarding the 6-7 September pogrom, obtained through the use of a red filter, can be separated according to the indications, and pieced back up together again. Sarkis used a technique inspired by the Japanese art of *kintsugi*, only involving lead, to repair these pieces. The red filter challenges our ability to view as a whole, to access immediately. There are but pieces of memory. These pieces, together with those who look at them, will also shape a future. The lead strips go through all the images in this series. We do not view them as photographic documents, recollective of an event, but rather as jigsaw puzzles. Even the mending logic of reparation has collapsed here. Even in its finished state, lead still underlines the work's fragmentariness. That which, however reparative, does not produce a whole, that whose fragmentariness is highlighted with lead, the mediation of the red filter, lodges the fact that we are looking at it from now, our gaze, the image of the person who remembers, within the picture.



Gülsün Karamustafa, *Meydanın Belleği* (*Memory of a Square*), 2005, Video

Gülsün Karamustafa's work *Meydanın Belleği* (*Memory of a Square*, 2005) bears importance for how it allows us to perceive the reciprocal impregnation between the individual and the collective, the universal within the intimate, but this two-track video also accomplishes something remarkable regarding the perviousness of the visible field and the operation of memory. The permeable relation established between both tracks renders the visible surfaces open, pervious to other phantoms of sound and gaze. Because of this permeable relation that it establishes with its own off-frame, other memories can flood in. I imagine that the persons present inside the house can change the relation with what happens outside of it, that the inventory carried into the visible area can grow with the identity of the person who remembers, or that the art of memory can accomplish this in and of itself.

The Gezi protests, the background of the Gezi Park, its previous existence as an Armenian cemetery, the cemetery's destruction and the illegal seizure of the plot,⁴² the Miramar building demolished during the construction of the AKM, the fact that Rafael Alguadiş –the architect of the Melek Cinema and the Sebat building in

Osmanbey, the building where Agos took shape, in front of which Hrant Dink was assassinated, now hosting the 23.5 Hrant Dink Site of Memory– who lived at the last store of this building, had to sell this house in order to cover the cost of the Wealth Tax,⁴³ the transformation of the Melek Cinema into the Emek Cinema after the Wealth Tax events, the demolition of the latter, and the more recent demolition of the AKM. By adding all these to what composes this off-frame, we may weave an even broader pattern. The temporal confusion created by the sentences which form when trying to weave this pattern, together with the past's inability to pass, usher us into Sebald's universe ("He had once called me Andre, said Austerlitz"; "even sometimes, Alphonso said, said Austerlitz").



Gülsün Demir, Uğur Oluş Beklemez *Hafriyat* (*Rubble*) 2018, Installation

Hafriyat (*Rubble*, 2018) wanders about a historically recent demolition: that of the district of Sur in Diyarbakır, which occurred after the state of emergency was declared in the aftermath of the clashes that erupted there in July 2015. I would like to draw attention to the plurality and fragmentariness of screens in this work. The installation was sparked off by the disappointment felt at seeing the remains of a demolished city, neighbourhood, of people who lost their homes, being reduced to one single word in a newspaper. It narrows in on the lives which the Sur neighbourhood once harbored before its destruction in fighting. It apprehends the damage on the basis of its consequences, not its causes. The remains of people's lives, houses, belongings and memories offer a multi-layered archeological material. On and around the void left behind by the demolished city, the life –photo souvenirs, topographic surveys, satellite pho-

⁴² Tamar Nalcı and Emre Can Dağlıoğlu, "Gezi Parkı'nın yanı başındaki Ermeni Mezarlığı (The Armenian Cemetery Alongside the Gezi Park)," *Agos*, 05.06.2013. <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/2794/gezi-parki-nin-yani-basindaki-ermeni-mezarligi>.

⁴³ For the interview by Karel Valansi of Jak Alguadiş and his father Rafael Alguadiş published in the 23 October 2013 issue of *Şalom*, see https://www.salom.com.tr/arsiv/haber-88677-emek_sinemasinin_mimari_rafael_alguadis.html; Also, for Yetivart Danzikyan's interview with Jak Alguadiş, published in the 1 December 2017 issue of *Agos* –let us quote from the introduction to the interview here: "Turkey is a country where almost all issues are interconnected"–, see <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/19803/emek-sinemasindan-sebat-apartmanina-oradan-varlik-vergisine>.

tographs, anonymous videos- which once prospered in the same location has been installed in an experimental manner. There is also a layer of reflection on the impossibility of accounting through only one surface, one track, on the operation of memory itself here. The ability to think the exchange between the excavation of remembrance and the excavation caused by the experience of violence brings us spectators closer to doing and not being able to, expressing and not being able to, to telling and remembering while being conscious of the default and violence inherent to representation.



Gülsün Karamustafa, *Apartman (The Apartment Building)* 2012, Installation

Apartman (The Apartment Building, 2012) is a work that sparks curiosity, catches the attention in such a way that it encourages one to descend, to dig and excavate, to forage and eventually to found a new topography of memory. The architectural restitution can be considered in the same light. Setting out from the structure's current condition, and going back in time all the way to its original state, producing findings regarding the later architectural interventions. Karamustafa started investigating the history of the Bazlamacı (Vaslamatzis) building when she moved there in 1991 and soon found out that the Vaslamatzis family had lived there when in Istanbul, where they founded the first soda factory which carried the name of one of their girls, Olympia, before they were forced to emigrate to Greece two years after the 6-7 September

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Doris Salcedo, *Untitled* 2003, Installation

pogrom. This work was first exhibited in Greece, with a mock-up of the building, the story of the family, photographs documenting the family's life there and information about the 6-7 September pogrom. The space opened up by this work urges one to learn more about the pogrom's many layers of violence, history of spoliation and destruction: children locked in a room in panick, the important damage brought to the Olimpos factory during the attacks that night, the fragile materials such as glass bottles broken by those who took part in this lynching party; followed by the family being victim of a streak of violence and persecution, and eventually Grigoris Vaslamatzis recounting, with his adult perception and emotions, how he witnessed all this violence when aged 7 at the time.⁴⁴

When she walked through a district filled with ruins during a visit to Istanbul, Salcedo wondered why there were so many abandoned buildings in such a central district.⁴⁵ That is how she came

⁴⁴ For Ezgi Berk's interview of Grigoris Vaslamatzis published in the 05.09.2014 issue of Agos, see <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/7927/olimos-gazozlari-ve-bazlamaci-apartmani-esliginde-6-7-eylulun-hikyesi>.

⁴⁵ See this short video where the artist discusses this and other works of his: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xdt2vZ9YpwE&feature=youtu.be>.

to learn that these buildings carry the legacy of a particular past: one full of violence, where Jews and *Rums* were evicted from their houses and forced to leave. She is striving to confront us with the reality of this multi-layered process of eviction and starting anew elsewhere. A "series of multi-layered events", in the form of 1550 chairs, is placed in the empty space between two buildings, in the void that bears the traces and history of destruction. There is more than just one element in interaction here. As Salcedo herself puts it, the story being told here is not one that can be touched upon in a museum or gallery. It sets into motion memories related to the particular space where the installation is placed and to the violence layers stacked on top of one another. According to Salcedo, such a work amounts to a manner of war. It defies the propensity to be absorbed by rationality, composure and excess, swallowed by the melancholy language of ruin. It causes a temporal collision between the history of those who were evicted and the contemporary viewer, conjuring the violence and chaos inherent to the act of evicting, of uprooting, along with memory's fragmentariness, chaoticness, repetition and superposition, with such violence. What is at stake here does not give itself away easily; it is unclear when it started, when it ended. While the time of the victors, History, continues to flow unimpeded, I feel as though, with these 1550 chairs, a gigantic cut, a dike of sorts had been performed.

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With all its excessiveness, this work invites us to think over the singularity-plurality equation in relation with the history of destruction. It al-



Hale Tenger, *Böyle Tanıdıklarım Var III*
(*I Know People Like This III*)
2013, Installation

lows for a discussion on the violence of the expropriation that took place in Istanbul. Contemplating the double elimination: the massacre of people, their eviction, exile and expropriation, the seizure of their cultural wealth, of their memories. That is why their restitution is necessary, I believe. Layer upon layer of data on eviction, expropriation and seizure of property. It reminds us that we should start with the material side of thought, with the surface of violence, when establishing a relation with a place or anything that rests on a history of violence. How starting with the symbolical side prevents one from properly thinking destruction, memory's violence, or the relation between artistic pleasure and the very same violence.

If we look at things straightforwardly, *Böyle Tanıdıklarım Var III* (*I Know People Like This III*, 2013) seems to present us with a chronological selection of photographs, bearing witness to state violence in its broadest sense: images compiled from the archives of foundations and press agencies, and from the personal collections of photographers who followed protests in Diyarbakır only a few weeks before the work's installation, iconic images of political history (images, imprinted in collective memory, of famous journalists killed either in a car accident or in plain sight, in the middle of the street, visuals related to the political and physical violence perpetrated during the 6-7 September pogrom), images that strike us with their repetition (photographs of the Saturday Mothers, gathering once a week on the İstiklal avenue, carrying posters made of photographs of the children they have lost). However, this work does not consist in the compilation of 731 photographs reminding us of state violence. These photographs, casting a crude light on the last 50 years in Turkey, were printed on x-ray films, themselves placed on negatoscopes in order to become visible. In the process, it builds up a labyrinth stretching from today to the 1950s. Tenger states that we may consider the labyrinth as a funnel: "When you enter the labyrinth, you will see countless photographs of Uludere, of Hrant Dink; whereas, towards the end of the labyrinth, in the same way that the funnel's mouth narrows, photographs from this period become scarce. Memory too is like a funnel; as we go back in time, events lose their precision." Here, contrarily to Salcedo's work, there is an arrangement rather than an accumulation. The archive images are aligned, from nowadays to backwards in the past. But these x-rays are not here to help remember these events, lest we put it this way: there is a questioning of remembrance, of the viewing mechanism itself here.

As we look at the images, we are driven to ask ourselves: what of that which we have not seen, despite our having knowledge of it, what of that which we did not know we knew, what of that which we did not know we did not know? What of that which our memory immediately grasps, that which it cannot articulate? Here is what we realise: as we go backwards chronologically, the

expanding of the time interval is concomitant with the decrease in the corresponding quantity of x-ray photographs. This allows us to consider time's healing potentiality, as much as its being an illness. A viewing and remembering mechanism is built here, and we wend our way through the maze which it constitutes. Boxes equipped with fluorescent lamps, x-ray films... the most important questioning here is that of how this whole inventory of the visible presents itself as reality. The relation established between the visible and reality works with a discursive authority resting on the act of openly putting forward (one may think of medicine and history). What enables us to question this remembering and viewing mechanism is its processing gear being included in the mechanism itself. We think of those other events, unseen, withdrawn by the hole of the funnel of memory, which time has covered up. Or we will have to think of what is visible, not as though it consisted only of itself, but in togetherness with that which we cannot attain, that which has been erased. Effort and fervour are needed in order to tell of the inexpressible, the invisible. On the other hand, a doubt emerges as to whether or not we remember that which is visible, that which is more visible, more easily. There is a layer of thought reminiscent of Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil* (*Sunless*) here. We do not remember; in the exact same way that we re-write history, we re-write memory.

When the works that I have selected come together –others yet could be added of course–, they lead us to notice how memory, which we thought of as being hollow or homogeneous, actually consists in a battlefield, where conflict and warfare reign. The void and the invisible have a history that is filled with violence, extortion and appropriation. They constitute a field where dominant memory does as it pleases. As we rake through the terrain made up of erasure, expulsion and eviction, these urge us to wonder whether now too there are sounds we are not hearing, sounds we are turning a deaf ear to. What Jacques Rancière writes of G. W. Sebald's way of recounting destruction and its history is worth remembering here. Of his method of writing and of our way of reading. According to Rancière, this writing style, which establishes free associations and connotations between the genres of black and white photography, history, travel diary, novel, memoir and autobiography, which spins freely in between spaces and times, and which "lazy minds qualify as unclassifiable"⁴⁶, is both a new genre of fiction and a new common sense, another way of making use of knowledge, establishing connection without imposing or destroying, open to other connections.⁴⁷ Weaving the thread of what we call fiction, the fabric which brings it into existence, in a different temporal processing mechanism than that which we are accustomed to, and incorporating into fiction the very fact that the kind of fiction we are accustomed to is in itself a thread made of threads. Time here is always the past of the future. It does not move toward an end, toward completion, but always in retrospect from the end, the next, the meaning of the weave is transformed with new connections – as "many cobwebs", says Rancière.⁴⁸ At the centre of the history of destruction told by Sebald, lie the Holocaust and post-war Germany. The destruction silently buried, as a secret which everybody knows, within the majestic view of the Bavarian Alps where he spent his childhood, the extermination of the Jews. Sebald says that he only understood the extent of the catastrophe in 1965, while at university, when the trials of the Auschwitz personnel began in Frankfurt ("the defendants were the kinds of people I'd known as neighbours [...] whereas the witnesses were people I'd never come across").⁴⁹ Here, the time of childhood is like a thorn stuck in the back. Something that we cannot escape or run away from, that will constantly recall its own presence, protrude from the place where it lies hidden in the house, a force that defiles the accuracy and integrity of the very ground we walk on, of who we are. This time, the disintegration, the disruption of the "paradise of childhood" is told with what it conceals, with the ability to identify what seems normal when in fact it is not normal at all. The time of childhood works with the ability to see that the catastrophe, thought to be far away from home, is in fact well inside of it, with that of rethinking those elements which protrude somewhere inside the house. The return to his father's photograph album or that which is thought of as normal, which he does not know what he will do with. Sebald recounts how, the day when they showed them a film displaying the liberation of Belsen in the grammar school he attended at the ski resort of Oberstdorf, on a pleasant spring afternoon, there being no discussion after the projection, he did not know what to do with it, and he adds: "I've always felt I had to know what happened in detail, and to try to un-

⁴⁶ Jacques Rancière, "Kâğıttan Manzaralar (Paper Landscapes)," *Kurmacanın Kuyuları* (*The Edges of Fiction*), transl. Steve Corcoran (New York: Wiley, 2019). / transl. Yunus Çetin (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2019), 116.

⁴⁷ Rancière, "Kâğıttan Manzaralar," 136.

⁴⁸ Rancière, "Kâğıttan Manzaralar," 128.

⁴⁹ Maya Jaggi, "Recovered Memories," *The Guardian*, 22.09. 2001. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/sep/22/artsandhumanities.highereducation>.

derstand why it should have been so."⁵⁰ Details, connections, transitivity between genres, narrating by collecting the erased traces, the rags, the scraps from one surface of expression to another were the post-catastrophe means of stirring the imaginative dimension of history, in a way that resonated with Benjamin's endeavour, of remembering our capacity to reverse our readings of History, of re-establishing bonds with the world and other people, against both the silent consensus of war time and the official mourning and commemoration culture of the post-war period. Here, the narration becomes neither the information storeroom of the chronicler, the person who professes "not to miss one bit of truth", who compiles events in continuous sequences, of the archivist keeping the record, nor an emptiness consisting in the inexpressibility, the untransferability, the impossibility, which abolishes the role of the narrator and reader in the history of destruction. Untransferability reaches everything that is compiled, everything relationships are established between. It transforms this selection/archive into a phantom-archive. The insistence on gathering, on building bonds, on establishing relationships between surfaces of expressions, ties a connection between the field of the uncanny and the material world, the extermination of the Jews and the erasure of all traces of this extermination, it renders the fidelity to this narration, way of listening and learning permanent.⁵¹ That is the reason why his books always address that destruction, the traces of the erased traces: "His books always revolve around this destruction, around the fate of those who go, never to return again, those who can escape and especially those children –some of whose names he would later forget, some of whose memory he would lose forever– who, at the last moment, are boarded by their parents on special trains bound to England."⁵² Sebald even apprehends his own life on the basis of these connections: after indicating that he was born in May 1944, somewhere left untouched by the war, he adds that on the same month, Kafka's sister was deported to Auschwitz. This is an uncanny emotion; because "you're pushed in a pram through the flowering meadows, and a few hundred miles to the east these horrendous things are happening."⁵³ A realisation beyond guilt and atonement. A way of narrating that brings to a standstill the relentless time of progression, covering everything, as well as the co-occurrence of the desire to rescue and of the irreparable loss, thanks to the time of childhood. A perspective that feels responsible for writing that which others will not tolerate

writing, conscious of our ability to look at history from an angle, obliquely, not frontally. An existence that will not allow for the resentment, kept as a weapon by the victim, to be erased in the language, that will not espouse self-satisfaction but weariness toward itself, as a member of a generation that carries the assassins' legacy. In order not to return home, not to go back to the time of childhood, Sebald's narrator draws spirals, but no matter what, he always finds himself inside this house full of spectres, within the time of childhood. Within these narratives where fake documents and dubious portraits intertwine, constant suspicion and uncertainty are also true for the reader. This form, which the narration folds itself into more than once, is a different use made of knowledge where we only ever learn in indirect ways, without ever being sure, whose narrator's authority is constantly challenged and questioned.

It seems as though the ears that heard Jean Améry's call were none other than Sebald's. *The Emigrants* (1993) was published shortly after Jean Améry's suicide in 1978, when Sebald learned that one of his teachers had also committed suicide. As for what drove him to write *Austerlitz*, a novel shaped around Jacques Austerlitz, one of the ten thousand Jewish children saved by being sent to England by *Kindertransport* between 1938 and 1939, adopted and raised by Calvinist parents in Wales, it was a documentary he watched on Channel 4, about Susie Bechhofer, a woman from Munich, born on the same day as Sebald himself, who, in her forties, remembers her being sent to Wales by *Kindertransport*. In the first chapter of *Austerlitz*, where, again, fiction and reality intertwine, the narration concerning the Breendonk fort connects to Jean Améry – in the passage where Austerlitz states that architectural structures of extraordinary dimensions project the shadow of their own destruction beforehand, that, from the very beginning, they were designed with the knowledge of the shape they would later assume as ruins.⁵⁴ In the passage where, walking across this monument, which we learn was used by the Germans as a prisoner camp before being turned into a national museum and memorial of the Belgian Resistance after the war –Jean Améry starts the chapter titled "Torture" of his *Beyond Guilt and Atonement* with the same information–, the narrator speaks about the opening of doors, which contained all his childhood fears, the image of the hard bristled cleaning brush his father used to like, conjured up by the smell of soap disseminated in the fort, turns his

⁵⁰ Jaggi, "Recovered Memories."

⁵¹ Gürbilek describes this tension in the following terms: "One must look for the difference between Sebald's narrations and post-modern ones, transformed in information warehouses, in the former's capacity to incorporate both characteristics. The narration, in the absence of this endeavour to rescue, becomes an uncanny game. When it fails to see that the endeavour to rescue will always leave an uncanny trace behind, it cannot pretend to being anything beyond a careless archive." *Ibid.*, 60.

⁵² Rancière, "Kâğıttan Manzaralar," 120.

⁵³ Jaggi, "Recovered Memories."

⁵⁴ W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, transl. Anthea Bell (New York: Random House, 2001). / transl. Gülfer Tunali (Istanbul: Can Yayınları, 2008), 21.

stomach. The narrator claims that his nausea was not caused by his own knowledge from childhood of the cruel interrogations carried out in this fort, but by Jean Améry's narration of his having been tortured there himself.⁵⁵ We also learn that the narrator is German, that he knows well what living in the vicinity of such a camp feels like, through these lines, activating the uneasiness caused by the time of childhood:

"Nevertheless, even though I struggle to imagine the pain suffered over the years in Breendonk and, in the same way, in all the other camps, when, through the window pane on the right immediately after the entry to the fort, I look inside the SS officers' mess and see the table, the chairs, the large coal burning stove, the proverbs meticulously written in Gothic letters, I can well imagine the good fathers and dutiful sons of Vilsbiburg and Fuhlsbüttel, from the Black Forest and the Bavarian Alps, sitting here when they came off duty to play cards or write letters to their loved ones at home. After all, I had lived among them until my twentieth year."⁵⁶

As he investigates the impression left by man-made destruction, by grand massacre, on the people 50 years afterwards, Sebald, the teller of post-catastrophe, of being a catastrophe-society, walks the terrain of remembrance and forgetting. The task ahead of us is not only not to forget, or to remember as a way of resisting oblivion, it is the creation of such a fiction that will build our capacity to "reverse the chronicle of destruction", reverse our reading of History. Rancière defines what differentiates Sebald's from classic fiction, that which advances toward an inevitably attainable end, which proposes a path to follow, in other words a model condemned to destruction from the very start, as the way it weaves threads that horizontally connect a place, and the construction/destruction process that this place bears witness to, with other places and times.⁵⁷ If we were to go back to the works that I mentioned earlier, I should specify that they all possess such a structure that the ring of destruction which they give voice to can be forever broadened. The power of such an openness to being widened does not lie in their recalling this endless history of destruction. For that matter, Sebald's goal is not to establish a relation between everything and anything.⁵⁸ Rather, the power of this openness lies in its potentiality to build another temporal collectiveness, instead of the inevitably destructive temporal understanding brought about by progressive thinking and the chain of causality, which leaves behind as it moves ahead. In its allowing, on every surface where the curtain of destruction, that of Turkicity, has been drawn, for the weaving of another thread, made of multiple horizontal and egalitarian relations. In its founding another temporal collectiveness, putting a stop to the unimpeded time of destruction, to History's victory march. Taking Sebald as his starting point, Rancière defines this new fiction as "the effort to create a story through the connection of traces erased in snow with other traces erased in snow"⁵⁹. What is aimed at here is not the comprehension or the remembrance of everything that takes or took place. It is the disruption of explanation, of exhaustive understanding, of end-oriented temporal progression. A perspective, conscious that explanation amounts to smothering up, which hinders the path and temporality followed by the significance-producing process that perpetuates the history of and rationalises the work performed by destruction, the cause and effect relations, and the destination-oriented journeys. A perspective that forbids for everybody to believe only in *what exists*.⁶⁰

As I was reading *Austerlitz* for the purpose of this essay, I also learned something from the impact that Alain Resnais's short film titled *All the World's Memory* (*Toute la mémoire du monde*, 1956) has always had on me. On the one side, this documentary about the National Library of France is like a praise of that very human feat: the act of archiving, of gathering, of collecting, of amassing and cataloguing, like the production of a web producing an infinity of words, ever-growing, of a collectiveness binding people, or people and books, together through the mediation of books; but on the other hand, it also conveys a strange uncanniness. As the camera, roaming about as it does in *Night and Fog*, travels through the shelves, the books become human, and the ghosts of camps and prisons pervade the shelves and library as a whole. The collectiveness founded here makes us feel the place as both a knowledge factory and jailhouse at the

⁵⁵ Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 27.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁵⁸ Rancière, "Kâğıttan Manzaralar," 129.

⁵⁹ Rancière, "Kâğıttan Manzaralar," 135.

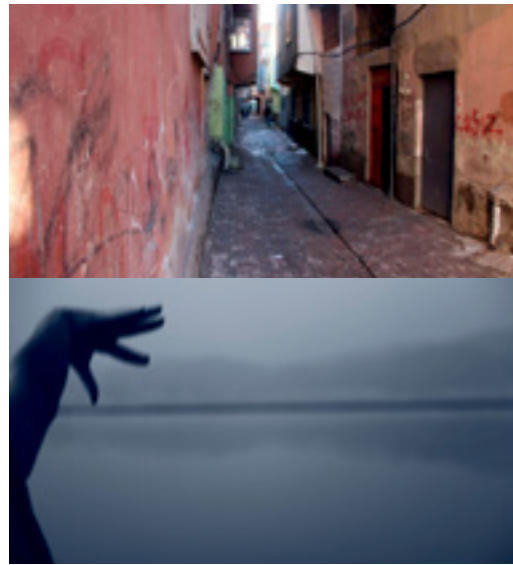
⁶⁰ The way Sebald's texts establish spatio-temporal collectivenesses that hamper the victors' temporality by connecting distant spaces and times with one another is very reminiscent of cinema. For a discussion on adaptations from Sebald, and films influenced by the latter, see Allen Meek, "In Transit: Sebald, Trauma, Cinema," *Humanities*, 6 (2017).

same time. As a matter of fact, Austerlitz states that the gathering occurring in a library becomes a being, feeding on an infinity of words in order to produce as many. Yet, the oceanic feeling induced by the thought of gathering will lead to no real coalescence. Austerlitz wonders whether the gathering is "an island populated by happy people or a penal colony". While he ponders this thought, he looks outside through the windows of the library, at the images reflected in the glass. A gaze connecting a moment situated within the voices of the library's collection, the gathering that it hosts, with the moments of other things, outside of it. A temporal progression that, instead of the sequential logic where what comes next erases what was before, connects the inside and outside through an egalitarian narrative temporality, makes one open to the other, and always pushes the archive toward its own edges.

"Without the slightest hesitation, and writing, subsequently setting them out in front of him in meticulous order. Some years later, said Austerlitz, when I was watching a short black and white film about the *Bibliothèque Nationale* and saw messages racing by pneumatic post from the reading rooms to the stacks, along what might be described as the library's nervous system, it struck me that the scholars, together with the whole apparatus of the library, formed an immensely complex and constantly evolving creature which had to be fed with myriads of words, in order to bring forth myriads of words in its own turn. I think that this film, which I saw only once but which assumed ever more monstrous and fantastic dimensions in my imagination, was entitled *Toute la mémoire du monde* and was made by Alain Resnais. Even before then my mind often dwelt on the question of whether there in the reading room of the library, which was full of a quiet humming, rustling, and clearing of throats, I was on the Islands of the Blest or, on the contrary, in a penal colony, and that conundrum, said Austerlitz, was going round in my head again on a day which has lodged itself with particular tenacity in my memory, a day when I spent perhaps as much as an hour in the manuscripts and records department on the first floor, where I was temporarily working, looking out at the tall rows of windows on the opposite side of the building, which reflected the dark slates of the roof, at the narrow brick-red chimneys, the bright and icy blue sky, and the snow-white metal weathervane with the shape of a swallow cut out of it, soaring upwards and as blue as the azure of the sky itself. The reflections in the old glass panes were slightly irregular or undulating, and I remember, said Austerlitz, that at the sight of them, for some reason I could not understand, tears came to my eyes."⁶¹

Stone, chair, curtain, well and wave

In this chapter, I will attempt to draw connections between the works that I have selected and the materials they use or the concepts they refer to. The possibility of building another spatio-temporal world, collectivity, not condemned to destruction, depends on the ability to keep the collectivity and its irreducible components together. That is why I try to mentally bring together the works bound by the tense relation between what is common and what is not, what is shared and what cannot be. An essay at a spectator's montage? An effort to understand the emotional and mental paths followed by the acts of remembering and forgetting as a *Turkish person*? One is reminded of Sebald here. I try to establish a topography of memory opening to broadening like spider webs, by presenting data regarding the manners of remembering and layers of thinking which make some images conceivable.



Aram İkrâm Taştekin, Gözde Özkurt
Taş (The Stone)
2016, Video

Two youngsters living in Diyarbakır and İzmir, starting off from a common concept, head toward their proper worlds. Thereby, *Taş (The Stone, 2016)* apprehends the frontiers of an object that has been used for different purposes, included in the language and conceptualised in numerous ways, from different angles. At one end of these frontiers, lies the image of the stone, tacked with the Kurds' struggle for honour and childhood. At the other end lies the "stone", one of the thousands of images released, between the conscious and the subconscious, within the memory, the body, and the culture and language that swaddle them. The videos are exhibited by being screened on two walls opposite each other in a dark room. Aram

⁶¹ Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 231.

Taştekin's video comprises interviews carried out with children throwing stones at the police in Diyarbakır and images of the city. As we listen to the children, their words travel across Diyarbakır. Gözde Özkurt's video is a tale-like narration which starts from and reaches a stone. These two videos facing one another summon the thought of a soil that we must forage again and again. On the one hand, the stone thrown in the water, that thrown at the person who we do not want to come back, the stone that fills the wolf's stomach... play and childhood association with these; on the other hand, the different forms, the different sorts of emotions assumed by the stone together with the house and country where we were born. Of course, this drives us to think that we cannot accomplish the act of remembering itself from the standpoint of a universal, empty subject. The house, identity and country where we were born do not stand in a homogeneous and empty temporality. What do we carry the legacy of? What were we born bonded to? Who possesses the right to represent, to tell the truth? Who is constantly being remembered of who they are? Or who possesses the right not to care, to forget, to disregard who they are? These questions lead us to reflect on the divisions within collective memory, on *this is not a stone*.



Hera Büyüktaşçıyan, *Panarchia*
2012, Installation

Hera Büyüktaşçıyan's work *Panarchia* (2012) tackles the question of a population, the *Rum* population, reduced as a consequence of physical and symbolic violence and forced eviction. The work is constituted of hundreds of mass-produced golden Fabergé eggs, none of them closed, left slightly ajar by placing a stone inside each of them. The original version of the installation comprises 1500 objects; this gives the whole composition a symbolic dimension: through state and collective violence, the *Rum* population in Turkey was reduced to 1500 persons. The stones blocking the Fabergé eggs bring me to think of the

whole demographic policy, the violence of the Turkification policies, the fear, silencing and oppression imposed on those who are not Turkish-Sunrite-Muslim; but also of the permanent need for praise, boasting and bragging of the dominant group, from freedom of speech to the right to remain willingly silent, the right to forget, to deny, to lie, the right to silence and to say that we should be able to speak whenever we want, a regime of expression, behaviour and habits full of the privileges of the Turkicity ethos. In popular culture, Fabergé eggs are associated with their use to store small, personal objects of high emotional value. These eggs left slightly open, containing a stone each, remind me of the outside's rule over the inside, of the choking, the silencing of individuals by the Turkicity ethos.



Ekmel Ertan, *Bugünün Tarihi (Today's History)*
2019, Installation

Ekmel Ertan's project *Bugünün Tarihi (Today's History)*, 2019) consists in a threefold ceramic, 3D laser cutting, video and light installation aiming to record the history of the present. A work which thinks together with the concept of the "Turkishness Contract"⁶² and Turkish historiography. The first part relates to the contract. A city mock-up lies on the floor, lined up against the entrance door. This mock-up recalls a lot of things. As for the city's building material being unbaked clay, it conjures up the most ancient forms of cities. As a result, the

work becomes a reference to any given urban formation. In order to enter the exhibition venue, one must walk across, step over this fragile city. Being part of destruction, consciously or not, the different ways of developing relationships to the exhibition venue occurring after the defilement brought about by the spectators (paying more

⁶² Barış Ünlü, *Türklük Sözleşmesi: Oluşumu, İşleyişi ve Krizi (The Turkishness Contract: Its Formation, Functioning and Crisis)* (Ankara: Dipnot, 2018).

attention to defiled areas, being careful not to cause more damage, feeling the burden of being responsible as the destruction piles up) lead us to ask ourselves questions regarding the existence of the silent contract. We are all part of a contract here, which we cannot get away from. We do certain things in order to comply with the contract, we walk over the city. We are within the contract. Perhaps the question is the following: destruction is located within the visible inventory, within our memory, perhaps within our conscience. Then what is invisible, what is not recorded? Perhaps the unrecorded part is the ordinary, what we do. The other two parts of the work examine where we stand in this history from this perspective. The second part relates to silence: the starting point here is an object from childhood. One of these dogs which rock their heads, used for decorative purposes inside cars in the 1970s. A sort of silence is thought of here, together with –if not consent– at least acceptance. Silence too is part of this collective performance. As for the third part, it leads us to think of how occasional oppositions, or even blames, are also part of the contract. This thought emerged from the idiomatic expression in Turkish, which literally translates to "I violently condemn." Ertan has compiled these messages from Twitter over the years 2008-2013. We see these tweets, lined up in a 6 metre-long strip. There are all kinds of strong, literally "violent", condemnations here. Rather than an analysis of when those condemnations tended to rise, or of which events sparked them, the work draws attention to how opposition obeys a certain pattern, itself a part of the consensus, and eventually to its ineffectiveness.

What this work reminds me the most is the concept of "defective act" which I discussed earlier in this essay. The emergence of a perspective that is conscious of its own incapacity to achieve confrontation, of how it inexorably returns to denial, of how even condemnations are part of the consensus. In that respect, this perspective may open the way for Sebaldian works, following the traces of perpetration in the dominant identity's memory. Such works may in turn warn us of the dangers of depredation, appropriation, filling the gap left by the other's loss and turning this loss into an inert, powerless gap, or phantom, unable of calling anybody to account. They may remind us of how speech is by no means symmetrical, nor the ground flat, of how easily we are dazzled into blindness, of how Turkicity, itself the biggest identity politics when it labels everything that is not itself as identity politics, can be viewed as an empty, universal position, of how, somewhere, we carry this belief. As a result, we may in turn realise that, in order to depict Turkicity, as a psycho-political law, as that mental assignment binding the subject, we must appeal to the moments when it is suspended. We may build the history of the collectors of rags, that of details, of that which is deemed unimportant, of

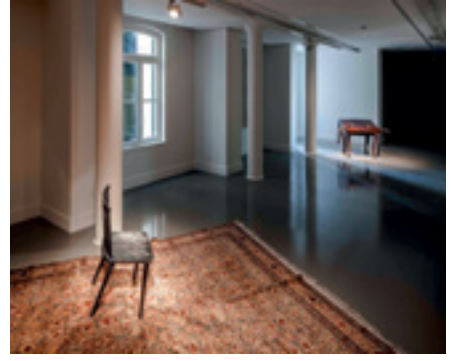
erased traces, the very history that will impede, impair and suspend the Turkicity ethos, drawing the curtain of destruction, by weaving horizontal and egalitarian connections between these elements. As for art's political power, it may lie in the weaving of such a collective temporality, against that of the curtain of destruction, presenting itself as absolute and monolithic, immobilising the past, binding citizens to one another with the contract's sternness.

Otur ki Hatırlasın (Let it sit so that you can remember, 2019) was included in an exhibition that questioned testimonial-historical knowledge, the transitiveness and intransitiveness between experience and archive, on the basis of architectural and archeological references, and took place in the Galata Greek School. The artist stripped layers after layers of paint from the worn out backs of the wooden chairs she found in the streets, in warehouses or from waste collectors, and returned them to their initial state. This excavation operation was completed through the sanding of 50 chairs in order to go back to their original design. The work proposes an assembly, a roundtable surrounded by chairs. The inequality of speech. Inequality between positions. Silencing when trying to speak. What does not come out even though we choose to sit, talk and remember. Or this question, re-framed in another way: is it possible, once those who have been silenced start to talk, voicing their demand for honour, for it not to jolt our reality, the place where we have settled, where we stand? The faulty positions of the chairs can also be thought of as pertaining to the justification, the denial set in motion on the interlocutors' part when those who have been silenced, when other memories than the dominant's, the "local's", start to talk. The very idea of equality unsettles the position occupied by those who have become accustomed to privilege. Perhaps an uncanny question: as long as what is allowed for the voiceless to let out is limited to the expression of pain, dependent on the dominant, no problem arises, but what will occur when they remember their capacity to talk, and to talk about justice? Building collectiveness always requires the inclusion of the tense, uncanny relationship between that which is common and that which is not, that which can be shared and that which cannot. Diffusing the tension, as a gesture, belongs to the dominant. As for co-existence, comprising the conscience of conflict, it may open up space for discussion about a past which does not pass, for the past of the future.

The same feeling of uncanniness is intensely felt in *Ada (The Island, 2012)* as well. There is a force, protruding inside the house. Inducing a protrusion, a shivering of the ground, having been swept underneath the carpet, weakening the floor's robustness – I noticed, among the artist's notes regarding this work in the exhibition's catalogue, the link with *Hayırsız Ada (The*



Sevim Sancaktar, *Otur ki Hatırlasın*
(*Let it sit so that you can remember*)
2019, Installation



Hera Büyüктаşçıyan, *Ada (The Island)*
2012, Installation

Exile of Istanbul Dogs, 1910).⁶³ We are being confronted with what accumulates underneath, what is thought to have been left behind, with the ousting by the invisible reality of that which lies on the surface right here. If standing somewhere, occupying one place, is the only representation of existence, here, we feel as though one of the chair's legs is raised, as though that which has accumulated underneath, or that which cannot be left behind, was about to dislodge that which is above. All this staging renders the familiar strange. A situation where the domestic becomes foreign. An element coming not from outside but from inside the house. Something both belonging to and protruding from the house.

We are very close to feminist aesthetics, to a feminist art of memory here. Feminism has come to be related to the idea that the social meanings of being a man or woman does not always signify a fixed position, that these can be displaced. We tell histories about what being a woman in one particular place and time means, before following the trace of how these categories are transformed over time. In other words, the question of what we will do with what was kept underneath the carpet when it rises and forces its presence before our eyes is related to the fact that the gender difference will not be sealed, that there is no such staging as will immobilise it. A hesitant, flawed, misplaced scene always confronts us with the futility of a very basic issue that establishes the visual space, the effort to fix sexual difference.⁶⁴ With our not needing an entrenched thought of gender. Apart from the identification of what acting with the desire to impair speech is, what speaking with that understanding is, what being able to open oneself to what the desiring person wishes to say is,⁶⁵ both works achieve the realisation that the past, what was repressed, silenced, will never be fully restored, the elevation of art at a frontier, a moment where that which is nothing, not there, that which was cast aside, can become everything. Perhaps the elevation of modern art, freed from aesthetic or moral ideals, and its deepest politics, stand on that frontier. By condensing the times that have been pushed out of the time of destruction, by connecting them to each other and giving them to nothing, it is performing its operation at the border of what is to be transformed into nothing and what is everything.

Another way of impairing the curtain of destruction, which determines who is visible and how, and fixes the rules of the game of light and darkness, is the creation of another temporal collectiveness by establishing connections between those cast outside, aside, to the edges of the time of victors. These open up space for transgressive images, for transgressive spatio-temporal collectivenesses that have broken free of a form of imagination stuck in the distinction between good representation and bad representation, able to play with the viewing and hearing parameters of the curtain of Turkicity.⁶⁶ Images that the dominants', the victors', the subduers' ego cannot swallow, which they cannot turn into a part of themselves. Between these images, we can weave a web of moments that is able to break the power of the sovereign

⁶³ Hera Büyüктаşçıyan-Merve Ünsal, "Yüzey Gerilimi," *Haset, Husumet, Rezalet* ("Surface Tension," *Envy, Enmity, Embarrassment*) (Istanbul: Arter, 2013), 62.

⁶⁴ See the text that enabled me to make that connection: Jacqueline Rose, *Görme ve Cinsellik (Sexuality in the Field of Vision)* (London: Verso, 1986). / transl. Özge Çelik (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2010).

⁶⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *Yoruma Dair: Freud ve Felsefe (Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation)*, transl. Denis Savage (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1977). / transl. Necimiye Alpay (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2007).

⁶⁶ I discovered this concept of transgressive images in bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992).



Sevil Tunaboylu, *Hayalden (Imaginative)*
2012, Installation

gaze through its supposedly infallible impact on us, thus imposing itself as absolute by producing constant destruction, moments that confront the dominant view with lack, lack of control, and inability to encompass everything. A web that brings together that which has been pushed aside of "the time of economy and power"⁶⁷. In that perspective, I consider the works *Hayalden (Imaginative)*, Sevil Tunaboylu, 2012), *Ateş ve Kılıç Arasında (Between Fire and Sword)*, Aret Gıcı, 2015), "*Kemalizm bir ibadet biçimidir.*" ("*Kemalizm is a form of worship.*", Hakan Akçura, 2007), *Madımak'93* (Burak Delier, 2007) as part of an ensemble. These works build collectiveness of a different kind, another kind of web, motioning or underlining the frontiers of what can be thought, imagined, against those brought about by the curtain of destruction. Examples which show the foundational relation between the visual field, the curtain of Turkicity and narcissism by drawing attention to how what was kept outside of, forbidden from the visual field actually pervades it, and thereby to what is off-frame. An artist dealing with the transformation of their own image while looking at the other; those who look at us not as victims but in power; the extinction of the image that promises integrity, its fictionalisation with defects or the fact that the productional structure of art within capitalist relations is made a part of the crisis of representation, while making the massacre a fictional one, considering the limits of imagination on the basis of questions similar to those that appear in Fassbinder's play. These are all examples of political art, inasmuch as they rebuild the relation between the visual space, the curtain of destruction and the person who looks at it.

With *Hayalden (Imaginative)*, 2012), Tunaboylu has designed a wall composed of about 16 parts. *Bildiğin Gibi Değil (You Can't Even Imagine)*, Rojin Canan Akin and Funda Danışman, 2011) and Bejan Matur's *Dağın Ardına Bakmak (Looking*

Behind the Mountain, 2011), two books which tell of being a child in Kurdish regions in the 90s, were two of the sources that this wall drew its inspiration from. These two books drove the artist to produce an imaginary wall. Moved by the question of what it feels like to consider somewhere different, a mountain, as one's true home. "You are evicted from your birthplace, forced to flee somewhere else. Actually, the state pushes you there. But it doesn't want you there either. Nevertheless, you have to consider somewhere your home, and that is where it is. A home that is forced upon you, that is where you make a life for yourself. I started to think of how I could subsist as a woman." An installation producing self-reflection, imagining oneself in that elsewhere, in such a home. By means of this imaginary wall where self-portraits of women wearing guerilla fatigues are hung, this work is based on the thought of setting to work firstly the artist's own capacity to identify and understand, but also that of all those who look at the wall. Another dream against the national illusions opposing reality with the curtain of destruction rather than dreams. Here, the inclusion of what the curtain of destruction casts aside into the curtain in such a way that transforms the curtain is not transformed into a pacific co-existence which erases the distinctions between what is common and what is not, what is shared and what is not; because the difference is not being smothered by a universalism that erases it. The recollection of Alice too, a fictional character belonging to childhood,⁶⁸ reminds us of our capacity to enter this door, to go beyond ourselves. We are very close to the elevation of modern cinema or of modern fiction. Aesthetic skill or ideal are not what enable this elevation here; art stands at the frontier between what is nothing and what is everything, at this pivotal moment. It incorporates into the language what does not fit in it. Perhaps art and imagination's political power lie within the capacity to produce this decision, this pivotal moment of en-

⁶⁷ Jacques Rancière, "Dilsizin Sözü," *Kurmacanın Kıyıları ("The Mute's Speech," The Edges of Fiction)*, transl. Steve Corcoran (New York: Wiley, 2019). / transl. Yunus Çetin (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2019), 163.

⁶⁸ See: <https://www.canakkalebienali.com/sevil-tunaboylu/>



Aret Gıcır, *Ateş ve Kılıç Arasında*
(*Between Fire and Sword*)
2015, Oil painting on canvas

during the years that preceded 1915, took up arms to defend their children, families, churches, schools, lands and eventually themselves, and fought to stay alive, it aims at approaching the Armenian genocide. One will find ties here with what Rancière wrote about Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*: fiction "brings to mind these political scenes where people thought to be mute speak out, not only to express their suffering, but also to display their ability to talk, and to talk about justice."⁷⁰ The production of the pivotal point between "nothing" and "everything", here, consists in its filling the void with the capacity of the victims of the genocide, whom the curtain of destruction has reduced to "being victims" and "expressing their suffering", to return our gaze.

counter that is capable of transforming the lives that defeat the curtain of destruction –propelled by dehumanisation, silencing, and the promise of wholeness– into everything. Such is the way this work, made during a period when the end of the conflict between the PKK and security forces, and the peace process were under discussion, is able to play with the entrenched parameters of the curtain of art and culture.⁶⁹

Ateş ve Kılıç Arasında (2015) is one of the paintings by Aret Gıcır which were part of the exhibition that took its name from writer Zabel Yesayan's depiction of the Adana massacre in 1909. Just as *Hayalden (Imaginative)* does, this painting too urges the viewer to pay attention, to identify and to learn more. This painting, part of an exhibition that touched upon an irremediable rupture that occurred a hundred years ago, ranges the background of 1915 by means of an experience of fragmented time. Thus, starting off with the stories of Armenian women who,



Hakan Akçura
"Kemalizm bir ibadet biçimidir."
("Kemalism is a form of worship.")
2007, Poster



Burak Delier, *Madımak'93*
2007, Installation

Hakan Akçura's work presents us with an outrage. This work, which addresses the visual taboos of the pre-secular period and their relation with irrepresentability, opens up the idealisation of Atatürk's image for discussion, by adopting a worldly point of view upon it. The outrage in the painting invites us to question the claim for absoluteness, entirety and wholesomeness of the dominant perspectives, wherever these might exist. As for *Madımak'93* (2007), it addresses the Sivas Madımak massacre. A fictional company called Tersyön (Reversedirection) has purportedly developed a fire-proof suit.⁷¹ This work is conscious of and draws attention to how it itself calls for us from within capitalism. A layer of thought spurred by maturity and awareness regarding these subjects exists here. It takes away the emotional banisters, such as surprise, innocence, pity. As is stated in Tersyön's manifesto: History belongs to the victors. The product of a perspective that acknowledges "defective acts" within the language and manifestation of the representation of suffering and massacres in the field of art. One would be tempted to write, next to this product, "20% discount for underprivileged groups".

⁶⁹ One of the pictures included in this installation was lacerated with a utility knife during its exhibition. For more information on the subject, see <http://www.siyahbant.org/kesici-alet-3-uluslararası-canakkale-bienalinde-isimin-basına-gelen-olaydan-en-son-benim-haberim-oldu/>.

⁷⁰ Rancière, "Dilsizin Sözü," 161.

⁷¹ See: <https://burakdelier.wordpress.com/works-2/madimak93-2007-tersyon/>



Atom Egoyan, *Auroras*
2007, Video

In the video titled *Auroras* (2007), a web has been woven, urging those who watch it to perform the excavation operation. A profusion of bodies and sounds acts as a call for us to identify violence through all its layers, preventing us from viewing the video as "a testimony of suffering". The true story that gave its inspiration to the video belongs to a young woman, Arshaluys Mardiganian. In the preface he wrote to the book *Aurora: From Çemişgezek to Hollywood a Woman, a Life, a Film*, Atom Egoyan mentions one of these layers of destruction: "The fact that this young woman, after having witnessed the broad-scale slaughter of her people, had to experience her trauma again for the purpose of a Hollywood movie based on her story tells volumes about the exploitation of personal traumas involved in the production of commercial entertainments."⁷² Henry Gates and his wife, who sensed her story's commercial potential, were this girl's legal trustees. Like thousands of children forcefully taken into Muslim households, Arshaluys began by losing her name, becoming Aurora Mardiganian. What she went through was turned into a film in 1918. Aurora herself played a large role in the film. The film was commercially launched under the title "Auction of Souls"; as for Aurora, she left the promotional tour halfway through. Whereupon seven "look-alike" Auroras were found. The seven Auroras in this installation read fragments from a text about what Aurora went through, which was published before the film premiered in 1918. The film telling the story of Aurora Mardiganian is lost (except for a ten minute-reel). The installation is considered as an attempt to bring back Aurora's spirit to the white screen.

Layer upon layer of story and mediation. We are approaching the realisation that the genocide's violence is not limited to one given time frame, to one given moment. These kinds of works urge us to investigate the relation that binds the curtain of destruction linking Çemişgezek to Hollywood with other destructions, connecting once more with Çemişgezek, to perform excavation. We are driven to think that we are talking inside a web of representation woven by violence, from the industry of looking at the pain of others to permanent erasure and re-writing. During its exhibition, *Auroras* was placed face-to-face with *Tanıklık (Testimony)*, Kutluğ Ataman, 2006). The latter addresses such issues as talking with an assimilated Armenian woman, expecting her to tell about herself, her inability to remember. Was this representational mechanism, not expecting a single effort from the viewer, preventing us from

establishing the connection between the inability to achieve confrontation and the curtain of Turkicity, included there as part of the representational web woven with violence, the constantly occurring erasure and re-writing? When I saw this video in the Biennial, what I felt was something like being put in the position of one of those people "proudly trying to achieve confrontation". I understood, only from thinking over and over of the indirect, intertwined, multi-layered woven webs of *Auroras*, how we must constantly learn in order to shake off the stickiness of this awful feeling, registered by the curtain of destruction, in order to acknowledge "defective acts".

Looking back now, I think that placing Berat Işık's video *Delik 2 (The Hole 2)*, 2012) across Egoyan's would have produced a much stronger impact. This work's starting point were the oral accounts of how Armenians were thrown down wells during the genocide. An underground cave 100 km outside of Diyarbakır, in the circumscription of Çüngüş, is transformed into a remembrance and forgetting site. In its original version, Berat Işık, effectively using his camera like an endoscope, descended down the depths of the cave, looking for the traces of events that occurred almost a hundred years earlier within its walls. From the mouth of the well on his way inside, he yelled Armenian names one after another. Later on, Işık recast *The Hole* for the exhibition *Haset Husumet Rezalet (Envy, Enmity, Embarrassment)* – which implied, I wish to stress, reshaping, refining again and again, as well as returning to the same location. The video, which was spatialised by being projected at the end of a corridor, was stripped of the narrativeness it had in its original version. Instead, it gave way to a plain, free from history, endoscopic perspective as it came rotating down the darkness of the well. We are looking for what is hidden somewhere inside. This time, the perspective seems much more oriented toward us, the generation carrying the perpetrators' legacy. Looking back at oneself, thinking over one's guilt. More than just one question: what do we hope to see? The expected catastrophe scene is not here. As the generations carrying the guilt's legacy and memory, upon which of our failures can we reflect? What will we not hear? What will we not see? We can also head toward a question concerning our present, toward the possibilities and impossibilities of speaking, toward foraging the soil of inequality.

⁷² Atom Egoyan, "Önsöz," *Aurora: Çemişgezek'ten Hollywood'a Bir Kadın, Bir Hayat, Bir Film* ("Preface," *Aurora: From Çemişgezek to Hollywood a Woman, a Life, a Film*), ed. Anthony Slide, transl. Evrim Kaya (Istanbul: Aras, 2017), 12.



Şener Özmen, *Sus (Shut Up)*
2010, Photograph



Cengiz Tekin, *Untitled*
2008, Video

In *Sus (Shut Up, 2010)*, a man wearing a suit is lying by a well, facing downward. With his right hand, he gestures for us as though saying "do not come" with a warning to stop, while gesturing for someone down the well to "hush" with his left hand. The time or place are uncertain in this work. It is evocative of the 12 September 1980 military coup, even though it is actually a lot more reminiscent of the enforced disappearances that occurred mainly in the Kurdish geography. A zone of tension has been established, and a crime scene has been staged only for our eyes to see. The perpetrator's act fills our gaze and the frame entirely. There are persons being silenced off of the frame, as well as things that ought to stay there.

Cengiz Tekin's *Untitled* (2008) video is also a work that intends to draw our attention to the way it produces tension in a similar way, and how it has staged a fictional crime scene for our eyes only. The thing that is being rolled down is a corpse – we see three men in suits, wearing sunglasses, executing a contract in this video. The motion of the corpse, which our sight is set upon, ends with the perpetrators hurling it into a ditch. We are stuck to the perpetrators' act. Both the video and picture cold-bloodedly render the crime scene, the recurring murder and violence mechanism, visible. We are the only witnesses of a produced crime scene, forcing us to concentrate on the perpetrators only. This fiction will not allow for pity or to escape toward other emotions; because it acts as a reminder of the conditions in which crime can occur, and continue to, repeat itself. This is achieved through a staging that sheds light on how the pleasure, the pleasure of watching, sticks to the perpetrator's act. Through our being tacked to the perpetrator's gaze. This is where the contract is valid. This is only possible while citizens cling to a monolithic history, a monolithic visual space, the perpetrator's act and gaze, and refuse to see otherwise. With citizens whose silence makes them complicit in the crime.



Hale Tenger, *Çıkardık mı su altındaki ölüyü?*
(*Did we pull the dead from underwater?*)
2019, Kinetic sculpture

did you pull the body from underwater
did we pull the body from underwater
we didn't pull the body from underwater
we had pulled the body from underwater
Edip Cansever

One of the works by Hale Tenger included in the exhibition *Rüzgârların Dinlendiği Yer* (*Where the Winds Rest*, 2019) is another form of the wells I mentioned above. Tenger returns to the installation which she had produced in 2007, after Hrant Dink's assassination, to this soil, to this topography of memory. With the way it could not pull the body between the fans and reflections, the installation that she produced in 2007 was a ventilation, maybe a wish – perhaps the dead body could be pulled out of the water. Whereas, in the form that it assumes in the version I have selected, writings, half protruding, half disappearing in black oil, harbour a deep darkness.⁷³ A well. A bottomless pit. Those who fall in it are never heard of again. Here, the history of destruction, of erasure, operates like a machine. Yet, another apparatus, capable of preventing us from being hurled by the history of destruction, from powerlessly, dumbfoundedly witnessing the accumulation of rubble, accompanies this mechanism, composed of motor oil, iron and aluminium. Reminding and bringing forth the moments, encounters, openings where the mechanism of destruction is interrupted, that which can disrupt this mechanism by establishing other temporalities, other partnerships, that which can prevent cohabitation from turning into a rigid contract, and this contract from being seen as an infallible power. The states of "weighing" each other, "togetherness" and "muteness", the otherness that creates us, the tension in encounters, the flying, semi-transparent, permeable, slightly gaping or overlapping of the curtains, allowing us to feel how we can move with them through collisions and con-

flict. The curtains' movement indicates that this opening is the source of the ethical bond between me and the other. The videos of moorland and sea accompanying them, as does Sebald's natural history, stand there as places witnessing humans' many talents for construction and destruction. The comparison and struggle between natural history and human history, just as they do in *Night and Fog*, *Austerlitz* or *Sans Soleil*, become a part of the traces of the topography of memory, of the building of connections between traces and of the erasure of their traces. The mechanism built with burnt motor oil reminds us of the logic and processing of erasure, of anonymisation, of outcasting, of destruction, and of our responsibility here. Only if we do not forget this processing, may we become ready not to lose ourselves, to accept the traces left on us by the others, not to become defensive in the face of the violence of conflict, not to appeal to denial, not to abandon ourselves to the flow in a moment of crisis, perhaps. Perhaps the politics at the heart of art consists in this. It does not grant solutions in order to pull bodies out of the water; but it can oppose the way the destruction mechanism declares itself irrevocable; it can weave webs that hinder this mechanism. It drives us to return, again and again, to the terrain of erasure, of self-erasure, and to forage the perpetrator's soil; such is the power it bestows. It settles at the frontier, on the edge between nothing and everything, and starts to operate there. Again and again.

⁷³ For Ayşegül Oğuz and Anıl Olcan's interview with Hale Tenger for Bir+Bir, dated 15 January 2020, see <https://www.birartibir.org/kultur-sanat/571-cikarmadik-su-altindaki-oluyu>.



Hale Tenger, *Rüzgârların Dinlendiği Yer (Where the Winds Rest)*
2019, Installation



Hera Büyüктаşçıyan, *Dalgaların Dalgası (The Wave of All Waves)*
2018, Installation

Lastly, *Dalgaların Dalgası (The Wave of All Waves, 2018)*. Two buildings emptied by the will of the state. We are inside one of them; the place where the exhibition is being held is the Galata Greek School. The second one is the Büyükkada Rum Orphanage; it is here, by means of voices, images and photographs. When we reach the building's fourth floor, we are faced with the last part, reflecting the destruction that a building struggling to stay on its feet was abandoned to until today. Titled *Dalgaların Dalgası (The Wave of All Waves)*, Hera Büyüктаşçıyan's installation, which indicates that the uncanny waves of the past might as well crush the ground beneath our feet and the present as a whole, manifests itself before us in the shape of a great wooden wave, moving from the building's ceiling down and inwards. This wave merges with Murat Germeç's photographs, hinting at the partly broken ceiling. The wave does not come from below, but from the ceiling. Just as it overwhelms the sky and ground, it is a wave that crushes time as well.

"*Dalgaların Dalgası (The Wave of All Waves)* is a reminder of this powerful, unexpected wave which at one point in time joggles our reality today, containing all that which history has accumulated over the years, and might even swallow it as it crashes. It is a reminder that sometimes hidden experiences, realities over which a stone is thrown so that they will never return and be remembered, and those that are given up upon as never expected to come back, may suddenly return and can pull the ground off our feet, the ground on which we are rooted, at any time."⁷⁴

⁷⁴ 206 Odalı Sessizlik: Büyükkada Rum Yetimhanesi Üzerine Etüdüler (*The Silence of 206 Rooms: Studies on the Büyükkada Greek Orphanage*, 2018) exhibition catalogue, 134.

This wave is a concentrated object. It works in several directions. We may regard it as the violent wave, constantly producing annihilation, brutally dislodging lives, snatching people away from the place they have made for themselves on this world which gives life to us, or as that of the oppressed, of the defeated, that will evict us of our present reality, dismantle the ground that we are walking on, expel those who, because they rule, have forgotten about the ground's fragility, disperse that which has been put under the rug. This second direction reminds us of our openness to an encounter that persistently comes, that demands, that comes again and again and reminds us of our responsibility, an encounter that bestows the power to derail time on that which persistently comes. That is why it is a permission, made of the past and the future. The wave which must be brought, which we must bring, which we must perform hand in hand, whose call we must hear. The wave of all waves.

Which murky river conquered us?

We collapsed at the deep.

The current runs over our heads

winding inarticulate reeds;

The voices

Under the chestnut tree became pebbles

And children throw them away.



Menstrual Blood, Hair and Needle: Constructing Testimony to the Self

**Dilan
Yıldırım**

"A blind boatman saw the murder
I saw, my ears saw
The steamship fumed and rampaged
None of you were there"¹

When casting a look at the artworks included in the selection/archive, compiled with truth and justice at heart by the *Hafıza Merkezi*, a feverish excavation work surfaces in one's mind. The excavation is a living image that voices a question: "what is it that these works do?" Undoubtedly, the question of "which truths come forth?" is crucial. When observing the issues addressed by the works in the field of visual arts, or these works themselves, at the level of representation, one cannot help but notice that nothing new has been uncovered in the process of this excavation. One necessarily grasps that these works have emanated from such a geography where everyone already knows only too well what is buried, and where. Instead, the excavation image brings us closer to lives in that distant past, which we cannot bear witness to anymore. However, the provision implied by the artworks in the selection/archive has to do with the rejection, failure or denial of testimony. While carrying out confrontation with invisible, concealed truths in the recent past or present, they drive one to conclude that Turkey is a non-testimonial society. I would like to focus this essay on such works that intervene in non-testimony. I will concentrate this analysis on artworks which generate testimony to the other, to one another and to the self. While doing so, I will try to account for how dynamically these works, which evoke different modes of testimony, actively interfere in the world.

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This is a Toros. It was born in France in 1969, as a mid-sized family car, under the name of Renault 12. Even though it ceased to be produced in 1980, its production and sale went on in other parts of the world. It was an uncomfortable vehicle, albeit a unique and cheap machine, able to transport "human load". Thanks above all to its high level of performance on rough and off-road terrain, this gawky vehicle broke all sales re-

ords in the history of the car industry in Turkey. Alongside its fame as a farmwork-friendly vehicle in some parts of Turkey, it is mostly known as a symbol of assaults by unknown assailants and enforced disappearances in the war-torn Kurdish geography. As the white Toros, parked somewhere in between neighbourhoods, in crowded or deserted roads, a little way ahead of the HEP/DEP/HADEP building, on the sidewalk at the crossroads, a walkie talkie resting on the dashboard.

This is not a Toros:



Ali Bozan, *Bu Bir Toros Değildir*
(*This is not a Toros*)
2009, Photograph

In his work titled *Bu Bir Toros Değildir* (*This is not a Toros*, 2009), Ali Bozan shows us a white Toros seen in profile. The artist described this work to the *Radikal* newspaper at the time as follows: "I am trying to account for how the Toros is not just a car, I am telling of the Toros monster that has hurt everyone's body and mind in the region, whether or not involved in anything. In his interview with Neşe Düzel, when asked how many persons they could abduct and execute, Abdulkadir Aygan answered by complaining about the Toros' limited physical structure. My work is a way of challenging the desire for counter-guerilla."²

Ali Bozan's work, presented as an ordinary photograph "not" being a Toros, comprises an artistic intervention which will go unnoticed to a quick gaze, I mean the eye that sees it as simply a car. A small addition that, in response to Aygan's complaint, increases the car's physical capacity: a third door.

¹ Quoted from Attilâ İlhan's poem, *Cinayet Saati* (*Murder Hour*). Imagined as sung by Ahmet Kaya.

² Nihan Bora, "Yersizliğin koordinatlarını bulanlar (Those who find the coordinates of groundlessness)," *Radikal*, last accessed 25.02.2021, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/hayat/yersizligin-koordinatlarini-bulanlar-939545/>.

This unknown door, which the eye will not notice at first sight, unsettles the mental image that we have become familiar with to the point of certainty, that which corresponds to our perception of reality. In other words, by *hacking* the plane of our perception of reality, that is, the world of phenomena, where the Toros appears to us as merely a car, it opens a portal that leads toward another plane of truth. If we actually experience difficulty in noticing this added door at first sight and only see it later, this leads us to a terrifying questioning: we can no longer be sure of what we see or not, of how we read a sentence. When we cross this portal presented by the third door, once things invisible to us in the plane of our existence start to appear, this is indeed not a Toros anymore. This unknown door, as an artistic invention, presses the claim of attaining the truth by wedging the missing, yet fundamental element inside a photograph.

When the door which first seems to us an excessive addition becomes fundamental information, we are compelled to reflect on the invisible power. The very same "invisible" power that has forced 17.000 people in the back of ordinary Toros cars. Is what terrorises us in Ali Bozan's work the knowledge of these 17.000 people ordinarily forced in the back of Toros cars, or rather our eyes' insistence on not noticing the third door standing in plain sight in the picture? 17.000 murders by unknown assailants is a dreadful figure, but could it be that what is really uncanny is in fact our being so accustomed to this piece of data that we even meticulously hide it from ourselves, that we do not even see what we see? If testimony is an act of faithfulness to the other in a society, it is also a matter of faithfulness to our own experience³: "How did I not see?" I would like us to cross through this third door and think on the perpetrator, that is, the null subject of the sentence.

Null subject, one of the four forms of subject that exist in the Turkish language⁴, is an element which, despite not being literally mentioned among the constituents of a sentence, is understood/known by the reader/listener. In such a case, a distinct phrasal element indicating who (subject) performs the action is considered unnecessary. In order to identify the null subject, we are advised to question the verb. Even though hidden, the identity of the null subject is indicated at the end of the verb (the word expressing the action) through an inflection (personal ending). This tiny unit, this scrawny bit of sound, indivisible into a smaller meaningful unit, is what tells us who the perpetrator of the action is. We badger this puny personal ending and ask the action that is being carried out: "Who did?"

The question of "who did it" is actually a theatrical reasoning. In daily life, when we talk-listen-read, we identify the subject as soon as the sentence is formed. This piece of information is a hugely important piece of data, expressed by a tiny bit of sound in the sentence. A piece of knowledge that is no secret, even when it is concealed. The utterance of the perpetrator beyond one little sound note, whether it be visible or not, in other words, talking openly of who performed the action, placing the subject in plain sight in the sentence, is a political matter: that of the relationship between the action and the perpetrator. Moreover, it is a vital matter. This effort constitutes one of the main lines of the struggle against enforced disappearances and murders by unknown assailants in Turkey.

On 20 January 2021, news of an enforced disappearance reached us through social media. Electric worker Gökhan Güneş left his house for work but never reached his destination. Individual social media accounts, human rights organisations and oppositional news agencies launched a digital campaign through the hashtag #GökhanGüneşNerede? (#WhereIsGökhanGüneş?). The Police Department ignored the duly filed camera recordings showing the moment when Güneş, said to have received threats for his political identity, was abducted. These images, clearly showing abduction by means of physical constraint, were not considered by the police as sufficient ground to open an inquiry. Hence, we are entitled to say that they went "unseen".

Part of the struggle not to allow for the loss of Güneş, the question mark placed beside the word "Where?", was an instrument in a sentence which actually exposed Güneş's whereabouts through collective stance and determination; a sentence which, although seemingly phrased as a question, actually was not one, and uncovered how what was concealed was in fact blatant: "We know where Gökhan is; give him back." In other words, the question itself felt no need for a theatrical inquiry into the truth of the matter. It designated both the name of the action (enforced disappearance/abduction) and its perpetrator (the state). The campaign was successful. Güneş returned six



³ Richard Kearney, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2005), 73-75.

days after his abduction. Prior to that case, the return of the disappeared was not something we had much heard of in Turkey.

According to his statements after his liberation, Gökhan himself "didn't see" what had happened to him, because he was blindfolded for the duration of his abduction. Somewhere else in his statement, he said he had asked the unknown assailants: "Who are you?"; to which they replied: "We are the unseen."

The history and present situation of state violence in Turkey is a heap of cases composed of open secrets, known not only by the victims and the opposition. The reason why we are immediately taken to the phrase "open secret", that familiar sensation it gives us beyond being a subtle word play, stems from its presence as an important driving force in Turkey's political and social culture. With regard to injustice, we must consider a social modality resting on open secrets as different from a collectivity resting on the unknown in the real sense of the word.

Blatant injustices can only stay hidden or continue to occur secretly –or the confidence that they will– where ignorance or invisibility reign. Within such a context, testimony is the only collective force capable of making the truth visible both symbolically and concretely. I am speaking of the capacity of societal components to bear witness to one another outside of the judicial courts established by law. If seeing and knowing are not equivalent to testimony, we must recognize that the foundation of "reciprocal testimony" is a matter of social acknowledgement, and that acknowledgement developing outside or in spite of the influence of the ruling power in such conflictual geographies as Turkey is a political matter. Indeed, social testimony is a force that determines what is visible and what is not on the plane of our own reality, beyond the material truth. Such a force can be considered a crime by the ruling power.

In our daily lives, however, being seen bears crucial importance. That is, not being observed, but seen in the sense of knowing one another, bearing witness to one another: the need to be seen as a matter of acknowledgement. Because one of the worst situations of solitude must be when a person has no witness, we often appeal to the highest possible testimony when no one believes us or when our experiences are being disregarded. We all know this form of lament from songs and poetry: "God be my witness, I love you very much." In daily language, every time we appeal to God's testimony, we actually appeal to the sacredness and power of testimony in the name of truth. On the other hand, collective testimony is a rather complex matter, due to its falling in the scope of the ruling pow-

er. As the proverbial phrase "May they not take me as a witness" shows, the fact that testimony can turn into condemnation is punitive common experimental knowledge in Turkey. Still, I would like us to remember another phrase, recurrent across the walls of the city or among the lyrics of songs, designating a mindframe that will not give up an action even when the latter is considered a crime: "If love is a crime, then I am a criminal." Further on in this essay, I would like to mention such artworks that do not hesitate to take the blame in terms of testimony. Such works that commit the crime of testimony to the other, to one another and to the self.⁴

Testimony is not exhausted by the verbs to see/to have seen alone, it is also a matter of acknowledgement⁵. This word in Turkish, stemming from an Arabic root, means "telling something openly, as it is, without concealment". Constituting one of the pivotal concepts of the Alevite faith, acknowledgement, or promise, comprises an idea of responsibility, of liability. In the framework of an understanding that places will at a central position, it expresses the human attachment to the truth. The relation that we establish with truth concerns both the other and, as a reflexive verb does, the self: acknowledgement is what makes humans human. As a notion, it is closely related to "giving one's word". On the other hand, in its Alevite acceptance, we must understand that acknowledgement, because of the life-long responsibility it bestows on its bearer, represents a great burden.

Amid the artworks comprised in the *Hafıza Merkezi's* selection/archive, we come across the series of photographs by the journalist Ahmet Şık in the exhibition titled *Başkasının Acısına Bakmak 2 (Regarding the Pain of Others 2, 2006)*. Through photographs which show the traces of a denied war waged in the Kurdish geography, the exhibition narrates those stories that compose the accompanying texts. According to Ahmet Şık's statement regarding the series of photographs, what he has seen were his own nightmares. However "inexistent" they are being described as, the exhibition performatively states that it saw the villages burnt, the eyes ripped, the prostheses, the bodies torn by a war whose existence is denied. In a sense, this work, which strives to prove the existence of a war that "does not exist", aims for the viewers of the photographs to bear witness to the same traumatic traces. In Şık's own words: "I want you to feel uncomfortable, to despond, to see nightmares."⁶

As Rancière touched upon in his essay, "The Intolerable Image", I am not quite sure of where a hope to attain an image of reality can lead us to. Especially in a country that operates on open

⁴ For a theoretic and political discussion of the concept of "taking the blame", see Suphi Nejat Ağırnaslı's essay "Cadi Kazanında Kaynayan Günahlar (The Sins that Boil in the Witch's Brew)".

⁵ Translator's note: *ikrar* in Turkish.

⁶ "Ahmet Şık'tan Başkasının Acısına Bakmak (Regarding the Pain of Others by Ahmet Şık)," *bianet*, last accessed 25.02.2021, <https://m.bianet.org/biamag/kultur/76194-ahmet-siktan-baskasinin-acisina-bakmak>.

secrets. In the same essay, Rancière also writes that the closure of an epoch that believed in fighting injustice has been pronounced long ago.⁷ Yet, especially now, in the age of hidden testimony, we are in dire need of the very relation of responsibility toward truth established by that epoch.

The challenges that Ahmet Şık's exhibition itself has gone through tell us that the ruling power actually knows this better than us: while it was travelling cities across Turkey, when it reached Ankara, the exhibition was deemed "hostile to the state" and obstructed by the authorities on that ground. The condition imposed by the authorities for the exhibition to be able to continue is worth a reflection: for some photographs, but mostly for the explanatory texts placed beneath them, that is, the victims' own stories, to be discarded. Within the context of this exhibition, can we consider that we are faced with a state that does not enjoy its picture being taken? It is obvious that it fancies neither those who tell their own story nor those who relay them.



Timur Çelik, *Untitled (Eyewitness series)*
2017, Oil painting on canvas



Timur Çelik, *Untitled (Eyewitness series)*
2019, Oil painting on canvas

While casting a look at the Kurdish geography during the peace process, the landscapes painted by Timur Çelik as part of his *Görgü Tanığı (Eyewitness)* series inevitably place a fire somewhere at the horizon of the visible world. That fire creates a disturbance within the spectacle offered by the landscape. Despite our will to delve deep into the contemplation of superb, grandiose mountain ranges or infinite plains, our gaze is caught by this disturbing smoke of a fire. At times the flames have long reached

⁷ Jacques Rancière, Özgürleşen Seyirci (*The Emancipated Spectator*) (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2021), 85-105. / transl. Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2008), 83-107.

the very centre of the frame, so close that we cannot look away anymore; other times, an ominous pillar of smoke at the horizon gives us tremendous unrest. Occasionally, other people watching the fire closely appear in the painting. If we look away, we fall into a contradiction with them: they are committed to continue looking, keeping watch, insistently bearing witness. No, this flame is not just a grassfire accompanying a bucolic landscape. This gaze is not an enjoyable view. We are unremittingly disturbed. We have no choice but to ask ourselves: what in hell is this fire? Such an intervention throws landscape off course from its nature of abstract representation, plucks the fire out of the frame and throws it straight at us

We are advised never to consider landscape art as only about nature, but to look at a particular time in history and a particular gaze organised in this historical context.⁸ If we argued that the landscapes that Timur Çelik presents us in his *Görgü Tanığı* series historically document the possibility of peace withering away, we would fall short of a genuine assessment. Because, apart from their value in terms of historicity, these paintings exercise a performative task in a similar way to that of Ali Bozan's third door, that of raising the fire alarm: this is an art of landscape that *hacks* the feeling of escape

Timur Çelik, *Yangın (The Fire, Eyewitness series)* 2017, Oil painting on canvas



Timur Çelik, *Untitled (Eyewitness series)* 2020, Oil painting on canvas

and intemporality we attribute to rural, natural scenery; that infuses a sense of urgency as well as a pessimism regarding the looming catastrophe, that rings as a fire alarm does.⁹ We may wish to turn our gaze, the same gaze acting "as though nothing was happening", similar to the human figures in Bruegel's *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*, toward these wide plains. But the fire alarm is already ringing, there is no escape: what we are looking at is not nature, but time itself, or the looming disaster. In other words, we are not looking at a space, but at an approaching time –the time of the disaster. The fire may well grow until it devours the whole landscape. While compelling us to think of the relation between testimony and time, Timur Çelik paints the irreconcilableness between the feeling of a spectacle and that of urgency.

We are all familiar with one of the artworks in the *Görgü Tanığı* series from the newspapers. On 11 September 2020, the military brought two villagers unconscious, their bodies crushed, to a private hospital in Van. The incident, registered in the hospital's records as resulting from a "fall from height", was reported on by news agencies as a case of two villagers thrown off a helicopter after being tortured. There were no eyewitnesses to the incident apart from the perpetrators and the victims. The picture of Osman Şiban, one of the two victims, reached our screens, with his bloodshot eyes looking upwards in awe, as it appeared in news reports. As for the second victim, Servet Turgut, he could never talk, and died a short time afterwards. Authorities have repeatedly claimed that no "throwing off of a helicopter" or torture had ever taken place.

Timur Çelik, on the other hand, painted this incident without eyewitnesses as though he had seen it himself. Having completed his compulsory military service in Van in the 1980s, he knows that specific terrain and its feeling well. In his work, a Skorsky-model helicopter bearing multi-terrain pattern camouflage has risen in the air at a certain angle, its blades blurring the sky against which they are rotating. This blur shows us the helicopter as in motion, almost alive. It is throwing two persons down. Two persons are falling down like leaves. This event could have been imagined from the point of view of the victims or from that of the perpetrators. But no: it is depicted from the point of view of a third person, against the backdrop of a wide landscape imagined as Van's topography. Are we looking at merely a single event, or possibly at a time that repeats itself, a moment that keeps occurring again and again in that geography? Just as the blades of the helicopter, blending in the landscape thanks to its multi-terrain pattern camouflage, keep rotating and rotating, do people keep falling and falling?

⁸ W. J. T Mitchell, *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002).

⁹ For a discussion on the concepts of catastrophe and fire alarm, see Michael Löwy, *Walter Benjamin: Yangın Alarmı (Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's 'On the Concept of History')* (Istanbul: Versus, 2007). / transl. Chris Turner (London and New York: Verso, 2005).

This painting, made shortly after the event took place, was placed alongside the picture of Osman Şiban and his bloodshot eyes gazing at the sky in reports by news agencies. It was shared countless times through social media as though a real photograph of the event. However deprived of eyewitnesses or proof the incident actually was, many of us "saw" the moment when people were "dropped off the helicopter" through this painting. It is possible to consider this work, whereby Timur Çelik aims to bear testimony, as a sort of proof produced by art? But what sort of proof? A proof that states that an isolated event resting on a recurring truth –that of the knowledge of founding violence– in a war-torn geography, does not need evidence in order to be confirmed: "Even though I did not see, I saw: two Kurdish villagers were thrown off a helicopter."



Nusaybin



*Zehra Doğan, Nusaybin
2016, Digital image*

A photograph of Nusaybin, representing the end of the military operations –known as the trench operations– carried out during the years 2015–16, has left its imprint in our minds through its reinterpretation in the shape of a painting by journalist and painter Zehra Doğan, who was in the region at the time of the events but also saw it through social media like the rest of us.

In the terminology of the age of Instagram, this picture could be designated as the selfie of a victory: the news reports that accompanied the picture at the time heralded the termination of terror, the achievement of peace by the state. While we are talking about the age of Instagram, it is worth remembering the visual regime that has imprinted its seal on this epoch: during the months when the armed conflict and operations lasted, journalists were denied entry to the areas cordoned off by the military. We had access to the unconceivable level of violence unleashed in the area only through the mediation of the many selfies taken and put into circulation by the members of the security forces; that is how we remember it.

In her reinterpretation of the photograph, Zehra Doğan actually performs only one, albeit fundamental, intervention: the military vehicles posing in line in front of a town razed to the ground are depicted as monsters. Horrific. One wonders; was the original picture not gruesome enough? Here is evidence, if need be: is a town reduced to a heap of rubble, and –even worse– the positioning of total destruction as the backdrop of a picture of triumphant victory not horrific enough as it is? The destruction has been identically reproduced, except for a pillar of smoke rising above the town. Within the context of testimony, here is how I propose to read Zehra Doğan's intervention: destruction is not a presented piece of evidence, but rather a witness speaking by reversing the direction of the gaze. Only a backdrop in the picture, it becomes an entity that sees in the painting. The destruction almost tells the person who takes the selfie: "I saw you too. You did not resemble that in the picture, you resembled that in the painting."



Zehra Doğan, *Untitled*
2018, Ballpoint pen on bed sheet



Zehra Doğan, *Ez Zehra, ne poşmanım*
(*I am Zehra, I have no regrets*)
2019, Writing, menstrual blood, ballpoint pen
and hair on bed sheet

In 2016, Zehra Doğan was arrested and imprisoned on the basis of her news reports, and of this painting as well. As part of the exhibition titled *Görülmemiştir* (*Unseen*), held in 2020 in Kırathane, she reimagined her prison bed "as a fake incubator" in a room, in her own words: "I believe that this prison's incubator carried the following expectation: you will lie there and

forget, deny who you are, what you saw, what you have experienced."¹⁰ Like an invention that breaks the will and power to bear testimony to the self. Except that with Zehra Doğan's intervention, the incubator comes off its hinges. On her pillow, she has written, with her hair, in Kurdish, who she is and how she does not regret anything that she has done. On a page of her illustrated diary, resting on her bedside table, there is a note above a figure whose eyes have become camera lenses, that says: "Imprisonment comes in my one ear and goes out from the other. They think they took it away from me, but my eyes are my camera."

The bedspread has been embroidered with the figures of women prisoners: these stark naked women seem to reach out to one another as much as they envelop each other and the person sleeping in this bed like a vine. They seem to have built a world that the ruling power cannot penetrate even though they are inside a prison. These are women whose flesh has been wounded into deformity. Still, they are not ashamed of appropriating their bodies. "I will call them freaks, Zehra", I tell her during our interview. "Fine", she says, before adding: "These are freaks whose greatest power is their fragility." Women who will not break down, however fragile they are, nor be ashamed of looking at each other despite having been wounded into deformity. Freaks looking, not to watch at each other, but to watch over one another, bearing testimony to themselves and to one another.

¹⁰ Quotation from the author's personal interview with Zehra Doğan.



Zehra Doğan, *Külotumdaki Kırmızı Ordu (The Red Army In My Pants)*
2016, Rosehip tincture and ballpoint pen on clothing fabric

On the wall by the bed hangs the figure of a woman, unashamedly showing her vagina, spilling her menstrual blood in everybody's sight. The menstrual blood in the images of freaks created by the artist tests, both symbolically and performatively, the masculine gaze cast over them. These are figures of women who, rather than being ashamed, hiding, asking for forgiveness because they bleed, carry their menstrual blood like a talisman. These women figures who, being created with menstrual blood as a material, symbolically speaking, cannot be tested by their own blood anymore, and have become objects that put the prison's rule itself to the test in real life. Objects that the prison's guards did not dare touch, check, or even look at: *un-see-able*.

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Understanding the gaze of the ruling power as a relation of viewing-being viewed requires our apprehension of the said gaze as more than a matter of perspective. State anthropology teaches us that this gaze aims to make the things it looks at readable.¹¹ In war zones rebuilt by means of superior military technology, apprehending things within the optical boundaries allowed by the image of the eye alone is not enough from an ethnographic standpoint. In such contexts, the gaze that accompanies the founding violence is to be considered along the lines of scopic¹² (as in "radioscopy") or radiological metaphors: a gaze that not only makes things readable but also aims to violently control the body, the object, the place, the texture and the narrative. In the Kurdish geography, technologically superior military vehicles that make this gaze possible in real life are part of the landscape. We have to envision a spatiality equipped with devices that see with heat, movement, differences in vibrations. We could designate this as a fantastic reality: in such a place, the sky is turned into an observation field with the help of watch towers and mobile drones, while the very ground becomes a recording device thanks to sensors placed below the surface. The frequently made comparison between the Kurdish-populated geography and an open air prison indicates that the gaze of the ruling power is one that also encloses.

¹¹ James Scott, *Devlet Gibi Görmek (Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed)* (Istanbul: Koç Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2020). / (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

¹² For a comparative look at the use of the concept of scopic gaze, see Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, "Potansiyel Tarih: Şiddet Üzerinden Düşünmek (Potential History: Thinking through Violence)," *Çatışmayı Kaydetmek: Arşivler, İnsan Hakları ve Toplumsal Mücadele (Recording the Conflict: Archives, Human Rights and Social Struggle)*, ed. Duygu Doğan, Sidar Bayram (Istanbul: Demos, 2018).



Fatoş İrwen, *Gülleler (Balls)*
2018–2019, Human hair

Artist Fatoş İrwen made balls, capable of piercing walls, from the hair that she collected from her wardmates in the Diyarbakır prison. As the daughter or a mother who collected hair fallen to the ground almost religiously and kept them in the cracks of the walls, she spoke of her work thus: "Hair is not waste or lifeless. It is living proof of the strength of life's cycle."¹³ Fatoş İrwen calls our attention to the wonder of hair, which, in biological terms, continues to grow even after death. A fragile, yet powerful material. Hair as a part of a body that has its own biography: like the textural chronology of the life lived by its owner. The balls, each made from the hair of a different political prisoner, remind us that prison is not only a place of oppression, but also a living space, a place where resistance and creativity arise. Beyond cannon shells piercing through the siege, can we imagine these balls as a gaze? Can we consider that they tell us what the women inmates see when they look at the walls, how they see themselves and their lives against incarceration?

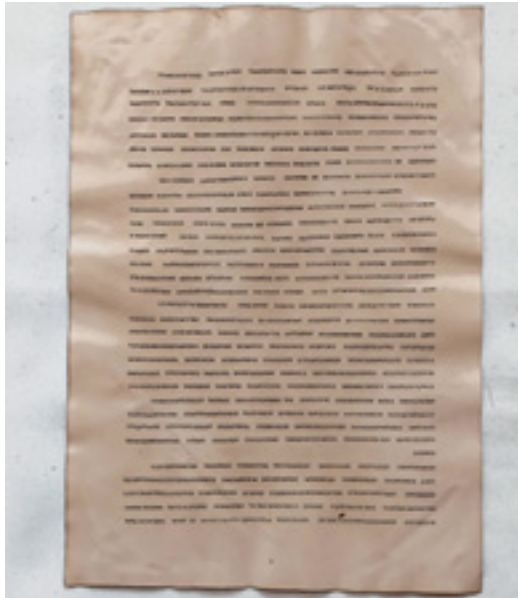
In another work by the same artist, the same walls are turned into witnesses from their original state of being incarceration instruments. Going back in time, almost as an archeological excavation, the artist has stripped each layer of these walls which have been plastered countless times over the years. She reached back to the eighties. She then prepared a series by binding the pieces, bearing the traces left by prisoners detained there over the course of history, which she carefully stripped, on pillboxes with toothpaste. With the help of her wardmates, placing plastic chairs on top of one another, she reached here and there across the walls to collect samples. Overall, the artist has produced a collective intervention that problematizes by whom and how the story is being preserved and told at a time when the transformation of the Diyarbakır prison into a museum was being discussed: the removal and collection of the place's testimony by the prisoners with their own hands.

Fatoş İrwen, *Duvar (Wall)*
2019–2020, Layers ripped off the wall



¹³ Quotation from the author's personal interview with Fatoş İrwen.

Another work by Fatoş İrwen consists in 40 documents, referring to the Diyarbakır prison's 40 years of existence. The sheets of A4 paper that inmates have to obtain from the prison's canteen in order to place a request, were made to look older by being soaked in tea. The 40 historic documents were produced by piercing holes with a needle so as to compose texts of prose or poetry. This work, which stems from the coercive relation with texts that the prison establishes, actually constitutes an unread history. "It came up mostly from books not allowed inside, censored letters, but above all from notes inquired into"¹⁴, the artist says. If only for a moment, we want to imagine that these documents emanated from past prisoners of this detention centre. It is impossible, but, for that matter, since these needle-punctured documents are undecipherable, what we are contemplating is actually the impossibility of attaining the truth. Later, these symbolic documents are turned into performative objects, putting the prison's authorities to the test. The first places where they were put into circulation were state institutions of course: considered as evidence, they were seized and submitted to investigation. They were sent to criminal laboratories for decoding. Eventually, Fatoş İrwen has created a history that has resisted probes to be made readable, and the state's penetration from within its very investigation mechanisms/a testimony to the self.



Fatoş İrwen, *Öteki Öteki Tarih - OKU!* (*The Other History- READ!*)
2019-2020, Paper with needle holes

Within the scope of this essay, I have tried to relay modalities of testimony which do not shy away from putting the ruling power to the test, no matter how they are also being tested by the ruling power. My concern was about a testimony to the other, to one another, but above all to the self. As I strode across the worlds created by the artworks which I focused on, I have gained a complete certainty: the worst case of lacking a witness is being deprived of the capacity for a testimony to the self. The notion of the "self" propounded here, as is the case of the freak figures which I have opened for discussion, exceeds the frontiers of the individual and must be understood as a form of self that reaches collectivity. But it should also be read, as a reflexive verb, in the sense of faithfulness to the truth on an individual plane. Testimony is a performative act in all three situations (to the other, to one another, to the self). In the world of concealed perpetrators and hidden witnesses, such a performativeness may constitute a crime. As for the works examined in the scope of this essay, they call for responsibility for this very crime to be claimed.

¹⁴ Quotation from the author's personal interview with Fatoş İrwen.



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Fatoş İrwen, *Şiryan*
2012, Video performance

In conclusion, I would like to go back to a both fragile and sharp figure that is recurrent throughout Fatoş İrwen's artworks: that of the needle. This tiny needle, embroidering a narration that cannot be controlled on sheets of paper, is also that which punctures the artist's hands in Fatoş İrwen's work *Şiryan* (2012). *Şiryan* is a 35 minute-long video performance. Inside the frame, we see two hands literally sewing one another. One hand embroiders patterns inside the palm and on the fingers of the other: the needle, thread and skin. We hear the sounds of the Sur neighbourhood coming from the outside: children playing, neighbours letting out their daily rumble, a motorcycle passing by, gun shots. One hand sews the other before un-stitching it. 35 minutes is a long time to think over what the needle is doing. Perhaps this tiny needle is embroidering new fingerprints, which the ruling power will not be able to prosecute, perhaps it draws a new fate line. Perhaps both hands do not belong to the same person? Perhaps different hands belonging to different persons are inscribing someone else's fingerprints/crime on themselves, embroidering a common fate, sewing themselves to one another.

I wish to express my thanks to the whole Hafıza Merkezi team, whose efforts have allowed for the constitution of this precious archive. I owe particular thanks to Sevim Sancaktar, who helped for this essay to emerge both editorially and theoretically. I thank Osman Özarslan, Özgür Sevgi Göral, İlim Karakuş, Ekin Kurtiç and İrem Sözen for reading this essay and not withholding their comments. I deeply thank Fatoş İrwen, Zehra Doğan and Timur Çelik not only for opening the door to their works' universe, but also for sparing no mental toil in the process.

The Memory of Death, the Death of Memory

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**Zeynep
Sayın**

For a number of reasons which I will go into more detail a little later, I would like to convey my gratitude to you for inviting me to take part in the Talks on Memory and Arts and for coming to listen to me later on, and set out, without further ado, by talking about death. I would like to speak about image, memory and breath. Speaking about breath, that is precisely the title of a poem from 1948 by the Senegalese poet I admire very much, Birago Diop, that I would like to quote by way of outset.

Breaths

Listen to things
More often than beings,
Hear the voice of fire,
Hear the voice of water.
Listen in the wind,
To the sighs of the bush;
This is the ancestors breathing.
They are in the darkness that grows lighter
And in the darkness that grows darker.
Those who are dead are not gone forever;
The dead are not down in the earth;
They are in the trembling of the trees
In the groaning of the woods,
In the water that runs,
In the water that sleeps,
They are in the hut, they are in the crowd:
The dead are not dead.
Listen to things
More often than beings,
Hear the voice of fire,
Hear the voice of water.
Listen in the wind,
To the bush that is sighing:
This is the breathing of ancestors,
Who have not gone away
Who are not under earth
Who are not really dead.
Those who are dead are not ever gone;
They are in a woman's breast,
In the wailing of a child,
And the burning of a log,
In the moaning rock,
In the weeping grasses,
In the forest and the home.
The dead are not dead.
Listen more often
To Things than to Beings,
Hear the voice of fire,
Hear the voice of water.
Listen in the wind to
The bush that is sobbing;

This is the ancestors breathing.
Each day they renew ancient bonds,
Ancient bonds that hold fast
Binding our lot to their law,
To the will of the spirits stronger than us
To the spell of our dead who are not really
dead,
Whose covenant binds us to life,
Whose authority binds to their will,
The will of the spirits that stir
In the bed of the river, on the banks of the
river,
The breathing of the spirits
Who moan in the rocks and weep in the
grasses.
Spirits inhabit
The darkness that lightens, the darkness that
darkens,
The quivering tree, the murmuring wood,
The water that runs and the water that
sleeps;
Spirits much stronger than us,
The breathing of the dead who are not really
dead,
Of the dead who are not really gone,
Of the dead now no more in the earth.
Listen to things
More often than beings,
Hear the voice of fire,
Hear the voice of water.
Listen to the wind,
To the bush that is sobbing;
This is the ancestors breathing.

Birago Diop, 1948.

The reason why I chose to start with this poem is obviously its links to the issues we are discussing, but also because I would like to begin by indicating that it leaves me with a feeling of incompleteness because, if some among the dead do not pass indeed, others simply cannot pass. In her talk the other day, Özlem Hemiş mentioned Antigone and her brother Polynices, whose burial Creon forbade, leaving his body to the birds and scavenging dogs. Of course, Creon's actions are motivated: his goal is for Polynices to reach neither the world of the dead nor that of the living, to eternally roam in limbo like a ghost, a ghoul, a larva, and for those who remain not to be able to properly mourn him, not to be able to sob for their loss. Therefore, the wind or bush, which we tell ourselves is the breath of the ancestors, is actually the breath of some ancestors. The noble ancestors, those who are allowed to possess the image of their own ancestors. In other words, there are some

among the dead who are granted the right to perpetuate, to immortalise their ancestors' breath and those who are not granted this privilege. Some among the dead live, others remain dead. This drives us inevitably to the question of the image, since the word comes from the Latin *imago*, meaning the death mask passed on down the ancestry line among noble Romans. The older version of today's family photograph album. The nobles are entitled to possess images, whereas the commoners are not. The commoners are those who cannot account for their lineage. As for the image, it is the proof of one's lineage: the death mask, the portrait, the bust, the photograph. The commoners do not have an image. This question, which possesses a long historic background, is highly linked to *Hafıza Merkezi's* Memory and Arts project. The project intends to return the right to possess an image to the commoners; that is why I am here today, giving this talk. Image is the only thing that keeps the memory, that redeems the dead. Being a researcher in imagology, I will try to locate the question of the image first, before briefly evoking that of the community, with the help of one or two examples.

I should specify that I consider the image as something ontological. Of course, it possesses an anthropological history, but it is mostly related to existence, to be, *being* as in *to be or not to be*, in *Sein*. As far as I have learned from François Jullien and other sources, the Chinese have a wonderful way of defining the image, which they have been using for centuries: they call it *chi xiang*. This term, *chi*, is a word which we all use without necessarily knowing it. We use it when we say we do *tai chi* or *reiki*, when we say we do *chi gong*. It signifies life energy, life's breath, breath. As for *xiang*, it means picture or configuration, perhaps close in a way to Walter Benjamin's constellations. The constellation, breath's picture. In other words, the notion of *chi-xiang* both coincides with and contradicts what the western understanding of an image is. Consequently, as Dilan Yıldırım indicated in her presentation, Ali Bozan's work *Bu Bir Toros Değildir (This is not a Toros, 2009)* speaks from somewhere else. It doesn't speak from the field of representation, even less from that of imitation. Whereas western history of thought and picture has considered images within the configuration of representation, at least until 150 years ago. According to this perspective, an image is the representation of something else. Except that it is not. In the same way that Ali Bozan tells us that no, this car is not a car, or Magritte that this is not a pipe, or still that this thing breaking there is something else, an image is not the representation or imitation of something else. What this representation mechanism does amounts to declaring: I am producing something predicated upon resemblance. *Chi-xiang* does not think that way. *Chi-xiang* does not stem from lie and truth, right and wrong, this renewed production corresponding or not to the original, being a good or bad imitation. It stems not from reality but from breath. By breath, I mean something we could also think of as *aura*. Something we can think of as in relation with what Walter Benjamin names *aura*. We can think of it as charisma or as air as well. When seeing someone walk from one place to another, we might be placed under the impression of that person's air, while not having a clue as to what they look like, what they resemble. For example, we might not remember the colour of the eyes of the person we are in love with. That person's air is far beyond that person's resemblance. Therefore, if, together with Aby Warburg, we define the image as a vector of energy, a dynamogram, something that is both in motion and a concentration of energy contained within itself, then we may consider that it possesses an animating effect. This actually signifies that the image, like smoke or a breath, can wrap and surround us by virtue of these effects.

By indicating that I would be addressing my thanks for the invitation toward the end of this talk, I actually meant the following: in comparison with the old representation and imitation mechanism, thanks to the interaction range they are able to create for themselves nowadays in the field of contemporary art, images are now capable of creating communication-oriented communities, micro-communities. My thanks are actually intended to such a micro-community, formed by *Hafıza Merkezi*. I will be addressing this question again further, toward the end of this talk. But I cannot pass without mentioning: why call it the Memory Centre, as in central command; this is something I do not understand. I mean, does memory have a centre? Really, it could have been named an archaeological excavation site or whatever, but why a centre for mercy's sake? Anyway.

We spoke of the *chi-xiang*, now is the time to mention Maurice Blanchot. Maurice Blanchot said that the image resembles a corpse. Because, he says: when a person draws one last breath and dies –here I must open a parenthesis: the ancient Greeks would say “to cast one last look”; breath versus look; look pertains to the old representation mechanism, to the old knowledge, whereas when we speak of breath, we touch upon something different– after a person draws one last breath, something is left behind. A corpse. The corpse is actually the ultimate paradox. Because we are face-to-



Gençer Yurttaş, *Ölüm Oruçları (Hunger Strikes)*
2007, Photograph

face with a bulk, a body. But this body is dead now. This body does not draw breath anymore. This body has ceased to be a person. It cannot communicate. This body is actually not here anymore in terms of to be, *Being, Sein*, in terms of presence. Consequently, Maurice Blanchot defines the image as the coming into existence of an absence, of a lack. This is very valuable. Now, in Gençer Yurttaş's extremely harsh image, we see a person cuddling their loved one, someone who died following a hunger strike, smelling them. The image brings something that is not anymore, something that was only in the past, into existence here and now. It contains all the layers of the past, the history, the memory of this thing that is not, but this clutch is made of the same stuff as shooting stars. Even its own track is slipping away from its hands. The problem with the works that pertain to the *Hafıza Merkezi*'s selection/archive –and to history in general– is that the visual record of a history that is not here anymore is kept in order to establish and confirm the past, history and identity of a family, of a tribe, a state, a nation or lineage.

With this image, Gençer Yurttaş demands justice and for justice to be done to this image. There are other people mourning in the photograph. Lying on the mortuary slab, a woman who died from her hunger strike. Hunger strike is a dreadful thing. Fatoş Irwen, mentioned by Dilan Yıldırım in her presentation, for example, is actually destroying her own finger prints while knitting threads and tying knots underneath her own skin, inside her hand. Her act of destroying her own fingerprints marvellously shatters all this politics that unremittingly submits us to this reduction to biology. There is desperation

in hunger strike. As a matter of fact, there is simultaneously desperation and honour. Because what is being said is something that amounts to the following: "Is that right, are you turning my biology into politics? Very well, in that case I give you my own death". There is such a gesture here. It is a harsh gesture of course and that is

Joseph-Benoît Suvée, *Invention on the Art of Drawing*, 1791, Oil painting on canvas



precisely the gesture or the situation photographed by Gençer Yurttaş. What Maurice Blanchot states is the exact following: the image resembles a corpse, a cadaver. Let us keep that here for now. Now I would like to move a little closer to the theory of community and Jean-Luc Nancy's inoperative community, with the help of a conception of image inspired by Blanchot. But I will promote that to a later stage –if I have enough time– and, for now, go on with another theory, another depiction of the image.

Before doing so, I would like to show an image. I chose its rendition by Joseph-Benoît Suvée from 1791 but actually, what I am talking about is a leitmotif in the history of art. It is an interesting image, because, in his *Natural History*, dated 79 A.D., Gaius Plinius Secundus wrote that the first picture we know of actually consisted in the image of the contours of an absence. In other words, it was an image that summoned the presence of an absence here and now. It is said to belong to the daughter of Dibutades from Corinth. When the man she was in love with had to go abroad for a reason we do not know, she drew an outline of his shadow on the wall.

Therefore, the image traces the contours of a void, of an absence. That is something which strongly resonates with Maurice Blanchot's statement regarding the image's resemblance with a corpse. Setting out from absence, steadily opening the path for some things to come to presence. I think this is important. Opening the path for an absence to come to presence.

The other image I would like to show and discuss is that of the canary. In the days when the steam engine was discovered, when, before the apparition of digital measuring instruments, the miners would go beneath the ground in search of coal, riddling the soil with holes, they would bring a canary down with them.



Coal miner



Paul Klee, *Angelus Novus*, 1920

Because the canary is a bird that can sense a firedamp explosion before it happens and indicate it by fluttering its wings. If the miners did not take the bird announcing the firedamp explosion beforehand, in other words, announcing the catastrophe beforehand, seriously, the bird would die. Georges Didi-Huberman writes that the image is also that which is situated in the prophecy that announces the catastrophe. It takes the breath of those ancestors, those dead or those dead who have passed and are not dead yet or those dead who cannot pass; it takes the last breath of the dead and brings it to the prophecy of the catastrophe. Moreover, canaries are beautiful; like images, they are capable of hosting both beauty and the catastrophe within their body. Gershom Scholem's poem, written for Walter Benjamin, says something quite similar. The angel of history is described as stating: "My wing is ready to beat / but I would gladly return home / were I to stay to the end of days / I would still be this forlorn." In all likelihood, it is an angel who wants to bring the dead back to life, piece back together what has been splintered, Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus*.



Resuscitation machine for canaries

The invention of steam engines in the 19th century has helped catalyse the draining of the earth in search of fossil fuels and led to the release of dangerous quantities of carbon into the atmosphere. This image shows a resuscitation machine for canaries developed in the same century as coal mining. When caught in firedamp explosions, the birds would be out of breath and die. Therefore, a pleasant machine such as this was developed to give them oxygen to breathe and revive them. Here is what I infer from this: when images are out of breath and presume to partake in a number of mechanisms on the plane of representation as they would in the past, they die. In other words, they are reduced to one-breath images. They are deprived of the capacity to take their own life, their breath, and carry it elsewhere. They cannot become fire alarms, life saviours. They cannot prophetically announce catastrophes beforehand.

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Resuscitation machine for canaries

Taking something from a given place and transporting it elsewhere, prophesising, being a fire alarm, are actually properties of the image, which we translate to Turkish as *mecaz* (metaphor). Etymologically speaking, that is exactly what a metaphor means: taking something from somewhere and bringing it elsewhere, *transporting* it. *Trans=meta*, *portare=pherein*. In other words, metaphors are transportation vehicles. They hold, carry and transport breath all at the same time. Consequently, since I was invited to consider this selection/archive along the lines of death, void and breath; I would like to draw attention to Evrim Kavcar's work *Dikkat Boşluk Var* (*Beware of the Void*). I was very impressed by this work when I saw it as part of the Mardin Biennial five years ago. Kavcar has installed this work at several locations of the city over time. One of these locations was the rock formation at the frontier between the old and the new city. What we are seeing here is the metallic void formed with construction wires, an empty gateway to the Mesopotamian plain seen from Mardin's Atamyan mansion.



Evrim Kavcar, *Dikkat Boşluk Var*
(*Beware of the Void*)
2015, Installation

This is void, this is not void, Evrim Kavcar says. This is a car, this is not a car, Ali Bozan says. This is a pipe, this is not a pipe. The void is actually not empty. It is not a part of the representation mechanism. Here, stemming from the emptiness and void whose contours it traces, the void is summoning things into presence. What are these things whose presence is summoned? First and foremost, Mesopotamia; certainly Syria a few steps ahead. Not only that beautiful side of Mardin where cultures meet, the mosaic of cultures. Mardin is also a harsh place, carrying in its body the traces of this hunger strike-related photograph we mentioned earlier, and the multiple scars of cultures and people who were annihilated, exterminated, from 1915 to 2015. Therefore, when saying void, breath, and summoning into presence, with only an inscription spelling void, with as little material as that, this many things are actually being told. We are talking about a work which opens all these is-

sues for questioning by means of an inscription spelling void only. Void traces the contours of a whole segment of history and brings the memory of the dead who are dead to the present. It also states that Mardin is still pregnant with other catastrophes. There is another work by Evrim Kavcar which I find extraordinary. I am talking about her notebooks, which she dried with her own breath, which carry the memory of the ancestors, the ancestors who are dead, and raise and recall the question of who has the right to possess images. Images always raise the question of who has the right to possess them. The right to possess images always exclusively belongs to the rulers. Those killed in concentration camps, the migrants who cross the seas in rubber boats, do not have such a right. If they appear in images, nobody asks them if they can use, print or publish them. When they are dead, when they drown in the sea, their breath does not live on. Mardin is filled with dead people who are out of breath. The dead who are dead are still visible, but some among the dead were killed a second time. If we had enough time, we could draw comparisons between Kavcar's works related to breath and Fatoş İrwen's. Perhaps we can view this as only a beginning and find opportunities for these comparisons in the future.



Evrim Kavcar, *Dikkat Boşluk Var (Beware of the Void)*
2015, Installation

Kavcar's other works which were also part of the *Dikkat Boşluk Var (Beware of the Void)* installation were exhibited in the Atamyan mansion. By documenting them through photography and notetaking, Kavcar turned the various ways in which people respond to the feeling of void into an artist's book. There were two epitaph installations in the same room, visuals of which I would like to share with you. These epitaphs' format is not vertical like a coffin's or a tomb's, but horizontal, as a sarcophagus'. The very moment that Kavcar set this sarcophagus-shaped epitaph in the same exhibition location, she established all these connections with void, breath, the ancestors breathing, tomb, visit and death, and transported me into all these settings. In her talk, Umut Tümay Arslan said that "collective memory can be envisioned as an environment." In that sense, I am convinced that the image is a form of memory storage. As a matter of fact, because the image hosts all these different layers of memory, it carries the whole weight of the past. This is why, at the same time, it can produce a prophecy regarding the future. Consequently, I am utterly convinced that we may view the image as something both alive and reviving. To tell the truth, I believe, I am even convinced that the accent is not placed on representation, imitation or the artist's artistry anymore, but rather on the energetic motion of images, on their breath, their *chi*. I saw a book cover twenty years ago: A smoker performs the final act of modernism. I do not know about modernism, but I like the part about smoke. What is smoke? It is something that surrounds us with this breath, this smoke. I believe images possess the power to do just that, surround us with their *aura*, with their breath.



Rilke's tomb

Together with the next image, I would like to touch upon a different matter. The picture above is not an artwork. It is Rainer Maria Rilke's tomb. There is a rose right by Rilke's tomb. As for the tombstone behind the rose, it carries this superb poem from Rilke's own hand as an epitaph.

"Rose, oh pure contradiction
Delight of being no one's sleep
Under so many eyelids..."

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Under so many eyelids: the eyes that look are closed. As soon as I pronounce the word eyelid, I remember the proposition that I mentioned earlier: to cast one's last look. Instead of drawing one's last breath, that is what the ancient Greeks would say: casting one's last look. The eyelids, all the eyes are closed. Being no one under so many eyelids. I am nobody's sleep under these many eyelids. Actually, I have become no one. I have become *Mr. No-body*, no one, an endless non-livingness, an endless anonymousness. Because I am dead already. Now I can abstain from assuming any identity, from taking on any shape, and I will have the chance to sleep, revering in this delight, the delight of not having to be anyone. As someone dead but not dead yet, the breath of my not being dead yet, of my still living in this rose, will live on in this bush. In other words, this desolateness may become this wonderful anonymousness which the Buddhists call *Nirvana*, taking the breath of my ancestors from their grave and passing it on to someone else. As for me, I may lose myself in this anonymous place, in a daze of pleasure and delight. Death can also be envisioned that way. As was the case for Antigone's brother Polynices, whom I mentioned in the beginning of this talk, there are some who cannot die. There are those whose death we cannot know. There are those we cannot weep for. There is a state of



oppression, when we cannot know if someone died, we cannot weep for them, or know what to do with our grief, and we are caught going forever back and forth between the hope that they will come back one day and the thought that no, they must have died three years ago.



Volkan Aslan, *Ölüye ağlayamayan insanların huzursuzluğu içindeyim*
(*I am unrestful like the people who cannot weep for the dead*)
2018, Video

I find the work by Volkan Aslan included in this selection immensely interesting. Because, contrarily to Kavcar who set her epitaphs horizontally, Aslan's work is a vertical screen. A short video (32 seconds in length), playing forever in a loop, showing a rose, plucked from its branch, being washed. A plain and poetic scene. Aslan places the screen vertically like a tombstone, and the work's title is a quotation from Sait Faik Abasıyanık's short story titled *İzmir'e* (*To Izmir*): "I feel the restlessness of those who cannot weep the dead." Actually, here, the rose is being washed the same way the dead are. A rose being washed like the resistant, dead while on hunger strike in Gençer Yurttaş's photograph. The rose which forever grows by Rilke's grave. It is being washed with the grief of those who do not have a grave here, those who can receive no visit. In the words of Cavafis: "Roses by the head, jasmine at the feet." And, like the miners' canary, like Walter Benjamin's angel of history, the messenger of catastrophe. "Beauty is the beginning of horror." According to Rilke, the image is capable of embodying both within its core.



Doris Salcedo, *A Flor de Piel*
2012, Installation

I would like to show one last work related to roses. It is *A Flor de Piel*, an exceedingly interesting work by Doris Salcedo dated 2012. This work, made to honour the memory of a nurse killed in Colombia, is composed of thousands of rose petals stitched together. I borrowed this example from Ezgi Bakçay, who showed it to me yesterday when I spoke to her of Rilke. It is a wonderful work, fragile. This work is an extraordinary garment of roses, made to honour the dead's sake, the dead's record and memory—in Turkish, memory and sake share the same etymological root, just as grave and visit do, and speaking of someone's sake is another way of speaking of that person's soul—and therefore, to summon the dead's soul once again. A skin of roses, a rose of skin, a dead body of roses. When you try to lift this work, to transport it elsewhere, you realise that this garment is in fact an altar, an offering made on an altar. A death offering actually. When you try to move this "artwork" somewhere else, the roses splinter, like decayed bones in the ground, and all that is left is a dust of roses. Nothing else remains than this dust of roses. This reminds me of an Iranian proverb: "Smell the rose, pass it on to your friend".

This is the way I read the selection/archive which *Hafiza Merkezi* has opened for access to the working groups. I would like to briefly open up the door to the question of the image's capacity to establish a community by linking what was indicated above with Jean-Luc Nancy. Maurice Blanchot's friend Nancy's main preoccupation was how communities, that which binds and brings together, may achieve that without a work, an "output". Why? Because community is not what is being made, rather, it consists in the very state of togetherness. Neither its beginning

nor its end is clear. Let us think of the Gezi community for instance. Actually, it is not a community; ever since the Cartesian proposition *I think therefore I am*, even presence—that is, to be or not to be—has been viewed as something that is being done, *cogito ergo sum*. That is why, today, life itself is thought of as something that is intrinsically being done. It is as though death too, or even health, like life, were things that could be done. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic, our health was thought of in the same way. Biopolitics cannot occur otherwise. Creon believes that he himself did Polynices' death, that he has the power to do it. In other words, we stem from a tradition that actually believes that life and death are things that can intrinsically be performed, produced by people. Consequently, we believe that presence, or existence, is the product, the output of thought. What is presence? To be, *sein*, *being*. If we can consider presence as the product of thought, is the same thing true of death? Jean-Luc Nancy's answer: it is impossible. Yes, of course there is something like the mastery of death. Consider Creon. Consider the selection/archive made up of hundreds of artworks compiled by *Hafiza Merkezi*. But there is something very fundamental: I can organise a society as an immanent product, I can make a society my immanent product. I can make a building, I can make a lover, I can make a child. There is one thing that I will never be able to make: I will never be able to make death my artwork. I cannot think myself dead. There are some examples of people organising their suicide or funeral before their parting of course, but these representations are no more than "not a pipe". Consequently, death is actually the frontier whence I cross to the other side, whence I lose my very immanence.

We have four choices here: to die, not to die, to kill, not to kill. The fact that every person is finite, mortal, as appears in every sacred text, brings the *thou shalt not kill* imperative in its wake. In other words, the conscience of death, the conscience that life and death are not products that can be manufactured, brings such things as a different justice, kindness and love in its wake. Somehow, kindness and love have not become the subject of philosophical thought. At least not for centuries. They have not been capable of admitting that a community had never been formed in the true sense, because a real community would only be possible if predicated on the transcendence of death, if it were a community of death. Actually, approaching the matter from an ontological angle, we have not given much thought to the idea that the image is not something made by humans but, truly, the extension, the permanence, as well as the metaphor of their breath. We have not thought of it as a fire alarm, as something fair, because of its transcendence of death. If we can think of death as transcendence, and of the image as that which comes to being in its substratum, with the nothingness of death, and, as Benjamin said, as something that contains all the different layers of time, filled with time until its explosion, then the common outcome of all the talks I have heard here, with this thought of a community predicated on the transcendence of death in mind, is the probability of establishing a connection between the notions of image carrying death and that of the community of death. If the community of death is a community that is predicated on death being the only transcendence of humankind, on *thou shalt kill no more, thou shalt kill no one, nor their memory*, a community that does not make itself, that does not possess a beginning, a middle or an end as a work does, then perhaps the image we have been trying to determine is that which possesses the modesty of Birago Diop, Rainer Maria Rilke, Evrim Kavcar and Volkan Aslan, that which opens itself to moving toward presence on the basis of absence, an image that can achieve this because it casts itself aside. Perhaps the most valuable achievement of *Hafıza Merkezi* is to have compiled such images that are capable of opening to what they are not, insofar as they can empty themselves.

What I am trying to say in a nutshell is the following; this is the point that I was mentioning in the beginning of this presentation, when I said I would present my thanks later on. *Hafıza Merkezi* has enabled us to become a small community. A micro resistance milieu. What I am trying to say is that contemporary art possesses such a range of effectiveness, as compared to images which possess representation mechanisms. What did we use to do in the past? We would go to museums, to the theatre, the opera. We would live under the bondage of the image's representation mechanism, the image up front, us in the rear. We would look. The mirror and the gaze, representation and imitation: these were our primordial concepts. Whereas now, these images circulating with breath actually enable us to form micro resistance communities, to advance with and according to them, us surrounding them as much as them surrounding us. Because they open up a field which is not linked to resemblance, but rather to air, breath, *aura* and energy. We are being pulled inside of them by a vortex. There are no hierarchical relations here. They are not a part of a field shaped by a common consensus, an official memory or the lineage of memory. If you wish, you can –we can– read this in light of Rancière's *dissensus*, or of different references. A lot of readings may be proposed. In any case, images are capable of carrying the breath of the dead who are dead here, just like the smoke of cigarettes, to revive the dead who are dead. I would like to express my thanks, in the name of such collectivities, of such communities, which images establish or at least open up the door for the foundation of, for having brought us here together with the breath of images, with the breath of the dead.

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(My/Our) Fantasies, Archive and You?

Interpretation

**Banu
Cennetođlu**

Articulation

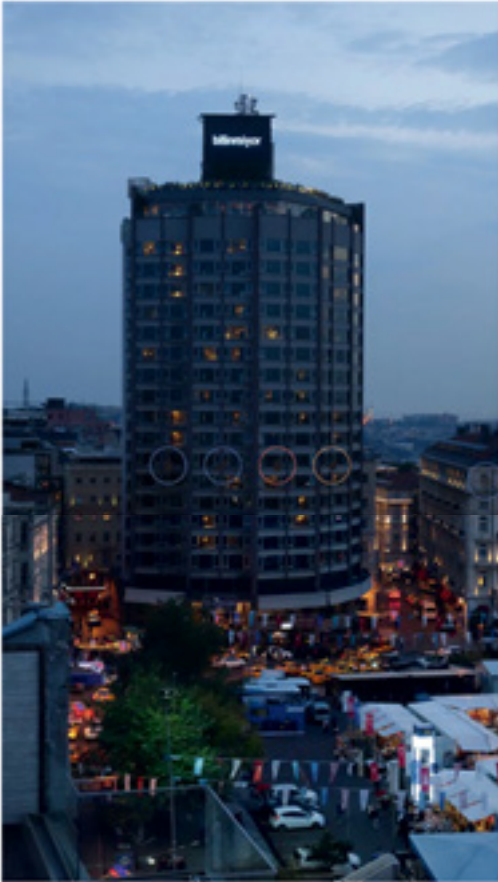
**Seçil
Yersel**

The List / Liste

See Origin

Şişli'de
Banu Cennetliği

Genel



Çizim Yılı: 2006	Sayılmaya Başladı Yinelemeye	Sayılmaya Deyişti Kurumsal alanda sayılmayan poster billboard, basılı materyaller
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Sayıp Adı Yavaş	Sayılmaya Müdahil İstanbul	Sayılmaya Yılı 2016	Dişçiligi görsel sanatlar
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Kategori görsel sanatlar	Etiler etirazlar	Etiler 2 arsizim	Kaynak 1 http://www.info-bana-hafiza.org/tr/en
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Kaynak 2
<https://www.republika.com.tr/medya/2016/01/20/banu-cennetligi-uzerinden-lakshmi-artika-film-sonrasi-nagrasart-2016>

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 ATTACHMENTS
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I would like to start with the feeling of –with my feeling of– unease, triggered by my first encounter with the selection-archive. Whatever name we give it, when I first saw the selection, archive, juxtaposition, inventory or list, I felt an unnerving concern that is hard to define. It was like the embodiment of many questions and issues which I had been struggling with, wrestling with for years, as have many others. When I tried to cast a closer look at this distress, what I saw was, on the one hand, the discomfort I felt at seeing the problem of “representation” mostly unaddressed, trimming the twigs and shoots of Uwazi¹ or whichever platform as they become boxed up in the drawers of its tags and categories, growing ever larger, ever deeper and, on the other hand, the despair that engulfed me as I realised that this selection, despite my knowledge of the hard conditions in which it was compiled, the good intentions and (relentless) efforts it owes its existence to, may (always potentially) involuntarily reproduce again and again the very language and feelings which we find problematic. I am viewing this talk from my screen because of the pandemic. People coming together over a surface commenting on an archive. Those who exemplify the works “chosen” under the given categories for their own range of thought, thus forming a territory of satisfaction, anger me a little. Banu invites me from this surface-resembling area to the textual space of this book. I relax a little during Banu’s contribution concerning her discomfort and Ege’s outsider’s look at the archive; I listen to Banu; and what I hear is an anxious artist. The anxiety of someone who is both looking at the archive and a part of it, through her own work. Therefore, she comprehends things self-reflectively, a perspective voicing out criticism from the inside, which is precisely what makes her interpretation valuable. Most of the time, an artist’s work is selected to be included in an archive, but that artist does not comment on it. The artist is often kept within the safe environment where his/her work has been included. Banu, instead, strives to reach outside when she is placed inside. There is tension in that situation; what is it the artist sees from that position? The field we are looking at describes itself as follows: “The nature, quantity and multi-layeredness of the traumatic social events which occur in our geography and can be depicted as rights violations, have rendered their delimitation, the definition of their framework and their categorisation much harder. When art’s natural tendency not to fit into categories is added on top of that, defining this project’s framework has emerged as one of

¹ Uwazi (<https://www.uwazi.io/>) is a digital database platform, already used by the *Hafıza Merkezi* for other archival works. All the data regarding the works comprised in the selection-archive compiled in the scope of the Memory and Arts research were (probably momentarily) transferred onto this platform in order to facilitate access for commentators.

the major difficulties ahead of us. Eventually, artworks, exhibitions and performances questioning Turkey's official discourse regarding issues repressed in collective memory, addressing social events involving violence or gross human rights violations and systematic discrimination have been included in the framework."² The definition of the selection has opened a categoric field. We are indicating that there are works "questioning Turkey's official discourse regarding issues repressed in collective memory, addressing social events involving violence or gross human rights violations and systematic discrimination". While looking at existing categories, familiar areas, works we are acquainted with because of their visibility, we are producing a new category. Topics we struggle to discuss; like representation, classification, appropriation, concession, position and their politics, the memories of places and institutions which are a part of what is being produced, our feeling at ease with what the artwork says rather than how it says it, or the state where we do not dare to raise our voice and hope someone else does in our stead, the effort for compensation, the "redeeming gaze", the naivety of Orpheus, who kills Eurydice once more... Should an artwork be read only with regard to what it tries to say? If the major part of a selection is compiled from institutions that are able to grant access to their own memory, from catalogues classified with specific tags, even if that is the case by virtue of the project's conditions and resources, does it not support the status quo's self-doubtlessness by putting potentially controversial, yet not problematised, texts/tags in circulation once again? Personal and institutional relations, the regime of production, the resources put to use, the mediums used to put works in circulation, to show them, the goings-on of these mediums, what is outside, what is being kept outside, delicate issues and positions, the voyage that follows a work's display, its preservation, its sale, its safeguard, private and public collections, the resources of these collections, the relation between resources and violence, the (violent) relation between art and the capital, practices of instrumentalisation. A helix of interconnectedness forever subject to metamorphoses, never completed. How can we place the fact that all these cooperations are a part of what is being said, such an entanglement, within a template whose goal is to collect, gather, harness? And should we? Why do we need a template? How and where can we place the names of these within an archive that aims to concern itself with art and memory? Is it possible for an archive to spark, grant access to and maintain such a debate? If these do not belong here, then where do they? And is Uwazi or a similar template suitable to promote such a reading? Is this our effort at confrontation, over an intermediary, a mediating platform? By whom and how can an archive, expected to be open to intervention, be constituted? Can an archive be brought to a state of openness to the eye that looks at it, that sees it and to the mind and spirit that reads it? I scribbled down what flooded into my mind in the aftermath of the feeling of obstruction triggered by what is given/seen/shown, on a print-out of the Uwazi page (which I knew to be temporary) of "my work" to which I owe my inclusion in the selection; is it possible for a classification to stay forever opened, never completed, to intercede for parallel, diagonal and reconfiguring information and feelings, and to interfere with such data as "work, technique, year, name, location, category, resource, discipline, about"? Apart from casting a critical look at the act of archiving, at its motivation, we may also look again at the categories qualifying what is touched upon. In the same way, I cannot correspond entirely to what qualifies me in categorical terms when I am included in the "citizenship archive" of the Republic of Turkey, as appears on my identity card; the reductive classification approach does not only bind the archive, it also binds what is being classified, thus sparking a chain of patterns in the future. What will happen if new heading(s) is(are) added to the classification operating on the categories of "work, technique, year, name, location, category, resource, discipline, about", and if this(ese) heading(s) allow for more flexibility on the part of the work, both in itself and in its mediation? Is it possible for an artwork not to be apprehended as a structure in itself, self-proclaimed, even independent from its producer by virtue of the archive structure, for it not to be attributed a function, a benefit, a usefulness, a power –grandeur– to proclaim!? This is a manner of reading: who benefits from it, who rises against it, does this archive itself constitute an exhibition space, who is the visitor of this exhibition, who does it invite? How can the format called "archive" grant artworks the opportunity to achieve flexion/self-criticism and self-reflection without falling for the comfort and convenience of classification? Any archive that is not problematising itself is bound to construct for itself a confined space where it will live happily ever after.

² "Proje Hakkında" (About the Project), Hafiza Merkezi, last accessed 20.02.2021, <https://hafizavesanat.hakikatadalethafiza.org/proje/>.

2010/2008

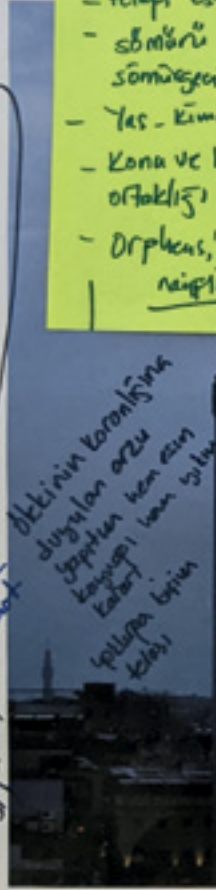
bu zamandan
o zamana
olanlar...

The List / Liste • Uvasi

The List / Liste

Sayıstıcı
Barfu Cennetoğlu

Görsel



Kaynak: bayansız & bilmic
Görüşler
Blanchot
Orpheus
Silmazlı
Seyhan
Peyz

- kuratörce bakış
- telepi estetiği
- sönümlü
sömürgeci dili
- Yes - Kimin ?
- Kona ve boşluk
ortaklığı
- Orpheus'un
naipliği

- temsil
- uygulama
- outer mekansları ve
benzeri vakalara fikir.

İretim? iz?
Harşey eşey? (Silmazlı)
- Liste değil? ↓

Sözcüksüz üretime
dair bilgilerin doğru
ve tam olması nasıl
dur?
Kaynak ne, kim olmalı?
çıkardığı, sırtlandığı,
midatide edilebilir olmalı?

Liste nedir ve ne vadedir o vakalarda.
Tüm belgelerin parçalanması - parçaların bütününe ilişkin

KAG kelime
KAG Lipi
KAG say
KAG istemes

Kürdistan (Kedimisin)
hafızası

2012. Liste'de mensei: Kirt demek
Kürdistan
dayanmek

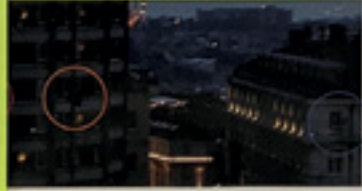
2015

- Kürdistan kelimesini kullanmaya
karar veremeyiz... (Silmazlı)

bu hafta 7 Haziran seçimler! ♥
20 Temmuz - Sıfır Koltukları

Harşın vesatlar bağdırken videoya aktar-
lamak için bir yerde drama ihtiyacı...

listede olan birçok
Kediminin siddeti -
Senekeman'in siddeti
Lilij'in siddeti -
göçmen
mülteci
sığınmacı
legal
illegal
kayıtsız
kayıtsız olan
kayıtsız kalan..



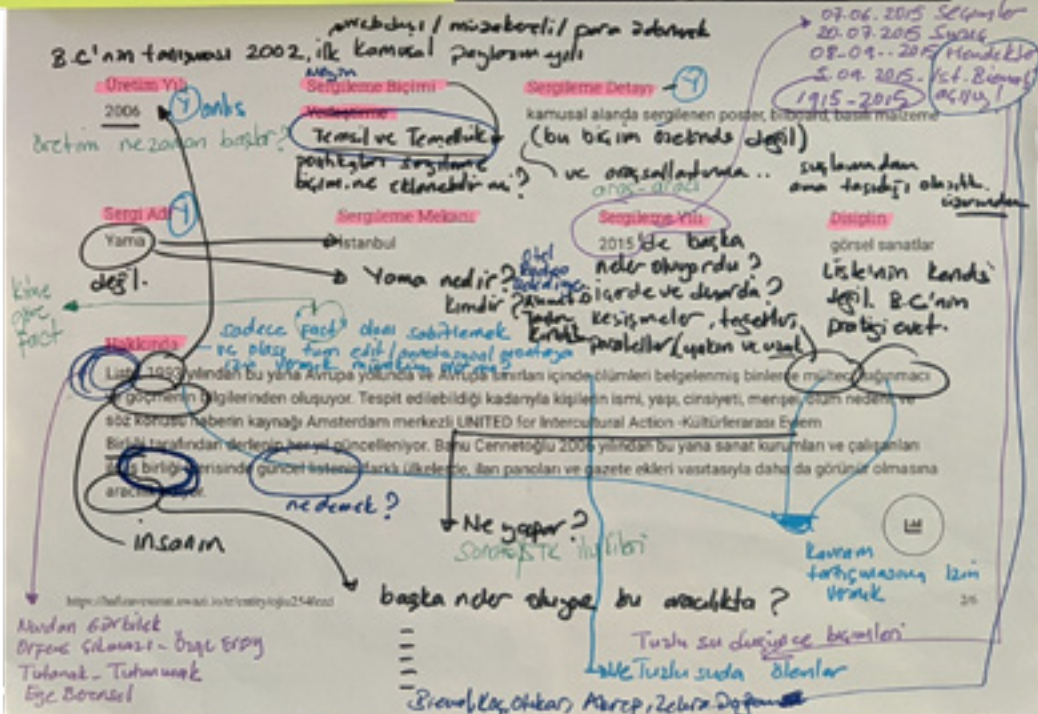
https://halke-mani.uzasi.io/?t=city/1024602

1/6



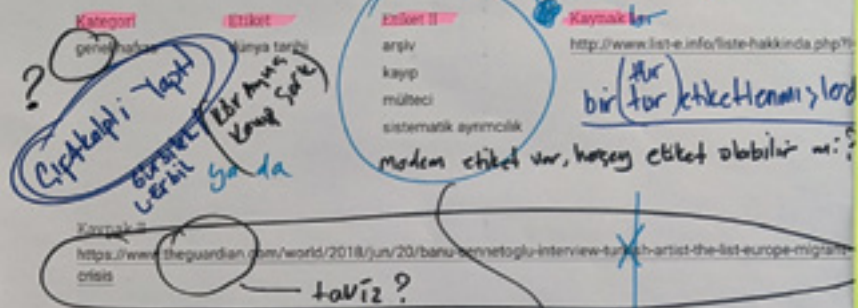
Foik ile deas
Dolaplık / Dolanımılık hali
(entangement)
Koren barad
Sımsı, taviz, kedbir?

Bir işsiz kendi içinde
bir sömürücü ve sömürülmeye
davam eden, "net" tanımlı
bir tasnif yapısını nasıl dolul
edilir? Ne beraber bir okuma
nasıl mümkün olur?



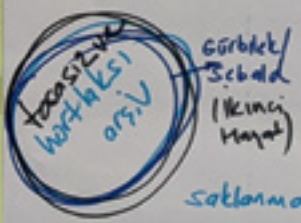
arayız öncelikle de
yüzleşmek mümkün mü?
kim için?

20K! hatta olmaz.



- görünür olmanın
görünürde olanın
iktidarını
- "görünür" kılıma
saldırıpın seni
görünür kılması
- "yüz"ün yüzleşmeye
izin vermemesi;

59 eserin
hazırlığı sırasında
olanlar "eser"
leri nasıl etiketler?
- herşey rapünan
devam?
- sessizliği utancı
- çok sesin utan-
mazlığı



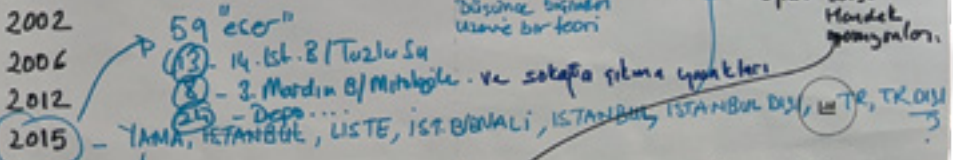
mizakere
temsil
temellik
sansür
oto-sansür
korku, cömür
koculuğu, koruma, saklanma,
do...
kaynak, destek, dayanışma

bunları kendine
dört etmiş, etmiş
özellikler... ve oları
mekanlar ve tutumlar
köt...

stigma / gözlerin Yılı / Zamanı
Yeri

Örn: Liste için tüm bu etiketler, buradan seçilebilir..

- 1993
- 2002
- 2006
- 2012
- 2015



1975-2015
seriye... 100 yıl.
Venedik, Sanki...
Osman Kavala, Zeynep...
Ne, kim, nasıl
ve hafızası...
Okul, Endişe, daha önceki üretilmiş,

"Yes, this is double-heartedness; two different parrots talking at the same time in the same indoor space, 'one denying what the other says and bubbling separately, qaqalaq quqalaq- quqalaq qaqalaq hops'. A bivalency; the same experience evoking opposite feelings at the same time. The fact that every truth can only exist by being mutilated, invalidated, and turned into a half-truth by its opposite; the fact that once hearts mate, each one comes to a lie separately; a state of 'whatever I say is a lie'." ³

³ With our deepest thanks to our team and Nurdan Gürbilek for all the questions they asked and made us consider. Nurdan Gürbilek, *Kör Ayna, Kayıp Şark (Blind Mirror, Lost East)* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2004), 213.



The Art of List-Making¹

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**Ege
Berensel**

¹ A concept forged by Jacques Roubaud for the Oulipians...

For a list-maker, forming sentences that follow one another straightforwardly, in a row, from left to right, is an agonising task. List-makers persistently remind us that a distinction must be made between this fondness for vertical reading and poetry, a tedious type of writing that takes from lists its characteristic of being most often concatenated downwards. The hero of c's short story "Revelations of a List-Maker" starts his narration by stating that "Lists thrill me"... Unfortunately, he prefers to indicate his feelings by placing them on descending steps, preceded by numbers so as not to be confused with poetry.

- 1 Lists
- 2 thrill
- 3 me

To a list-maker, the table of contents of a poetry book, the listing of the names of the poems downwards, will seem more poetical than the poems themselves. For list-makers, such book parts as indexes, glossary entries, telephone directories, balance sheets, almanacs, signed proceedings, catalogues, score tables, errata lists, train or bus schedules, in short, all kinds of texts calling for vertical reading, will always contain more stories, associations and mysteries than any narration ever will.

Infante states that Yeats, Fitzgerald, Auden and Hemingway have all exalted lists against literature... Yeats confessed that the texts he always preferred and read with greater addiction were train schedules... In some of his most beautiful pages, Fitzgerald lists the names of the guests who attended parties ending in great disasters... Auden finds all kinds of lists literary, not just train schedules...

- 1 Hemingway
- 2 advised
- 3 inexperienced
- 4 writers
- 5 to scrutinise
- 6 horse racing
- 7 directories...

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Until the apocalypse, the sacred texts are filled with enumerations, divine litanies and lists...

- 8 One gold spoon of ten shekels filled with incense
- 9 One young bull, one ram, one one-year-old lamb as an offering to be burnt
- 10 One goat as an offering for repentance over a crime
- 11 And as an offering for salvation, two oxen, five rams, five one-year-old lambs to be sacrificed ...

Lists are made of accumulations, of juxtapositions, of choruses... Eco writes that prayers are lists too. Islam considers that reciting the ninety nine names of Allah in a row will open the gates of Paradise to the believers. Infante claims that no literary work will ever attain the list-making tradition of sacred texts... Regarding classic literature, he prefers Virgil over Homer... Homer merely approaches the edge of list-making. "Of the Beotians Peneleos and Leitus were captains, and Arcesilaus and Prothoenor and Clonius; these were they that dwelt in Hyria and rocky Aulis and Schoenus and Scolus and Eteonus with its many ridges, Thespeia, Graea, and spacious Mycalessus; and that dwelt about Harma and Eilesium and Erythrae; and that held Eleon and Hyle and Pe-teon, Ocalea and Medeon..." These references to mountains and hills do not supersede horizontal reading... However, Virgil draws lists in order to render Troy's position, war, looting and carnage more intelligible... He makes lists of weapons, of the names of the heroes, of the sides, armies, types of wounds, of deaths and spoliations, inventories of lootings and ransoms...

In the East, there is a list-making and classification tradition that was not inherited from the West or from Greek thinking, which stretches from Ibn al-Nadim's *Kitab al-Fihrist* to Kâtip Çelebi's *Kashf az-Zunun*... Kâtip Çelebi's *Kashf az-Zunun* draws a list of all the books that were written –in Arabic, Persian and Turkish– in his time, classifying them according to their scientific branches and subjects... El Kindi's text titled "On the Number of Aristotle's Books" is a genuine beauty.

Making lists is a good mental exercise in order to understand infinity. Humankind produces lists, catalogues, dictionaries, encyclopedias in order to come to terms with the thought of infinity, to grasp what is obscure. Umberto Eco used to write that we make lists in order to defy death. Eco distinguishes between two main types of lists... The literary, poetic, aesthetic lists and the practical, pragmatic lists. Pragmatic lists are the likes of shopping lists, library catalogues, the enumeration of the objects belonging wherever, restaurant menus... Pragmatic lists are referential, because their entries correspond to existing objects. If the objects did not exist, the list would be fake... Such lists cannot be changed, they are limited... However, a poetic list is infinite, it always comprises an *et cetera*... In most cases, the writer is conscious that what can be recorded is endless, or places objects in a sequence merely for visual pleasure, to produce something of a visual nature. Items pertaining to practical lists are connected with one another... Whereas poetic lists create disconnections of sorts... Eco also states that a linguistic difference distinguishes both list types: practical lists concern what is shown, whereas poetic lists concern the signifiers... Examples of lists surface from Ancient Greek classic rhetoric; enumerating through anaphora or through asyndeton or polysyndeton... Anaphora consists in the repetition of the same word at the beginning of several verses. Asyndeton is a rhetoric strategy whereby a sentence's conjunctions are lifted off. On the other hand, a polysyndeton allows for an enumeration relying on the repetition of conjunctions... In the Middle Ages, list-making involved a reference to infinity, an unended regime of insistence. Good list-making should convey the thought of infinity, and the etc. appearing at the end should make us feel dizzy... Classic and contemporary literature are equally filled with lists: Rabelais enumerates hundreds of children's games in *Gargantua*; the 17th chapter of Joyce's *Ulysses*, that is, about a hundred pages, is a list of the objects contained in a cupboard in Bloom's kitchen... Oulipians, especially Perec, brought list-making to extremes... In his text titled "Vilin Street", Georges Perec confines himself with listing whatever he sees occurring on this street on Thursday 27 February 1969, around 4 p.m.; in "243 postcards in Real Colour", he merely places the contents of 243 postcards sent to him in a sequence. The short story titled "Attempt at an Inventory of the Liquid and the Solid Foodstuffs Ingurgitated by Me in the Course of the Year Nineteen Hundred and Seventy-Four" consists in a list of food and beverages. Jacques Roubaud wrote that the art of the Oulipians, of Perec, is an art of listing and that these lists do not include the great works of the past, but rather ordinary, common things... Ordinary indications become even more ordinary in the hands of the Oulipians...

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Eco's and Infante's views of Homer's list-making are in complete opposition: according to Eco, Homer is the father of the art of list-making, with his enumeration of 1186 ships, names of warriors, geographic features, mountains and hills... Moreover, we are confronted with the the unspoken in Homer... When the numbers of the objects or events in question are limitless, the poet prefers to stay silent; Dante on the other hand does not attempt to tally the angels in paradise because he does not know their number...

Poetic lists are mostly chaotic... The surrealists brought chaotic lists to extremes... The list of animals appearing in the Chinese encyclopedia made up by Borges, which so raptured Foucault that he quoted from it in his introduction to *The Order of Things*, is extremely chaotic: "a) belonging to the Emperor, b) embalmed, c) tame, d) sucking pigs, e) sirens, f) fabulous, g) stray dogs, h) included in the present classification, i) frenzied, j) innumerable, k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, l) et cetera, m) having just broken the water pitcher, n) that from a long way off look like flies..."

Foucault further writes that "What transgresses the boundaries of all imagination, of all possible thought, is simply that alphabetical series (a, b, c, d) which links each of those categories to all the others. What is impossible is not the propinquity of the things listed, but the very site on which their propinquity would be possible. The animals '(i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush' –where could they ever meet, except in the immaterial sound of the voice pronouncing their enumeration, or on the page transcribing it? Where else could they be juxtaposed except in the non-place of language?" Indeed, language is what opens space for them...

Another classification method exists, born within the art of depiction that was defined as visual listing by Eco: the latter indicates that, as is the case in *Ancient Rome*, the painting by Giovanni Paolo Pannini dated 1759, some visual lists do not only represent and log what is being represented, but also what remains from a tradition of representation, style or collection. The Dutch still life movement involves a certain degree of list-making; lists of foods are there to remind us of the ephemerality of worldly things. Visual arts make an endless use of lists to hint at the existence of infinite and incomprehensible phenomena, beyond and outside of what can be thought, said or seen.

The instinct for archiving is closely correlated with that of list-making. As a matter of fact, list-making happens to be one of the techniques of archiving. The archive consists in all kinds of rules, procedures, categorisation and regulation techniques that oversee the access –both physical and ideological– granted to, and the relations of property over what is archived and the protocols of its publication and reproduction. As Derrida stated in *Archive Fever*, the archive's technique determines its content, existence and future... According to Derrida, an archive can be organised in two ways: either in a sequential way, which has to do with listing, or by relying on the imperative form (the jussive way, related to law –jus). List-making breaks the connections between the elements included in the list... Artists, social scientists, activists all try to establish connections between the things listed, the archive, the document. Another mode of thinking which is put up against list-making is mapping. How do these two proceedings pertaining to archiving –listing and mapping– operate within artworks or activists' creative practices? Do lists produce counterinformation? How do lists conceal the perpetrators, how do they reveal them? Do lists turn into the perpetrator itself? Is there such a thing as a perpetrating list? Is it possible not to aestheticise lists or, by placing the notion of artist in relation with that of intermediary, that of artistic object with that of concept and documentation, to problematise them? How can we avoid statufying, monumentalising lists? How can lists be protected from being transformed into a consumption object ready to be used by artists, without reifying, aestheticising or neutralising the past? Contemporary art raises these questions while making use of lists, being prone to making lists... The conceptual art of the 1960s was a list-making art... Think of Richard Serra's lists of verbs... Just as Vangelis Vlahos exhibited the lists of the objects found by the police during the search of the house of the November 17 organisation ...

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States constantly produce lists: lists of punishments, of orders, of rulings, death lists, lists of decree-laws... There are two types of lists which we can distinguish between here: Lists of Perpetrators and Lists of Victims... Most of the times, states do not need lists; the numbers are enough for them; statistics is a state science, numbers can be easily manipulated... The number of deaths due to pandemics, the number of femicides, the number of child deaths... Somehow, the identity of the victims is concealed. Non-governmental organisations and rights defenders draw counter-lists, pointing out the identity of the victims, their names, the causes of their deaths, and their perpetrators... Such as the Monument Counter for femicides and reports on labor homicides, child deaths and rights violations... At times, artists assume the role of intermediaries for the counter lists drawn by rights defenders and become activists to raise awareness in the public...

Banu Cennetoğlu has initiated a collaboration with the Dutch non-governmental organisation UNITED in order to grant visibility to the list of the persons who died on their way to claim asylum in Europe, a collection of data made public... (*The List*, 2006) The death lists updated every year since 1993 contain the names, ages, genders, countries of provenance, countries of origin, and causes of death of those who lost their lives, as cross-confirmed from an array of sources... Most of the times, the bodies of these people are not found; in a way, they become buried in the list, their names are like a tombstone within the list... The first time this list was made public in Amsterdam in 2007, it contained 7.128 entries. When it was published as a supplement to the Guardian in June 2018, it had grown to contain 34.361 death entries... When it was last released in September 2018 in Barcelona, 35.597... As Thomas Keanan pointed out, the causes of death are most often attributed to natural phenomena such as the sinking of a ship due to adverse weather conditions or the capsizing of a boat due to overload as a result of human error... However, we know that these deaths are actually caused by the deliberate choice made by the European Union to forbid the migrants' entry on its soil...

In her presentation of this list, the artist refuses all manner of aestheticisation, uses public spaces, metro walls, newspaper columns, billboards and other screens in the city for display rather than galleries, and puts her artistic identity aside, granting it no visibility... She merely intercedes, thanks to the possibilities that her being an artist offer... She stages a surprise encounter, a confrontation between the people on the streets and the list... Actually, her performative efforts to persuade and negotiate with a number of institutions in order for this list to be published and presented, the long hours devoted to collective translation and cross-checking between news reports became artistic creations *per se*... As Banu Cennetoğlu and Erden Kosova both pointed out in their interviews, all these efforts are nothing else than an act of mourning on paper...

Transcript, published in 1986, which took Heimrad Bäcker almost 20 years to write, founds another direction for creation and thought regarding lists, documents and archive. How can one describe, represent, the national-socialist murder mechanisms' systematicity, its cynical dialectics of annihilation, racial hygiene and atrocity...? Every manner of description, of representation, plugs reality up... A photograph of a pile of naked bodies, of people whose bones can be counted, is far from being capable of reflecting the true dimensions of horror and pain... There is no such reality that can represent or substitute all this reality... Didi-Huberman visited the concentration camp of Auschwitz only in his later years, when it had already been transformed into a site of remembrance. He had hesitated to do so for a long time, despite his own grandmother having been detained there. In *Bark*, he focuses on the 8th photograph taken by a prisoner of the camp from a high window, which was not displayed by the curators of this remembrance site. The prisoner had managed to acquire a camera and his pictures are the only photographic testimony of this mass murder. As a matter of fact, the photograph does not show anything of what it bears witness to... The image was taken in a hurry, in order not to be noticed, probably while falling, and shows only a part of a window and the sky... According to Didi-Huberman, this image showing nothing, this accidental picture, is the closest representation there can be of this appalling suffering. The archive must also record singularity, coincidences, noise, accidents. The archive must be a curatorial algorithm that does not automatically reject defacement and accidents. Heimrad Bäcker submitted the tens of thousands of pages' worth of archive of the national socialist party to a montage that in effect subtracted all singularities, coincidences, noises and accidents from it... What he did actually amounted to quoting from the perpetrators' and victims' language. He stated that staying faithful to the language preserved in the documents was enough... Reality leaves its mark on texts... Lists, records, roll-calls, bans, arrest warrants, lists of burnt synagogues and forbidden behaviours, lists of parks forbidden entry, orders, depictions, designations, quotations from speeches, data, numbers, figures, reports, abbreviations, names, professions, activities, descriptions of medical experiments, interrogation reports, lists of daily walk distances comprising death numbers, last letters, Auschwitz telephone and prisoner numbers reduced to figures, statistics of days spent surviving...

Lists can be extenuated until they amount to mere numbers, uncertain marks and signs.

2400
 2600
 4600
 6600
 9100
 number unknown
 number unknown
 10600
 number unknown
 number unknown
 number unknown
 12600
 14600
 16600
 17600
 21000
 21400
 26400
 27030
 29330
 30530
 32030
 35079
 36079
 38749
 39249
 40449

Following these cutbacks, they leave us face-to-face with the awe of an empty list, whose entries correspond to nothing, that does not show anything except for one.

PRELIMINARY CAMP

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14.
15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24.

CAMP I

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.

CAMP II

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.

CAMP III

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. Gas Chamber

Can the totality of savagery be represented by the mediation of its singular parts? Chronological time is met with defacement: archives are time's irremediable entropy and disruption. Literariness is not achieved through quotations... To achieve these gaps and montage, Bäcker uses experimental methods of writing from the 1960s, such as concrete poetry, hand-drawing, asemic writing, found poetry or number poems... Thus, the list of the perpetrator presents to us the perpetrator as a list... The montage which Heimrad Bäcker submits this heap of papers and documents to does not produce semblance (*schein*). To quote Adorno's perspective on montage: montage's parts, contrarily to what the realistic artwork does, do not show signs of the truth, but the truth itself. Montage exposes the revolutionary form... Could we repeat Adorno's criticism of form and shape, which he addresses in his aesthetic theory, and apply it to *Transcript*? "The artwork not only reproduces pain, it also reduces it; form, a tool for thinking the artworks' savagery, is also the disablement (neutralisation) of suffering."...

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Prologue by Béla Tarr, which was crafted on the basis of the list of homeless persons living in Budapest, exemplifies what visual list-making is... There is always an archival instinct attached in filmic image itself. Filmic image has replaced memory... Film camera records to forget and is always archival... Béla Tarr's 5-minute-long black and white film *Prologue* is unfortunately not widely known. It is part of a collective film where one director from each country in the European Union was asked to express their own country's vision of Europe. The work, dated 2004, consists in one single sequence shot, showing a number of men and a few women together, obviously poor and in need, young and old, who are forced to live in the streets of Budapest. The film is reminiscent of the almost Dickensian painting by Samuel Luke Fildes, *Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward*, representing people living in the streets of London at the end of the 19th century waiting in line, defined by Eco as visual list-making... The camera is moving ahead along a line of people toward a place we do not see. This tracking shot successively captures and frames the faces of 204 persons waiting in line... In the process, it conveys the feeling that what is not seen bears the utmost importance... Expectations are not met... Through a half opened window, a young woman distributes daily food support to the street dwellers, which will help them stay alive: a glass of milk and a slice of bread. The clock behind the woman indicates noon... After this long side track, the camera locks in on this window and shows the same act of food distribution repeated 13 times... Before turning to black, the names of these 204 poor and needy persons appear on screen in alphabetical order...

Agost Zoltan
Andresi Judit
Angyal Attila
Antal Miklos
Babos Istvan
Bakos Ferenc
Bella Geza
Balog Szaba
Balogh Andras

...

Here, the text and the image, the list and the image part ways, building an interval... Henceforth, the image does not only consist in what is visible, the text in what can be said... The European Union has resulted in nothing else than in the increase of people impoverished by neoliberal capitalism and the homeless... In southern European countries such as Greece, Spain and Portugal, the number of people waiting in line in front of public food distribution sites has increased dramatically. For instance, in Athens, the number of people resorting to food distribution sites, outside of the unofficial public "kitchens" set up by volunteers and organisations across the city, has more than doubled over the course of the last few years.

In the 1980s, Ihab Hassan has put Mapping, as a post-modern thought, in opposition to List-making, which he designated as a modern instinct, a thinking exercise... Thinkers such as Geert Lovink take a critical stance against the position attained by mapping, by the visualisation of data nowadays. Looking into contemporary art these days, how should we envision the mapping of the *Networks of Dispossession*, produced by Burak Arıkan, which focuses on the relations between the capital and power? Or the media installation titled *Arşiv Rüyası (Archive Dreaming)* produced by Refik Anadol, with algorithms produced by computer intelligence classifying each one of the more than 1.700.000 documents contained in the archive collections of SALT Araştırma (SALT Research) according to their characteristics?

One may briefly define mapping as the spatial rendition of information, the visual rendition of data... Do maps produce counterinformation? Do they merely place what we already know before our eyes? Mapping draws its inspiration from *status quo*, content, software architecture, a worldview and an aesthetic idea... Mapping is the visual rendition of motile thoughts based on the belief in the idea of open data, tackling data generally too big to be apprehended by the human mind and attempting to establish relations between these data. Maps only serve to draw a conclusion to social analyses... The latter cannot start there... Mapping must concern probabilities... It must not be reduced to a cartography of the *status quo*. We must take every opportunity to question the way visual rendition of data has become a fetishist obsession nowadays... Often, visual renditions of information, data and archive, are produced without a clear idea of the questions these should raise. Most of the times, they do not produce any question at all... For the practitioners of these techniques and artists, oftentimes, what bears most importance is not the questions produced by the network, but rather the way this network makes things visual and the form produced by this visualised object, the beauty of the form, the image, the representation. What is designated as the art of making networks visual is in a constant state of conflict with three distinct frontiers: the screen's limits, the algorithms' and those of human perception... Generally speaking, the human perception cannot cope with the associations and relations established by visual renditions. The spectator, participant or reader willing to read a network merely sees more connections there, and focuses on them. When an artist, intermediary or activist produces a visual rendition of data relating to the defense of particular rights, the perpetrator is most likely to disappear among the connections, the algorithms, within the form and representation mechanism. Geert Lovink stated that the way to solve the problems related to mapping and visual renditions of data lied in an integrated, combinatorial idea of mapping... In other words, constantly evolving, real-time mappings that would be in constant dialogue with all the other data produced by social scientists and the civil society alike.

In the book that he devoted to Foucault, Deleuze appealed to the former's concept of "diagram" to define this sort of cartographies; "The list is endless, but it is always concerned with unformed and unorganised matter and unformalised, unfinalised functions, the two variables being indissolubly linked. What can we call such a new informal dimension? On one occasion, Foucault gives it its most precise name: it is a "diagram", that is to say a "functioning, abstracted from any obstacle [. . .] or friction [and which] must be detached from any specific use". Diagram is no longer an auditory or visual archive, but a map, a cartography that is coextensive with the whole social field...

Et cetera

Et cetera

Et cetera

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The Outside of the Archive

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**Begüm Özden
Fırat**

The inspiration of this essay comes from hours of discussions we had with a team composed of Banu Cennetoğlu, Ege Berensel, Ayşe İdil, Sevim Sancaktar, Eylem Ertürk, and Gamze Hızlı, from October to December 2020 in the framework of the Memory and Arts project. We discussed together the practices of memory work, archiving, categorisation, editing, selection and integration in general, and, in particular, the selection/archive within the project.

The presentations we gave as part of the series of online "Talks on Memory and Arts", were about an archive, existing although not yet visible, not yet accessible, which it is still unknown when it may be opened. The aim of our talks was not the mere description of an artistic selection unknown to the viewer, but also its deconstruction. In that respect, the talks which strived to propose a structurally and methodologically critical contribution to the selection/archive differed from the other sessions focusing more on the artworks included in it.

Undoubtedly, talking of a selection/archive which is not available to the public is not an easy feat. Nevertheless, there is a quite powerfully allegorical side to this state of things, worth reflecting on. The invisibility of this selection itself, which emerged as the result of a research looking at rights violations through the lens of artworks, seems to me as a bitter, almost ironic contribution to the debates being held about archive in Turkey. Talking about restricted official archives and stressing the relation between archive and truth have become one of the most crucial forms of invitation to confront and face the past in Turkey. In that sense, the notion of archive in Turkey hints at a gap, an absence. The talks and essays about the selection/archive of the yet unavailable Memory and Arts project, insofar as they recall such a gap, invite us to reflect on the notion of archive as both a concept and an institution. While discussing this selection/archive that points at its own absence and triggers a discourse about itself nourished by this absence, I have avoided sharing images from either the archive itself or the works mentioned, in order to intensify the effect of this gap in my own talk. For the same reason, I chose not to include images in this essay, and strived to describe visual phenomena in verbal terms as best as I could. As a matter of fact, what I am mostly interested in, rather than the selection/archive itself, are the times and places, in other terms, contexts, which remain outside of the archive but have played a crucial role in its inception.

Let us first remind the "content" of the selection/archive, that is, what it is about. The Memory and Arts project, in the team's own words, consists of a selection/archive of "artworks exhibited during the years 2000–2019, questioning the official discourse on issues related to the repression of collective memory in Turkey, and addressing violent collective events, gross human rights violations and systematic discrimination", brought together in a

digital environment. The question of broadening the scope of exhibitions and locations encompassed by the archive, as well as its timeframe to earlier than 2000, is currently being debated. However, as of December 2020, the time when the talks were held, the general opinion was that it was still too early for the selection/archive to be opened to the public (spectators/viewers/researchers). Security is also an issue. For all these reasons, it is highly probable that this selection will remain inaccessible to the public for a while.

Memory studies tell us that the processing of memory has little to do with the past itself, that the main task rather consists, by understanding and facing the past, in changing the shape of the relationship between the present and the future through the redeeming of this past. Adopting a similar view, within the boundaries of this essay, I will try to question whether the selection/archive carries such potentials which would allow us to connect to the past in an ethical and political manner. My main focus is on what we could define as the outside of the selection/archive: different historical times/spaces surrounding the moment of encounter between the person being included in the archive, that person's artwork and the archive itself, in other words contexts. First we should ask ourselves: what does such a selection leave behind as it "archives" certain objects? Actually, I do not mean the works, institutions and exhibition locations left outside of the selection as it was constituted. What I am talking about are these contexts which any archive inevitably leaves out, unclassified. I am talking about the archive's historical, temporal and spatial strata which inevitably usher us in, each time we engage in an effort to observe/search/understand the archive, upsetting its inner historical purity –if it exists– and undermining its documentary quality. I believe that every look cast at the archive comprises such a confrontation of different time-spaces, that, in a way, the meaning of an artwork or document is being produced by this very movement of synchronisation, of synchronicity between these different layers of context.

In the course of this essay, I will address three different "outsides of the archive", namely the researcher's context, the archive's context and the artwork's context. I will focus on the process of production of meaning, triggered by each context within the framework of its relationship with remembrance, memory and time. I believe this selection, just as every archive, to be primarily surrounded by the historical present of the person who enters the archive, that is, of the "I" of the researcher, the viewer or the reader. Let us call this the context of the researcher. At this level, we must build the time which envelops the "moment" when "I" cross paths with the selection, and the "spirit" of this time. Second, comes the spatial and temporal context of the selection, which we may call the archive's context. However similar this context may look to the archive's content, it has been rendered

invisible, and therefore marginalised, insofar as it actually constitutes the technical ground of the archive. At this level, we find Uwazi, the platform hosting the archive, and the 2000s, the time period covered by the selection. Lastly, there is a stratum which defines the "historical present" of the surrounding of the "white cube", where the works included in the selection were exhibited, which we may call the artwork's context. On the other hand, there are at least two other contexts which I will not be addressing in the framework of this essay, but wish to hint at nonetheless: one consists in the historical context when the works of the selection were produced, the other in the context of the events depicted; that is, the historical present of such events as military coups, massacres, pogroms, enforced disappearances and murders by unknown perpetrators, the Kurdish issue or the Gezi protests. Both these contexts, just as the other ones, are waiting to be constructed. I will now explore each of the three above-mentioned contexts one by one.

The researcher's context

What does the relation established by Turkey in the 2020s with time –the past, present and future– look like? How do we understand the present, how do we perceive the past? I will strive to answer these questions in a somewhat provocative and speculative manner, on the basis of the relation established by political regimes with time.

Building from "belirsizlik tefrikası" (the "uncertainty serial"), Pınar Öğünç's article series published by Gazete Duvar, I am planning to define the period we are going through as a socio-political regime relying on temporal uncertainty. Uncertainty is a form of relation established with time, implying that anything might happen anytime, while suggesting that the future is unforeseeable. It also contains the notion of loss of acuity and preciseness, and therefore the impossibility of knowing, predicting or planning. We may state that in the current period, perhaps at a global scale, we are connected with time on the basis of uncertainty: uncertainty has become a determining factor and a form of governance in various areas of life, from politics to relations of production, from comprehension of the self and the society to the way in which work is experienced.

The production and distribution of uncertainty is closely linked to authoritarian populist regimes. Indeed, there seems to be a differentiation in the relationship which these regimes establish with time. In an interview for Bir+Bir dated 16 June 2019, Hamit Bozarslan defines what he names "Erdoğanism" as "a political regime which demolishes the trust in time". Erdoğanism "either concentrates on the moment –that is, a 24 hour-long timeframe– or develops a very long-range vision of power", he adds. In other words, this regime may give assumptions regarding something as unpredictable as what Turkey will become by 2071, but will not plan on a close-range scale (such as 5-year or 10-year plans). Thus, the future is being turned into a substitution for a glorious history. Simultaneously, seen from below, from the perspective of grassroots, we are facing a counter-revolution where people are stripped of their capacity to conceive another temporality, to remember or to envision the future, as they are cornered into the "news flash", depriving them of their ability to grasp which yesterday is followed by today, even in chronological terms. We are constantly placed in a state of present, where every moment, indexed on the "news flash" filling each and every second with a particular incident. It is as though we would fall into the hollowness of history if we stopped.

This regime of uncertainty induces a state of melancholy which the left wing in Turkey is so well acquainted with that it could even be defined as its founding emotion. On the one hand, there was the succession of massacres throughout the 2000s, which we have sworn not to forget: "May our hearts dry if we forget." On the other hand, the apophthegmatic words of Daniel Bensaïd: "Past traumas are pathological, but so is an obscured future."

I recall the work titled *Bellek Kutusu (Memory Box)* by anti-pop, as part of the exhibition titled *Ateşin Düştüğü Yer (Where Fire Has Struck)* which opened in 2011 in Depo. This work consists of a touchscreen laid on a table resembling a game console. The game starts with the image of the Turkish flag. Afterwards, numerous cards open up in front of you, as though in a memory game. Your goal is to pair the cards. The familiar faces of Ceylan Önkol, Tansu Çiller, Metin Göktepe, Uğur Mumcu, Ayşe Paşalı and Festus Okey appear one after another, but where are these cards' matches? A picture of looting from the 6–7 September events, the operation Return to Life, the Maraş massacre... Where is the match? By processing the "memory work" in that way, in other words, by remembering and matching pairs of cards, the cards are being erased and eventually the Turkish flag darkens.

In nowadays Turkey, we seem to be still quite far from being able to identify the perpetrators, to materialise them and match them with one another, or to distinguish what the "monster bodies" are and what they do, to use the expression proposed by Asli Zengin in her presentation within this project. On the table, in front of us, against an army of small, anonymous and bodiless perpetrators, lie a crowd of victims reduced to hashtags. How will we connect with the past from within such a fragmented present? What kind of anchor will the Memory and Arts selection throw at its own times? How will we find a way of looking that is loaded with historical experience, outside of an endless present, of an empty time? How will we match cards, perpetrators with one another? How does memory function in this regime of temporal uncertainty? Or rather, how can we make memory work?

The archive's context

As the research team has put it, the selection constituted within the framework of the Memory and Arts project, as a digital platform, is not yet accessible to the public. In the coming years, the scope of this selection might be expanded to include the years prior to 2000 as well as a variety of institutions and initiatives forming the "province" of contemporary art. However, no matter how broad its scope becomes, it will always leave one context out: its own. That is, the space occupied and the time encompassed by the selection/archive.

Let us start with the archive's space. The space where the selection/archive is located is the quite modest, or even a bit tedious, rather functional digital database platform called Uwazi, also used by *Hafıza Merkezi* for other archival works. Uwazi is an open-source platform designed and developed for the purposes of creating and sharing collections of documents. It is being used around the world by a number of human rights activists to document and analyse human rights violations. However independent this platform may be, the main risk pertaining to the digital realm, that of disappearing, of being lost, of "vanishing", threatens this seemingly solid ground. When we think of the sudden disappearance of the Radikal newspaper's archive, or the erasing of MySpace's 12 year-old digital archive by mistake (however unrelated these two events might be), we are led to consider the selection/archive as a frail place of remembrance. By gathering artworks digitally, this selection "protects" them on a fragile ground. Nevertheless, the gathering of old exhibition catalogues only kept in the libraries of certain art and culture institutions, or other documentation pertaining to artworks and exhibitions messily scattered across internet pages, bears crucial importance for institutions deprived of memory.

Then, how can we define the temporal atmosphere and the regime of remembrance of the 2000s, the years covered by the selection/archive? The 2000s were a period when, in parallel to global tendencies, Turkey underwent an experience and institutionalisation of "memory outburst", especially in the academic field. In his book *Geçmişi Kullanma Kılavuzu (The Past – Users Manual: History, Memory, Politics, İletişim Yayınları, 2019)*, Enzo Traverso claims that the current obsession with memory is the by-product of the collapse of historical experience. According to him, "in a world which has lost its landmarks, where the shapes of violence have become blurred, fragmented by a collective system which erases traditions and crushes lives", memory can only function as an obsession. Inspired by Walter Benjamin, Traverso here hints at "the injury of experience" or the collapse of the experience referring to a self-transformative, historicised collective mental universe accumulated by way of transgenerational transmission. This perspective emphasises the current rule of partitioned, sporadic, historiless and singular lives.

Nurdan Gürbilek described the cultural atmosphere of the 1980s as a tense relationship between "the repression of speech" and "the outburst of speech". In a similar way, the 2000s –as a historical period– may be considered as the result of a dialectic between "the repression of memory" and "the outburst of memory". The expressions of "old Turkey" and "new Turkey", which emerged in the 2010s, speak for a rupture in historical temporality. Together with this rupture, two different –and opposed– regimes of remembrance have emerged. On the one hand, there is an essentially conservative memory politics, which we could define as a form of nostalgic adherence to the old Turkey, its institutions and narratives. On the other hand, the politics of memorialisation implemented by the ruling AKP (Justice and Development Party), a specific form of the conservative nationalist rightwing, appear to oppose this approach but, in fact, they symmetrically mirror the former position. These are actually politics of resentment resting on the construction of a past allegedly repressed – as in the case of the Kut al Amara victory, as Tanil Bora has put it in the framework of the Talks on Memory and Arts. The Taksim Square offers a good symbol for us to consider the relation between these two regimes of memorialisation: the demolished AKM¹ standing on one side, opposite a mosque under construction...

On the other hand, there is an autonomous "leftwing" memory narrative occupying the space (the Gezi park?) between these two memorialisation politics, which can also be referred to as a memory war. It is a space where the narratives of social movements, minorities and different libertarian or socialist politics are being

¹ Translator's note: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi, the Atatürk Cultural Centre, a large, multi-purpose venue and cultural centre hosting classical music concerts, operas, ballets and performing arts events, remained inactive from 2008 to February 2018, when it was demolished for purposes of reconstruction.

whispered in between the different generations. Ever since the 1990s, these weak and fragile memory works have found a privileged means of expression in contemporary art, leading to a memory outburst. How can we transfer these fragile memory works from below, to go beyond the two predominant memory politics in the 2000s? How can we establish such an autonomous space of memory, which would be powerful enough to build historical experience and to imagine an alternative future?

The work's context

We have in hand a selection/archive (the first in its field), presenting artworks which it claims to catalogue in a more or less functional manner. Actually, this claim of functionality rests on a preference: the selection/archive was constituted through the scanning of the exhibition and performance programmes of the chosen contemporary art and performing arts institutions and venues covering the years 2000–2019. Therefore, the selection/archive is primarily classified on the bases of exhibition locations and dates. Of course, this preference is not being concealed, but since this spatial and temporal frame constitutes the inner logic of the classification, it actually becomes invisible. It is therefore necessary to build and make visible the context of exhibition which these artworks were a part of.

The selection was constituted by the scanning of 1670 exhibitions and performances from a total of 40 institutions and venues. These venues are the critical art institutions that have eventually become mainstream, establishing the prevailing practices of display and therefore shaping the field of contemporary art. As a result, we must consider what these exhibitions organised by these institutions display and how, what they include, as well as their input in terms of exhibition design and discourse. What kind of representation practices, what form of remembering and experiencing the past do these institutions encourage –if not suggest–? How does censorship (be it overt or covert) operate, what is remembered and what is concealed? How shall we understand the relations between the capital and art and culture institutions, instead of rejecting them over-simplistically? Let us consider the work titled *İsimsiz Mektup* (*The Anonymous Letter*, 2011), exhibited during the 12th Istanbul Biennial by the Public Art Laboratory (not included in the selection/archive). These cards, which were distributed during the Biennial's opening and featured the same dimensions, colours and typography as the Biennial's own communication materials, bore an indication to "scratch off". When the visitors scratched the indicated part of the card, they discovered the last part of a letter in 15 bullet points written by Vehbi Koç to Kenan Evren in 1980.

This work should be considered as a perfect example of a memory work, because in this letter, the processes of accumulation and Turkification of the capital tell us a story of coercion, violence, genocide and military coup. This encourages us to make a small move towards constructing the identity of spaces, their history and memory.

Finally, I will address the question: "How can we build the historical present of the context in which the artworks included in the selection are exhibited?" In order to achieve this, we may start by looking at the works themselves. Some of the works included in the selection cast a look at their historical contexts through the lens of statistics. *İstikrarlı Ölüm* (*Stable Death*), produced and exhibited by Neriman Polat and Arzu Yayıntaş in 2016, is one of these works which may be considered as a kind of context builders. This work is constituted of 3322 nails on a wall, spelling the word "İSTİKRAR" ("STABILITY"). This number corresponds to the sum of the 295 civilians and 204 security officers killed during the curfews and bombings, the 414 women killed by men, the 706 migrants who died in Turkey's waters and the 1703 workers who were victims of workplace homicides during the course of 2015. Banu Cennetoğlu's work titled *14.05.2019* (2019) also builds its own historical context by assembling the 770 national, regional and local newspapers printed on that date. Apart from these rare examples, the customary practice of collecting data undertaken by autonomous collectives can be quite useful in order to construct the historical present of the time of the exhibition. The "İşçi Sınıfı Eylemleri Raporu" (Reports on Working-Class Protests) by the *Emek Çalışmaları Topluluğu* (Labor Studies Group), the "Toplantı ve Gösteri Hakkı İzleme Raporu" (Freedom of Peaceful Assembly Annual Monitoring Report) by the *Eşit Haklar İçin İzleme Derneği* (Association for Monitoring Equal Rights), the yearly reports by *kadincinayetleri.org* (@FemicideMap), the "Mülteci Ölümleri Almanacağı" (Almanac of Asylum Seekers' Deaths) by the *Halkların Köprüsü Derneği* (Association of Bridging People), the "Hayvan Hakkı İhlalleri" (Violations of Animal Rights) reports by *Dört Ayaklı Şehir* (City on Four Paws) and the "İş Cinayetleri" (Workplace Homicides) reports by the *İşçi Sağlığı ve İş Güvenliği Meclisi* (Health and Safety Labour Watch) are all examples of this data archiving work which Aslı Odman defines as "wreckology"

("Enkazbilim: Kaybın Verisi, Bilgi Müşterekleri Oluşturabilir mi? [Wreckology: Can Data of Loss Form Communities of Knowledge?]", 2019). By building the spatial surroundings outside the artworks included in the selection and the historical present of their exhibition, these data allow us to understand the state which Turkey is currently in through losses and rights violations. Thus, they allow us to understand and remember the selected artworks within their social and cultural context.

Needless to say, as they bring forth current (rather than past) issues, works on archive and memory acquire a political strength; the reason for their political potential is that they may bestow the ability and power to leap across times, to think in terms of interrelations and to historicise. At the beginning of this essay, I have claimed that the regime of uncertainty was specific to neoliberal, authoritarian political regimes. I would like to reconsider this view, bearing in mind how closely this regime is related to collective creativity. While nature and state structures crumble one after another, can we manage to consider uncertainty as a kind of opportunity in order to make sense and historicise this turbulent life we believe none before us had experienced, and to make the future imaginable, if not foreseeable? Obviously, this is not a task which one person alone can achieve while sitting in front of a computer's screen. I wish and hope that the Memory and Arts project, the selection/archive, the series of talks and this publication as a space of encounters, will help us connect and explore the layers of context to strengthen memory work and inspire us in that direction.



**Bridges,
Chains and
Ruptures:
Interviews**

**Erden
Kosova**

Feyyaz Yaman
Gölsün Karamustafa
Hale Tenger
Asena Günal
Barış Seyitvan

Feyyaz Yaman: Outside the Framework

Erden Kosova: Mr. Yaman, since your years as a student, you were witness to the intersections of art and politics in Turkey. Moreover, you have played an influential role in the construction of such bridges. You have closely observed the passages, transformations and continuities between generations throughout this period. Within *Karşı Sanat*¹, you have held exhibitions that focused on particular periods. I guess that you have a lot to say about the transformations in the art scene in the 80s, the connections and disconnections between the painting tradition and artists who were involved in conceptual experimentations. But perhaps it would be best to start with your personal history.

Feyyaz Yaman: We must look at things from a historical perspective if we are to talk about a particular period. As a generation, we have experienced the distinction between before and after the Wall, modernity and post-modernity, as well as the process through which the neoliberal period has prevailed. Looking at things from today's perspective may deform our judgment, restructure it. That is why I wanted to recall that historicity before I started.

My family is originated from Komotini on my father's side, while my mother's side originally came from Vodina before migrating to Adapazarı. My family's background encompasses a number of contradictions: my grandfathers, who died in their prime, were linked to Thessaloniki's Association for the Defense of National Rights; one of them was shot dead during the Bulgarian occupation. My father's uncle on his mother's side, Hüsametdin Özgültekin, a veteran of the Battle of the Dardanelles, later became a French teacher in the Kuleli Military High School, while my father was an auto electrician. I was born in 1955 in the district of Kömürpazarı in Adapazarı. I was brought up by my grandmother on my father's side, who was a middle school graduate; my father always encouraged me to receive an education in spite of all hardships. We, in

¹ The full name of this collective founded in 2000 literally translates to Dissident Art Works. It is often (e.g. in the present text) used in its contracted form: *Karşı Sanat* (Dissident Art).

Adapazarı's schools, received a comprehensive education at the hands of the teachers raised by the republic. The town was different from most of Istanbul's peripheries: having a lot of movie theatres, it was a place where a number of families who had founded film companies lived, a town definitely facing Istanbul's way. During my years in study, our interest in politics was high, and there were factions. In middle school, Hüsni Gürsel, the father of Barbaros Gürsel, the graphic design teacher at the High School of Applied Arts, gave us an education in art history and drawing based on a deep knowledge of western tradition. Mr. Rüştü, our painting teacher in the second year of middle school, was Adnan Çoker's classmate; he had close ties with the Academy. My highschool teacher Ali Faik Peltek would give free drawing classes to highly motivated students on the weekends, thus preparing us for the Academy admission examination. I did copies of Kokoschka and Constable in that period. In 1972, together with my friend Mustafa Salihoğlu, we both passed the State Academy of Fine Arts' admission examination with honours, and were soon enrolled. Two years later, when my sister Feyzan Yaman was admitted to the English Department of the High School of Foreign Languages of the Istanbul University, our generation eventually settled in Istanbul.

The freedom we enjoyed at the Academy was striking. I remember that military officers sat at the front row by virtue of protocol during the opening ceremony in the conference hall. After the rector's speech, when the students' representative, nicknamed "Crazy Yüksel", summoned all of us by saying "My friends, since we are not granted the floor, we are leaving the room", all the students left the theatre. This was our first experience of gaining self-confidence against the *status quo*. During my first year, I received basic art education classes from Altan Gürman, Özer Kabaş and Ali Teoman Germaner, and chose Sabri Berkel's drawing workshop. In 1973, I picked Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu's workshop, which is where, after I met my wife Sevgi Akyüz, I gained further self-confidence. Spurred by her criticism, I hastily started to claim my own political and economic freedom. In 1974, together with Sabahattin Tuncer, I was chosen as the students' representative. The same year, I began to stay at Bedri Rahmi and Eren Eyüboğlu's workshop in Kalamış, which is where I met with the intellectuals who were part of that circle: Vedat Günyol, Mustafa Eyüboğlu, İsmet Zeki Eyüboğlu, Mualla and Robert Anhegger, and Ferit Edgü. That same year again, one of my works was selected for the 36th State Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture. I worked on the preparation phase in Kalamış as well as the production in concrete relief and ceramic and mounting of Bedri Rahmi's sketch in the entrance hall of the Etap Marmara Hotel in Tarlaşa.

After the passing of Bedri Rahmi, when his workshop was left without direction, we managed to continue without a teacher, under the supervision of Neşet Günel and his assistant

İbrahim Örs. During this intermediary period, the workshop became a meeting ground for art and politics. Later, we moved to Neşet Günel's workshop. Nedret Sekban, Hüsni Koldaş and Kasım Koçak were already there. Politics were both discussed and performed there. We were all very interested by our experience of collective painting, which we discovered there, in Neşet Günel's workshop. Moved by a common vision of the world, so as to do away with individualism, we would produce works bearing a collective signature against the objections of the administration. That same year, I was appointed to found the Academy's Students' Association, and took part in the works carried out by the students' cooperative. During one year, together with Mustafa Salihoğlu, we organised the meals for the whole school in the students' canteen, and ran the cafeteria.

In 1975, I met Sahir Abacı. I joined the political formation Dev-Genç (Revolutionary Youth). I was involved in the Dev-Genç branch of our school together with Bülent Oşkan, Hakkı Mısırlıoğlu and other friends. Most students' representatives were present among this group. The Art Festivity that we held, and the presentation we made in this context on Mexican art can be viewed as a good example of the dimension of the relationship to art envisioned within the scope of this political perspective. These events later paved the way for the inception of the Art Festival and Biennial. Another experience that I personally found enriching in the year 1975 was the Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu retrospective exhibition which we worked on for a year, together with Eren Eyüboğlu. This exhibition held in Ankara's Vakko Art Gallery was considered that year's most important art event. Getting to meet with Orhan Peker, Bahri Savcı and Turan Erol during our one-month-long stay in Ankara was yet another valuable gain.

Another event worth reminding for the way it affected the academic sphere that year concerned the candidates to assistant positions sent abroad. The 1968 generation of students sent to Paris on scholarships with the promise of an assistant position on their return had come back only to discover that their positions as assistants had been rejected by the State Academy of Fine Arts. As students of the school at stake, we positioned ourselves amid this tension and demanded their rights be granted to them. I believe this to be one of the first examples of antinomy within artistic language experienced inside the Academy.

The artistic image of that period's political language cannot be reduced to the generalist depictions made of it later on as mimetic or coarse social realism. It is not possible to ignore the richness that referred to numerous art history backgrounds, and could be associated with daily life, with the language of politics. In that period, the writings of Ahmet Oktay, Murat Belge's doctoral thesis on Caudwell, the Cinema Days that programmed contemporary films and the debates animating the literary world pre-

sented a wide perspective regarding the relation between art and politics. In the meantime, examples of the new figurative language were beginning to be discussed within the Academy. Artists such as Alaattin Aksoy or Kemal İskender were introducing a new language. I remember how Asım İşler came to Neşet Günal's workshop and talked about light and compositions, or brought Hayter's technique to the etching workshop. However, we were so busy with the intensity of our political struggle that we failed to establish a common language with them. Besides, Canan Beykal had begun to lean toward works conveying a strong conceptual dimension in Adnan Çoker's workshop. Nur Koçak was printing her translations related to Pop Art on stencil paper and publishing them. It was the first time we saw something like that. Symposiums about Conceptual Art were being held in the conference hall. And, of course, Şükrü Aysan, together with Serhat Kiraz, who was younger than us, and Alparslan Baloğlu, who was later to found A4 Ofset Press, constituted a group that focused on Conceptual Art and examined objects with a conceptual language independent of everything.

After Neşet Günal's workshop was divided in two, Mehmet Güleriyüz was assigned to a position and he started to work with senior students on the upper floor. He opened his course with a piece of criticism: he argued that what we were doing was closed drawing, whereas he was advocating for open drawing. He vouched for an openness of language that would start with drawing, build its relation to objects over time and thus metamorphose into painting and constantly be able to evolve. He said: "You cannot fill a big composition with small brushstrokes, transferring the drawing on the canvas and then paint the inside before working on texture; big canvas must be made by means of the body's movements, with big brushes." This was true. But here is how he put it into effect: "Work on kraft, on paper, on surfaces that will not last and can be thrown away easily; leave oil painting aside, use acrylic or even mainstream plastic paint; favour experimentality; instead of looking at a model in order to make your drawing, throw paint on the canvas with your brush; see the figure emerging from the stain and work from there onwards, articulating it with the existing model, line or drawing." In that period, the workshop would host Mevlüt Akyıldız, İnci Eviner and myself. Among us, only İnci had managed to establish a specific language following that direction. We, on the other hand, were still busy trying to work our way in an approach that proceeded from such elements as the street, body, labour, the reality of the deaths occurring out there, from a political language, from a determined location, so much so that tension soon arose between us and Güleriyüz. We criticised him for taking lightly of the issue of truth. When we agreed to talk, we had a meeting, also attended by Sabahattin Tuncer, Ferit Özen and Sevinç Altan. By the end of the meeting, neither side had convinced the other. Güleriyüz said that

he would not stay where he was unwelcome and tendered his resignation that same day; a little while later, he went to the USA.

That same year, together with Kasım Koçak, Aysun Koçak, Berrin Küçükkağa, Nurperi Demirhan, Biles Öcal, Sevinç Altan, Sevgi Akyüz and our friends Taşkın and Erhan from the Applied Fine Arts, we rented a first floor store on the Bağdat avenue, in Şaşkınbakkal, and formed the collective experiment titled Atölye Benek. We tried to unite art and business following an understanding whereby everyone contributed inasmuch as they produced and benefited on the basis of what they needed. Our priority was to constitute an income pool through the jobs we found. Biles Öcal took upon himself to prepare signboards and objects for the windows of the shops of the Moda neighbourhood. I undertook the decoration of the passage that was being renovated after the closure of the Melek movie theatre in Adapazarı. With the intermediation of Eren Eyüboğlu, we got a job from Profilo. A plexiglass partition wall had to be installed in Jak Kamhi's house in Yeniköy. They liked Sevgi's sketches. After leaflet distributions in the Profilo factory, which was on a strike at the time, we would go to Kamhi's house and mount the plexiglass wall, bringing the money to the collective income pool.

After a while, we experienced a dissoliton of the group when those who lined with Kasım followed a Maoist direction while I led others in that of the *Dev-Genç*. They went on under the denomination of the Painters of Maltepe. On the other hand, we started undertaking carpet weaving, stained-glass, graphic design and etching works in the workshop that we rented together with Mustafa Salihoğlu on the Galipdede avenue, in the Sarıoğlu Han, right across Teutonia. We used the larger part of the place as a painting workshop. 1977 was the date of inception of *Atelye Alaturka*, which would later give birth to *Karşı Sanat Çalışmaları*. Together with Sahir Abacı, we started undertaking the organisation of fair jobs. The same year, we started issuing the *Devrimci Gençlik İçin Sanat* (Art for Revolutionary Youth) magazine in the Academy, whose aim was to counteract the *Dayanışma Dergisi* (Solidarity Review) issued at the time by our friends from the İGD (*İlerici Gençler Derneği* - Progressive Youth Organisation). We started developing our own graphic design practice.

After the 1 May 1977, I adopted the perspective of the *Dev-Yol* (Revolutionary Path) group. The following year, I painted the large banner for the May 1 march whose photo was reproduced in Şükrü Aysan's book titled *Afişe Çıkmak* (Let's Go to Postering!). This work, which we produced in one day in the canteen of the Kadırga student dormitory, together with the other paintings we did for DİSK (*Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu* - Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions) and *Bağımsız Nakliyat-İş* (Progressive Union of Sea and Land Transport Workers), constituted one of the bridges I was striving to build with the muralist tradition in the context

of Mexican art. In 1978, we withdrew from the *Dev-Yol* group together with Sahir Abacı, and joined the *Bağımsızlar Grubu* (Independents Group) in the Academy. Together with Korhan Gümüş, we founded the plastic arts branch. This was the period when our friendship formed with Engin Akçin, Yılmaz Değer, Dilek Zaptçioğlu and Deniz Bilgin. Our works for the 1 May neighbourhood, to which the architects participated with their projects on shanty towns, or the boycott of the school over the issue of the models' rights, all date from that period.

Considering *Görsel Sanatçılar Derneği* (The Association of Visual Artists), the Artists' Workshop organised by DİSK in Ören, the murals created by artists in collaboration with progressive municipalities, the graphic works of Sadık Karamustafa, the Wall Newspaper published by the *Yeraltı Maden-İş Sendikası* (Underground Mining-Work Union) in collaboration with artists, the theatre plays (the kind that started with the plays at *Ankara AST* and *Tepebaşı Deneme Sahnesi* [Tepebaşı Experimental Stage] and continued with *Kafkas Tebeşir Dairesi* [The Caucasian Chalk Circle] by Mehmet Ulusoy), and such filmmakers as Yılmaz Güney, Erden Kıral, Tunç Okan etc.; I think it would be more appropriate to understand the change that occurred in the relationship between art, daily life and politics as linked with with the rupture created by neo-liberal cultural policies in the global sense. Observing the characteristic effects of the socially critical language spawned by Neşet Günel in the field of painting and Mehmet Aksoy in that of sculpture, both on the aesthetic field and the relation between art and politics nowadays is quite striking.

The 1980 military coup was the beginning of chaos. After a period during which the country had become uninhabitable, the fascism that was unleashed on the September 12 ushered us into a new period. Two weeks after the coup, I took my graduation examination. I went back to Adapazarı on a four-month military leave. At the end of the same year, I lost my father in a car accident. After putting everything on hold for a year, I took my whole family along and we all settled in Istanbul.

The ironic spirit that appeared toward the end of the 70s took a sharper turn after the military coup. The jury of the DYO painting competition, which Sezer Tansuğ was a member of, chose to grant the prize to four works at once, most probably in order to show support to that generation. Sezai Özdemir was among the recipients at the time. The work titled *İkili Davet* (*Dual Invitation*) by Şenol Yoroğlu, one of the pioneers of this ironic movement, took part in another competition in the same period. In this composition, featuring the use of the new figurative language, a businessman is sitting on a couch, one of his hands resting on the leg of the woman sitting by his one side while facing

and conversing with the woman sitting on his other side. Orhan Deliorman, Fuat Acaroğlu, whom we used to call "Apache", Mevlüt and Şenol formed a group of four. While we would sit in Neşet Günel's workshop discussing current political issues, they embraced a more distant attitude within an individualist world. They began to establish a different critical language, using their specific character. They were associated with such painters as Georg Grosz or Otto Dix. They developed a language that both had a political dimension and maintained their individualism in a very stylistic way. Yet another group that formed in Neşet Günel's workshop, that of Artin Demirci, Aşık Mene and Sabahattin Tuncer, was crafting the language that voiced questions on colour and form, which would later be adopted by the Kuzguncuk movement.

At the time, the art market was initially launched by the constitution of banks' galleries and had gained spatial existence as a consequence of the tendency for private collections to turn into private galleries. The mutation of political language toward irony, which occurred beneath the unprecedented level of fascist violence unleashed in 1980, granted the "art market" prosperous conditions for plurality. On the other hand, women painters who rose together with feminism (İpek Aksüğür Duben, Fatma Tülin Öztürk, Nur Koçak, Gülsün Karamustafa, Neşe Erdok, Tomur Atakök, Canan Beykal) produced pioneering works for the establishment of a new realist-critical language, independent from that resting on figurative labour-body representation. Mustafa Ata, İrfan Önürmen and Yavuz Tanyeli may be considered as partakers in the same movement, alongside the abovementioned artists.

Within the milieu composed of Academy students, the likes of Ramize Erer, Tuncay Akgün, Tamer Ulukılıç, Caner Karavit, Ömer Güney (the *Saka Grubu* - Goldfinch Group) in the first place, led by Aziz Öz who had been sentenced to jail in the *Dev-Sol* (Revolutionary Left) trial, and, to a lighter degree, the "*Akadeğilmi*"² group, gave much visibility to this ironic language, along with this new figurative approach and variety of materials. As a matter of fact, they experimented things that the concurrent development of the culture of caricature and humour magazine was directly linked to. The impact of this language can also be noticed in the emergence of the *Hafriyat* (Excavation) Group a little later. As I enumerate the names of all these groups and formations alongside one another, one can grasp once again how rich and diverse the political avant-garde language was at the time.

As heroic rhetoric slowly receded from socialist-social artistic language, giving way to reality taken from daily life, beaten down and deformed, blue collar workers gave way to disorganised labour-body, doormen and housecleaners newly arrived in the city and the characters

² Translator's note: Named on the basis of the discussions held at that time on "Academy or not Academy?".

of under-the-counter manufacture. One may observe the traces and influence of structuralism and critical realism, which preceded the entry into post-modern culture, on this transformation of political symbols. Even though the protecting shield of irony may have evolved into compliance with the art market and new conformism, it still constituted a protected area. This position both gave satisfaction to the feeling of opposition without fully committing to confrontation, and granted continuity to critical language and negation. In my opinion, *Hafriyat* positioned itself right on that spot, benefiting from this opportunity. One may notice this irony especially in İrfan's language, as well as in the paintings which Hakan Gürsoytrak produced in the aftermath of his return from England, where he internalised free figurative works. It is also noticeable in the way Antonio Cosentino, rather than focusing on the people living in shanty towns, emphasised the stowage solutions achieved by this architecture. The same experiment can be seen in the works of the group led by Ramize, Tuncay and Aziz. Works produced on kraft paper, as Güleriyüz advocated for, can be seen in the works which they hung on clothes lines in the side streets of the Kuledibi neighbourhood before photographing and exhibiting them later in the Osman Hamdi Bey Cultural Centre, in the Art Festival, and those upon which they continued to focus their practice.

For us, the 90s represented a period when we committed to an intense effort to articulate art with the business sphere after the transformations undergone in the tertiary sector and technology field, parallelly to the accumulation of capital in the newly emerging monopolar world. In this regard, the spray gun technique and giant photographic works for Camel and Marlboro which we developed with my wife Sevgi Akyüz allowed us to take an important step in financial terms. In order to give a brief outline: we became a limited enterprise in 92; went on to reach agreements with advertisement agencies, companies specialised in the organisation of conventions and congresses and public relations offices; we ourselves specialised in the organisation of fairs and launching meetings, the production of 3-dimensional styrofoam works and set up procedures on an international scale. We then moved to Seyrantepe, and made a leap toward a 2000m² workspace, and a team reaching as much as 30 people. These activities allowed for *Karşı Sanat Çalışmaları* to reach economic independence. Our activities in the field of fairs led us to develop a relation with Tüyp, which in turn led to our collaboration on Art Fairs throughout the 2000s. Based on this energy, while keeping our workshop in Beyoğlu's Tünel neighbourhood going, we also attained professional mastery in the etching workshop that we had founded under the responsibility of my wife Sevgi and the management of Fevzi Tüfekçi, Asım İşler and Fethi Kayaalp, allowing us to start publishing. In 1992, amidst all these positive developments, my brother Hüsametdin Yaman disappeared, along with his friend Son-

er Gül, while in custody. This example of state violence, whose perpetrator became clear after Ayhan Çarkın's confessions, was what prompted me to return to the artistic field. The 1999 Marmara earthquake and my being affected by bone tumor the same year only hastened my decision.

That same year, we turned the etching workshop into a fully equipped and running professional space. Together with the lithography printing press and the transfer printing machine, acid tank, resin closet and set of cylinders that I had bought from the Emel Printery, we were in possession of a complete workshop. At the time, Artin and his friends were thinking of closing Harmoni and the Elhamra art gallery. We went there to tell them not to let go, and ended up thinking whether we could take over, whether we could implement the ideal gallery that we had in mind there. We met with our friends from the *Hafriyat* Group regarding this question. Numerous friends attended, from Gülçin Aksoy to Gül İlgaz, and, from my own entourage, Sezai and Antonio. The idea was met with enthusiasm. We then started to become organised within *Karşı Sanat* together with artists. Yet, my intention was to propose an alternative that would carry on what the Atölye Benek in Şaşkınbakkal and the Maltepe Painters, under the impulse of Kasım Koçak and his friends, had experimented. I envisioned *Karşı Sanat* as a plural platform, open to experimentation, distant from Developed Socialism's social realism, which would speak the political language of the left. We were also open to curatorial experimentations. For my part, I viewed curatorship as a culturally developed manner of art commissioning, in charge of bringing the artists together. However, when I saw its acceptance slide, within such contexts as biennials, toward support for the domination of text over image, I voiced criticism. Within *Karşı Sanat*, we held two exhibitions with Levent Çalikoğlu, and opened other exhibitions under the curatorship of Fulya Erdemci and Beral Madra. But, most importantly, together with Aslan Eroğlu, we conceived the *Pankart* exhibition as a confrontation platform for the 78 generation. We also held numerous exhibitions with a group of women artists including Gülçin Aksoy, Nancy Atakan, Neriman Polat, Maria Sezer and Nazan Azeri.

In 2003, we came in contact with İskender Savaşır and the *Defter Grubu* (Notebook Group). I was aware of their previous experiments at İstasyon. Sabahattin Tuncer had also conducted a workshop at İstasyon for some time prior to Mehmet Güleriyüz. During the establishment of *Karşı Sanat*, we went there with Sabahattin Tuncer and Yavuz Tanyeli to discuss –together with Orhan Koçak, İskender Savaşır, Oruç Aruoba, İhsan Bilgin and Bülent Somay– how we could perpetuate political discourse in the newly shaped artistic atmosphere, and reinforce it in institutional terms. At the time, the *Defter Grubu* was forced to leave the place belonging to Eti Behar, across from the Beyoğlu municipality building, which they had been using. We offered them to carry out their meetings, lessons and

seminars in our location. When they accepted the proposition, we started renting the flats at the third floor of the Elhamra passage, and rearranged the floor we were using. What we thought of was to proceed with seminars on a given number of topics, which would allow Deftter to acquire enough working capital. All I asked was for them to organise a critical public talk which would be articulated with each exhibition we would hold. We moved ahead covering such topical frameworks as Kant, Lacan and political economy. Orhan, İskender and Bülent produced critical readings of the exhibitions we held. For instance, we organised numerous panels criticising Mustafa Özel with regards to pornography, or Nancy with regards to ecology.

We were trying to provide grounds for research, aiming to define the new revolutionary art stance. Of course, in the meantime, the world outside of us was gradually falling under the domination of neoliberalism. We were witnessing the constitution of a new subject, competitive, individualist, deprived of all sense of solidarity, becoming the artists' identity and profile. I, on the other hand, was struggling for us to assume our responsibilities as a professional chamber. I was seeing the state my friends were in: they had no insurance, no social security, were experiencing housing problems or difficulties sustaining a workshop. That is why I bought a 1 ha-wide plot in Büyükçekmece together with four friends from the Atelye Alaturka, which we ventured to transform into an artist's village. The architect Ahmet Beykan drew the architectural project. His plans included small suite bedrooms, a large workshop space, a refectory, laundry, library, movie theatre and conference room. However, a lot of friends shunned this vision. Thereupon, we set the UPSD (*Uluslararası Plastik Sanatlar Derneği* – International Association of Arts) in motion, and tried to resolve the artists' problems. I assumed governance responsibilities in the association, along with Mehmet Gülerüz, for two terms. Later on, drawing on the support of the previous generation, we tried to motivate the members of the *Hafriyat* Group to enroll in the association. We told them they could develop arguments in order to convince the Ministry of Culture of compelling galleries to provision social security subsidies for artists. A motivated young generation had gathered, but after Bedri Baykam won the election, the UPSD ceased to be broadly representative of artists, and was reduced to a faction, under monarchic rule. Our organisation efforts did not go through when the artists prioritised their individualities.

The 90s were characterised by the launch of the (Istanbul) Biennial, the introduction of the language of contemporary art, this language's distantiating from painting, the emergence of Vasif Kortun and the partitions that occurred in terms of media and language. Beral Madra did a joint exhibition with Biles Öcal in Galeri BM and told the latter: "painting is finished, let go of it." I remember how seriously Biles took this comment, despite the fact that all his works had

been sold. I myself felt the need to strongly oppose such determinism in that period. There was a sort of polarisation. As *Karşı Sanat*, we could not manage to define a common language that would bring us together with Vasif Kortun or Halil Altındere. Yet, faithful to *Karşı Sanat*'s plural structure and need for debate, I did an exhibition together with Halil. For instance, I met Burak Delier for the first time during the readings that followed this exhibition. These were important contacts, but the sector's institutionalisation, the definition of their own fields by cultural actors in impervious terms, the marginalisation policies and the preferences made in favour of factionalism in such a way that resembled the pre-80 fragmentation caused for this dialogue to wither. The limited amount of contacts did not lead to much interaction or transformation. Contradiction and the absence of dialogue are still ongoing.

When conceiving the exhibition *Ölüm Eşittir Ölüm* (*Death Equals Death*), we ran into the question of whether the image displayed showed death or not with art critic Mehmet Ergüven. In a similar way, we started to question whether the language of contemporary art represented the truth or not, carried this burden or not. We drew the conclusion that the language of contemporary art had gained dominion over the market by means of the tension induced by this interrogation. Under the pressure of privatisation and the rise of galleries, the Academies had lost their former position as central public institutions. Therefore, we considered that we needed to build an opposing critical language, to develop experience by politically organising the artists, by proceeding from theory. On this basis, I ventured into the preparation of the *Başkasının Acısına Bakmak* (*Regarding the Pain of Others*) exhibitions, as a sort of counter-attack. Our discussions with İskender Savaşır were grounded in these issues. Starting with Susan Sontag, we examined what showing and representing pain signified. As we wondered to what extent contemporary art could shoulder this load, we also questioned whether this language manipulated this quest in a political sense, whether it smothered it up. In my opinion, this discussion remains an indicator of the most crucial issue regarding Turkey's artistic sphere.

The conference which Jale Erzen gave, under the title of "The Figure in Turkish Painting", along with the teachers of the Academy, in the Akbank conference hall in Fındıklı in 1983, and the arrival in Istanbul of such artists as Mehmet Gülerüz and Bedri Baykam and such art managers as Hasan Bülent Kahraman and Vasif Kortun were the first indicators that the wind of change was blowing. The apparition of such reviews as Argos, Gergedan, Boyut, Beyaz and Kalın in the field of artistic publication, the evolution of the Art Festival and festivities into the Biennial, and the impulse which Murat Belge and his circle exerted on politics, drawing it toward richer grounds in line with the concept of non-governmental initiatives... All these developments

paved the way for the articulation of political language with artistic practice. During the 80s, the opening of their own studios by artists, the speed with which the number of galleries increased and the kick-off of sales were all developments imputable to the wide-scale adoption of Özal's economic policy. But in my opinion, the most determining factor of change has been the entry of an outer, global actor, the "biennial" form, in Turkey. This was a piece of a strategic design process that can be linked directly with neoliberal policy. However, the key shift happened when Vasıf Kortun was transferred to the Bilkent University and came to Istanbul along with four artists. In the same way that we created *Karşı*, they too shaped their surroundings "naturally". At times, our paths crossed during the biennial, but a true encounter and talk on democratic ground was never possible. The only time when something close to that happened was during the Istanbul Biennial, in Antrepo No. 5, thanks to the atmosphere created by the Post-Express magazine. Unfortunately, all later discussions were limited to whispers in closed circles.

EK: You have just given us an in-depth account of fifty years of history with breathtaking knowledge. Within the scope of our project, we are trying to examine what sort of impact the traumas brought by state violence or violence from state-driven groups have generated upon art. *Başkasının Acısına Bakmak (Regarding the Pain of Others)*, which you have mentioned, is one of the exhibitions that have tackled this question directly. Of course, beside the representation of the pain of others, we may consider examples of display of one's own pain as well. There are artists who were submitted to torture or imprisoned in the past, or some who witnessed their close friends suffering similar treatment. You have told us of figures idealised as history makers in the 1970s, of the optimistic perspective toward the future, of the hopeful attitude toward the revolution. Still, to what extent can we say that the struggle against the state and the losses, the pain it ensued, are reflected in the art of that period?

FY: Here is what I think: there was a language of victimhood that had been developed in light of the relation to the state prior to the fall of the Wall. These were its axioms: that is the state; it will torture you, kill you. This was an experienced, accepted definition. In this context, the language consisting in showing the state violence was envisioned as the language of truth. There is a similar pattern in art history, as is the case in Grünewald's depiction of the *Crucifixion*, where deformation is appealed to in order to represent pain. The deformed body has always raised more interest than the poetic body. In the collective painting that we made at the Academy, the body of the revolutionary was represented lying horizontally in a similar way to Holbein's *Dead Christ*. While doing the painting, we debated over the reason which drove us to represent the dead; on this occasion, we ques-

tioned whether this represented the torture, the pain we had suffered. Our painting was not directly the representation of torture, it involved a certain amount of crypticness. The language we were using was not appealing to the affectivity of Goya's works. Let us think of the paintings made for the 1 May 1977 massacre or of Hüsnü Koldaş's painting titled *Kızıldere Massacre*. A photograph had been published in the papers at the same time, perhaps you remember; it was a high-angle shot of an ox cart, laden with corpses, hands, arms dangling from the rear. I still keep this picture. That is also what Hüsnü did: a way of saying "I want this massacre to be recorded in history." Even though most paintings made of the May 1 represent corpses reminiscent of those who were killed on the square that day on the foreground, a painting by Seyit Bozdoğan represents a large fist and powerful workers in the background. But if you look at Hüsnü Koldaş's painting, you will notice crooked, crowded figures side by side, holding sticks and flags in their hands. A preference for twisted hands, faces, labour-body prevails, a trait that stems from Neşet Günel's school. Because this deformation was the hereditary reflection, the anatomy of a long-lasting violence. This stance was anchored in the priority given to drawing, the habit of having someone sit across and paint them, of going out on the street. Both Bedri Rahmi and Neşet Günel would take us outside of the Academy. Every year, when spring arrived, we would go out in nature, to Fenerbahçe, or to Karabaş, the gypsy neighbourhood, and paint the people sitting at cafes, in the parks or in front of their houses. Because the conceptual and the imaginary had to be confronted and tested against reality. Among all those who strived to produce painting in the name of the political left, who did not break bonds with the language of painting, one notices a solid habit to value praxis when building a relation with drawing, with the object, following the necessity to approach the object, to identify the truth, rather than placing it at a distance and alienating it.

At a time when it was not possible to view Soviet art, a comprehensive exhibition on Albanian art, accompanied by artists and art commissioners, came to Istanbul. We had the opportunity to ask questions, debate and voice criticism. There was a painting representing a tank standing in the middle of a lush field. Atop the tank, a soldier was standing, wearing the red star emblem. The field was spotted with red poppies, both giving contrast and symbolising those who had died in the struggle. We opposed this symbolism, this romanticism. In 1979, Sabahattin Tuncer and I went to the USSR's consulate. We told them that there were no resources concerning Russian art in the Academy. We had only seen a few, albeit striking paintings belonging to Alexander Deyneka, reproduced on the back cover of the *Revolutions Encyclopedia*. The following day, the consulate presented us with a heap of books and transparent slides. We set up the slide projector in Neşet Günel's workshop,

and started debating. There was nothing that we liked among what we saw, nothing we felt close to. Merely healthy workers, citizens and so on represented from a Zhdanovian perspective. Neither were our Maoist friends interested in the language of Chinese art that was popular, naive, childish and connected with tradition at the time. Kasım Koçak had brought photographs of a sort of sculpture museum; there, people were represented fighting against feudal lords, fished, brought down on their knees; that was what raised their interest. I, on the other hand, was interested in Malevich's early periods and the works of the Italian futurists. The effort to catch movement, continuity, temporality, the state of being, was what captivated me. I was drawn by Mexican art, by independent characters searching for the existential truth like Orozco or Renato Guttuso. I revered such Italian Primitives as Mantegna, Della Francesca, for their different use of the figure. The language being depicted as conventional or mimetic actually proposes a criticism of narration. As a matter of fact, figurative works, reaching beyond narration within the language itself, keeping aloof from storytelling, comprise a subjective distinction that is open to all of art's topics. Let us cast a closer look at Nedret and Hüsnü, because they have become symbols. If we can identify the areas of art history which have nourished them both, this means that we may notice, beyond the commonly accepted, characteristic definition of social realism, their individual differences and their searches in this direction. That is something that I find very exciting. The issue at hand is not how Kasım emphasised the peasant, or Nedret the proletarian. For instance, the latter's portraits feature twisted brushstrokes reminiscent of Pollaiuolo's. Ahmet Umut Deniz' composition and painting technique carry influences from Velázquez' or the Norwegian painter Odd Nerdrum's painting. I also consider that the fear of death that appears in Ahmet's figures is an element that commands more attention. We may also include Neşet Günal, or Avni Memedoğlu, with his plainness reminiscent of Léger's, and Chinese painting's language, which in turn can be viewed as close to signboard aesthetic. However, people prefer to lean on clichés and fail to see this. If these details could be discussed, perhaps we could achieve a discussion over the language, beyond conceptual topics. That is precisely what we were doing when we founded the *Bağımsızlar* (Independents) in the 70s. In that period, since I did not have enough money to photocopy Murat Belge's professoral thesis, which I had obtained from Tarık Günersel, I copied it by hand: I read it, spread it around, came and went to the offices of the *Birikim* journal. This was the right place to discuss the marxist writer Caudwell, as opposed to Zhdanov's social realism. However, the military coup interrupted many things.

The 1968 generation in France was speaking from a position characterised by the prevalence of individual liberty, of desire. This was the time when the references which would nurture

post-marxism were produced. Their political experiences managed to develop an outward-looking –if we think of Vietnam amongst others– language that brought politics directly inside, but they could not reach out to the society in a broader sense. On the other hand, it evolved into the political formation that emerged in Turkey as the 78 generation. At the latter's impulse, resistance committees were created in Fatsa or in the places where massacres were committed against Alevites, and alternatives were sought for, more or less successful, in the direction of a transition to another world order. Celalettin Can was told something when taken into custody: "We won't kill you, we'll keep you inside. When you go out, you'll see that everything has changed, you won't be able to recognise the world around you." That is the very essence of the September 12. Our generation lived such a rich political experience, reached so far that some got frightened. Especially being located immediately in the south of Russia, within the green crescent belt, these developments represented too high a risk for some. That is why we felt the military coup, the neoliberal backlash as hard as Chile did. Because we still have not properly achieved confrontation with this syndrome in terms of mourning, we are still experiencing problems in terms of democracy and law. We are still the subjects of this process, which perhaps is the origin of my personal trauma. The 1980 military coup has left more of an impact on me than the loss of my brother did. We have not fallen short of this confrontation only from the point of view of the relation between art and truth, but also in terms of legal order. In my opinion, what is important regarding the question of showing death or the pain of others is not its expression in a narrative-mimetic language; on the contrary, it consists in bringing it to such a point that we become free of it conceptually speaking, in completing our mourning process, in casting the pain off. As long as this remains unachieved, that which has been gone through will remain inexpressible.

I still remember İrfan Önürmen, who came from the TKP (Turkish Communist Party) tradition, and tried to convey something through the exhibitions he held, as someone who approached things in mimetic terms. He would represent massive gatherings of people; death occurs up front, the perpetrators are shown, so are the close ones of the dead, the reasons behind the situation are explained. I have never seen such an upfront demand for narration among any of my friends engaged in art and involved in politics, neither in the past nor nowadays. Things were always being discussed on the basis of aesthetic questions. But, the fact that we are still discussing and conceptualising within the framework of aesthetic issues seems to me to stem from an incapacity to comprehend reality. A satisfactory confrontation has not been accomplished. I once saw the large works of a contemporary artist in the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. They represented white undercover cops, tucking the bodies

of black people whom they had shot in the trunk of their cars and posing in front of them, holding their rifles in their hands. It was addressing us, plainly stating who the perpetrators were, in the most aesthetic and personal of languages, reminiscent of Goya's. I cannot stand this: in my opinion, when the perpetrator's identity is blatant, acting as though they are invisible in the aesthetic discourse does not result from aesthetic sensitivity. On the contrary, it constitutes a discursive mechanism operating as a manipulation instrument that covers up both the perpetrator and the crime. This is my main point of criticism toward contemporary art. When we deprecate forthrightness, we actually manipulate that of the perpetrator, and of the crime. Perhaps this is a problem that is intrinsic to modernity and aesthetic from the origin. The very thing religion covered with image, the crime it smothered up, the process it encased within the relation to representation, is what aesthetic is covering nowadays. This problematic relation between reality and aesthetic, as Hegel put it, may be surpassed not through imagination and art, but through conceptualisation. The void that exists is not filled by the image nowadays; nor is the necessary strength to mend the relationality between the state, violence and crime, or to produce mourning shown.

Among the works displayed in the exhibition that we held at *Karşı Sanat* about F-type prisons, there was a film about the "Return to Life" operation, which was edited by Cem Arslan. The revolutionary circles we contacted in the Küçükarmutlu neighbourhood presented us with a large collection of documentary material. Images of corpses burnt with chemicals, stoned, obtained from the morgue, added to trial records... A body, black as coal, dismembered, which did not fit inside the coffin prepared for the funeral; they could not close the casket. The veil too slid from atop the casket and the coffin was brought to the funeral that way. The situation was already tense, the police ready to intervene. There were images of that funeral. No one endured the idea for those images to be shown in the gallery. Should we follow in Susan Sontag's footsteps and consider the display of such images as pornographic? In pedagogic terms, what are the effects such images have on a child or adult seeing them? Yet, this line of criticism leaves a subject unaddressed: the church has always shown us what is deemed beautiful, the suffering body of Jesus in an aestheticised, understandable, acceptable way. Think of the Dutch painting tradition: insects concealed in beautiful flowers to represent mortality and evil. The fly was not painted on its own as a representation of evil; it was painted as the fly prowling above the beautiful flowers. The church's emphasis on the eternity of beauty conceals death and violence. As opposed to this, when we are confronted with a picture that shows death plainly, we react, when, in fact, a mechanism that submits us to domination and violence operates freely on the other side, that of the representation that grants divinity to

death and beauty. In today's artistic sphere, in galleries, there is a sort of reified popular language that obscures invisible violence. As it produces debate over violence, over its aesthetic expressibility, this language simultaneously creates another sort of violence. We, on the other hand, continue to tolerate this sort of violence, while being shocked by the other. When I was looking for my brother's forcedly disappeared body, I was met with this reality when I went to the morgue where the forlorn are kept: when you are faced with this many corpses, you go into shock. Forget the question of showing it to anybody, you collapse emotionally when placed in this situation. But if that is a reality, we have to cope with it, to agree to see it. We have to think, to perceive, to discuss, to debate, starting from that point. But art shuns these situations which we encounter in daily life. It is up to speak about beauty, but shies away from talking of the ugly. On the other hand, the people encounter it constantly. When two persons are thrown off of a helicopter, their relatives, who come to collect their corpses or wounded bodies are faced with it. This happens constantly in Diyarbakır. Bearing with the situation that the bodies were put in Roboski was the same thing. When we bring these to the plane of representation, of symbolism, to such a position where this reality becomes acceptable, the problematic that we addressed on the plane of aesthetics loses its very necessity. But then, we start to speak from such a position that we no longer address reality or assume confrontation, where mourning is impaired. Consequently, since mourning is not completed, it becomes permanent.

Ezgi Bakçay: Dear Feyyaz, when we saw the photographs in the exhibition, we all agreed that showing such an image was not political. We know, from Sontag's texts, which we read over and over at the time, that showing this kind of images does not leave room for mourning, does not politicise the subject, that, moreover, by objectifying the subject, it produces a political violence. This prognosis stands somewhere at hand, presumably met with our common agreement. But now, you are opening another path, arguing that, in some social conditions, even a theory that has become a postulate in the context of art must be questioned. You are saying that if Sontag's proposition has been interpreted as saying uniformly that showing pain is altogether wrong, in every context, then this stand of political correctness which postpones confrontation, this aesthetic consensus, must be reexamined.

FY: I feel as though there is a loophole there: showing suffering has already been considered problematic earlier in art history. Remember the paintings where Doubting Thomas stuck his finger in Jesus' wound: these paintings turn wound and pain into discussable topics outside. Jesus' face shows no sign of pain or opposition, his position is that of the subject who understands the situation with holy acceptance. Distancing allows for the experience of suffering to be talk-

ed about, but also comprises the ruling power's smothering gesture; it produces a language that reengineers suffering.

There is a current debate over Hannah Arendt's notion of "the banality of evil". This phrase has reached a level of consumption that has pulled it away from the existential problem Arendt had initially envisioned. Even a bureaucrat from the AKP, who himself threw a kick at a miner on the ground in Soma, dared to use the sentence in a tweet criticising the violence that black people are the victim of in the USA. There is a risk for conceptualisation and depiction to bring the issue being addressed to such a point that it becomes veiled, concealed, rather than clarifying it, transforming it into a sort of judgment of society, of the legal order. The concept of pornography propounded by Sontag has been turned into such a cliché that we have started to cut corners and wrap up any disturbing piece of reality we are confronted with in it, in effect covering it up and calling for it to be apprehended from a distance. However, in the world we live in, this social violence has become so recurrent that what Sontag was warning us against has become what we are continuously presented with by the media. Under these circumstances, how will we address this situation in terms of seeing, looking, conceptualising and depicting? While journalists and documentary makers state that they will not show it, how will we bring what we feel, with our affectivity, as being in our subconscious, to the level of mourning?

EB: Perhaps the images displayed by the exhibitions in *Karşı Sanat* are not what must be examined. At a time when social media had not acquired the functionality they have nowadays, how were the events presented by the television; who was handing you these images? Maybe you can elaborate a bit on the relations between the flow of information and justice at that time.

FY: Yes, I agree with you: it is necessary to take all the chains of relations encompassing the acts of seeing-looking into consideration, to look at the issue of conceptual framing. Then again, this means the continuation of the policies of governance, in a Foucauldian sense. What I mean is that there is a risk that the construction of the individual fall in the trap laid by politics on a daily basis. There is a work that made a lasting impression on me among those that were exhibited in Arter's previous venue, in the scope of the Design Biennial a few years ago. It conveyed advice in the event of an earthquake. A brochure containing military strategies that were used by the US army in Vietnam was displayed as a guide. It comprised such tactics as: in order not to be seen, do not walk against the skyline, but in the shadows instead; advance like this in such terrain, you may find water in such places. It articulated guerilla warfare logic with earthquake survival techniques. When we try to read the discourse used, together with its context, the issue of how these are associated, and the Bi-

ennial's theoretic input, we run across the framing issue that you've mentioned. Establishing the framework for the apprehension of a topic, means placing this topic in a specific configuration within the scope of reach of power relations from the very start. When we start doing this in ourselves with the obstacles of political reflexes, we break away from our social tradition. For instance, during funerals in my hometown, they bring the dead to the house and show you their face. That would upset me to the highest degree. When they brought in the body of my father, who had had a car accident, I had a shock. They tell you to look at it, that if you do not look, if you do not acknowledge a person's death, you will not be able to come over their loss. This has eventually evolved into a traditional mourning mechanism, designed to procure psychological relief. Like the mask element that Zeynep Sayın mentioned. That is what I said when I had to make a speech about my brother: I am not looking for my brother's bones; I do not view his situation as his body being stuck in limbo, I do not think that I will be able to complete the mourning process, that I will feel relief when I find and bury him. My main concern is how the impossibility of mourning has become constant in collective terms in this geography. It is not only my brother who has died. Everyday my brothers and sisters, my friends, people I love, die, are being killed. We lose Hrant. But associating the display of Hrant's dead body, that hole in his shoe which we see in the picture, with pornography, or a little further ahead, with the corpse of this emigrant child who washed up on the shore, come under the act of framing. Yet, as a reality, Hrant's loss had to be seen, lying on the ground. There is a painting by Käthe Kollwitz, which shows Karl Liebknecht's corpse lying horizontally, surrounded by people mourning. I do not mean an anthropology of death related to Christianity of course, but if we speak from within the tradition of mourning and bereavement, I believe that the relation to death and the dead must be discussed beyond Sontag's arguments.

Turgut Tarhanlı: In the same book, Susan Sontag also states the following: the capacity of modern people, existing as consumers of violence, to watch that violence or pain, to stand beside it, also comprises a protective, shielding dimension over the self or the latter's entourage. Therefore, if this seems to be placing the act of looking in the foreground, it is actually setting up a fence. This may undermine the capacity to faithfully identify the truth. This is a situation that we clearly observe in journalism. A video about an old ballet dancer affected with Alzheimer's disease has been circulating recently on social media. It shows her performing some choreographic movements either involuntarily or instinctively. Pieces of archive material from her youth as a successful dancer appear intermittently. Medicine says that the body continues to carry physical movements, gestures learned long ago, even at an advanced age; that it can reproduce them, without necessarily doing it wilfully, as reflexes. Therefore, the viewer starts

questioning such an aestheticised presentation. One starts wondering whether one is overstepping. Personal will and the question of autonomy are an important criteria in that sense. Years ago, the Habertürk newspaper has placed a report about the murder of a woman in the front page, you must remember. This woman had been killed by her former partner or spouse, while in the bathroom, with a long knife. The photograph in the newspaper showed the moment when she was taken away from the crime scene, a blanket placed on her body, although not well enough to hide the blade sticking out from her back. That crude reality was not blurred in any way; the woman's eyes were half open. Habertürk's editor-in-chief Fatih Altaylı defended the use of this image in the following way: "What we wanted to do was precisely to expose this violence; what you should be upset with is that reality." The event could have been covered with another news reporting language of course, whereas Habertürk's choice led to a pornographic image. It is easier to look at certain things, like women's bodies for instance. What is exposed may be the sharing of victimhood, but often times a unilateral, asymmetric relation is established.

EK: What position can the exhibition about the 6-7 September events occupy within this discussion? One could sense that these photographs were shot from a bureaucratic perspective, albeit almost imperceptibly unable to remain indifferent to the gravity of what had happened. Eventually, when these photographs surfaced years after they were taken, they still managed to have an impact on the collective perception of these traumatic events in my opinion.

FY: With this exhibition, the question of framing was again on the agenda. The 6-7 September 1955 events were not discussed enough; proper mourning was not performed; they have not been closed off in terms of conscience, and that is still the case. With this exhibition, held on their 50th anniversary, the events gained public visibility. The perpetrator was already known at the time, but the fact that this knowledge did not translate into a legal punishment meant that the mourning process was never completed. Therefore, all that the exhibition could do was to stress this incompleteness. There was another manipulation involved there. This exhibition had a triggering effect on the efforts to join the European Union and to soften the implacability of the state violence. There was a political will in its background. Therefore, we were trying to discuss historic violence, but there was another framework, which should not have been forgotten, in the rear. From an artistic standpoint, yes: it raised the question of how a collective suffering whose perpetrator was obvious remained invisible. Every year, during the commemorations that are being held, for instance by Açık Radyo, we listen to the witnesses and, once again, we observe the same thing: the fact that confrontation with the truth still has not occurred. If the exhibition is reduced to some sort of doc-

umentation, in my opinion, it is being covered up once more. Just as Walter Benjamin's thesis on history, because it speaks of something that lives and goes on. But if we manage to turn it into something that calls on the past and the suffering that has occurred and achieves confrontation, while aiming at tomorrow's democracy, then we attain actual significance. Here is what I can add about the documentary dimension: remember the realistic American photographer Jacob Riis. His effort to photograph poor families, despite all the technical difficulties involved at the dawn of the history of photography, stemmed from a need for truth. But on the other hand, his photographs were turned into electoral campaign material by Roosevelt later. Every effort to call back, to bring to the present, carries such a risk. We ran across that problem when working on the project of conversion of the Diyarbakır Prison No. 5, where we met with Turgut Tarhanlı, into a museum. An interviewee from Mardin got angry at me and asked me why I was asking him about this now. He went on telling me he had been imprisoned there, came face to face with death, yet tried to take notes while inside, eventually came out and lived a number of other experiences. He then asked me where I had been all that time. I carry this highly confrontational, heavy reversed question in my memory as an unforgettable experience.

Can the pain caused by what unfolded during the 6-7 September events be shown outside, at least on a verbal level? There are some parts of these events that are particularly hard to talk about. That being said, how do we, how will we continue to stand their weight? What we are doing is limited to flying by. We have been involved with the testimonies regarding the No. 5 prison, but similar events are occurring everyday, everywhere. What I am uncomfortable with is how this is being displayed. You know it very well: the Brechtian alienation technique allows one to bring something to such a dimension that it becomes speakable, even if one resorts to the act of showing. But in my opinion, this is much worse: for example, when discussing the Kurdish problem, to me, it is wrong and manipulative to put rows and rows of yellow coffins in Keçiurcu. This amounts to the formation of another framework, the production of yet another way of covering up the state violence. We stand facing an aesthetic void. How will we fill it, express it? How will I represent what I heard about the No. 5 prison? It is very difficult to express. Is it inexpressible? As I view it, it is expressible, or rather, it must be expressed. It must be made speakable, understandable. Or else we will not be able to bring it to justice. Because it is a negative void. Exactly in the same way as the Taksim Square stands nowadays. Some are defining it as the void square. No, this square is everything but void. What is present there is the negative presence of the society. Because they know this, they are occupying the place with TOMAs (riot control vehicles) to prevent this negative presence from becoming visible. Right now, there is also a void and truth not being shown,

represented as a void. Think of how the Saturday Mothers are prevented from gathering.

TT: Regarding the Taksim Square, there is a multi-layered burden at stake. As is now well-known, the whole area that extends to the Hilton was an Armenian cemetery.

FY: The more one excavates, the more it surfaces. Perhaps artworks carry such a responsibility. Opening up history and image layer after layer by means of readings facing backwards in the past. Right now, we should not be impaired by such clichés as "this should not be shown this way but rather that way". On the other hand, while works covering up reality are being produced, reality manages to overcome this: they throw two persons off of a helicopter. Is there a photograph of it? No. Someone pops out and says that they only fell from one meter, broke their foot, hit their head. How long will we continue to stand this as the language that fills the truth? We simply cannot stand it any longer. In spite of our knowledge, we make it invisible, unspeakable. What is happening is the transfer of the framing tactics by the dominant discourse to the other side. Exactly like Franz Fanon put it in *Black Skin, White Masks*. In such a situation, we authorise this framing to operate within ourselves. We place masks and accept the process of convincing, just as explained by Hegel's master-slave dialectic. When formulating this, Hegel had the knowledge of the revolution that had occurred in Haiti, but also possessed stock obligations linked to investments there, as Susan Sontag has underscored. The reality that is not being discussed continues to operate on the level of market relations, of daily behaviours, that we are the actors of. But as soon as visibility and a reality with a known perpetrator is revealed, it is immediately covered up. I cannot accept the argument stating that art cannot show it. It can be shown somehow: Brecht tried it, there are other examples throughout art history, which only need to be talked about in order to open, layer after layer.



Gülsün Karamustafa, *Sahne (The Stage)*
1998, Installation

Gülsün Karamustafa: The Memory of Transience

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Erden Kosova: Mrs. Karamustafa, in the framework of this project, we are trying to examine the contact points of art and memory. The question of how collective memory was –and is– shaped in the specific context of Turkey was our main focus. Your long-running artistic practice is as explanatory as it was decisive in shaping the evolution of artistic dynamics and the way memory was approached as a subject in many regards. Whenever the term of memory is being pronounced, one of the very first works that comes to my mind is your work titled *Sahne (The Stage, 1998)*. It is based on a photograph from your personal archive, taken in the aftermath of the March 12 military memorandum. I would like to start off by asking you about the story of that image. What significance did it carry for you, why did it wait for so long, and at what point did you decide that it was time for others to see it?

Gülsün Karamustafa: It was a photograph from a trial, taken by a journalist friend of ours who happened to be at the hearing, and published, if I am not mistaken, by the *Hürriyet* newspaper to illustrate not only us but the hundreds of people convicted at the time. Being found guilty by that court and imprisoned as a consequence, we did not have the chance to follow up on the matter, and did not know whether it was published or not; perhaps this can be verified. Years after the trial, when our friend gave us the original of that photograph, we kept it aside.

EK: After all, this image, confidential to a high extent, represents two young persons placed in a moment in time which they may not wish to remember. Actually, I would like to link this question with your overall artistic creation in the seventies. Our acquaintance goes a long way and I have closely followed a great number of exhibitions you have been included in or the subject of over the years, yet, I remember finding the opportunity to discover your works dating from that period only recently: in the exhibition held at the TÜYAP fair where you received the honour award in 2016,

and, the same year, in the comprehensive retrospective exhibition held at Berlin's Hamburger Bahnhof. When I saw these early works of yours, I remember feeling as though the missing pieces of the puzzle had been found. I am guessing that you needed time, as well as a certain level of psychological readiness, before these paintings could be shown again.

GK: Why did they surface only at that point? Why did they not find their way at the time? To start with, what I can say is that we were caught in so many things at the time. Actually, I managed to find the time to have a deeper look at and duly display the works that I had produced at the time, thanks to my solo exhibition at the Taksim Sanat gallery in 1978. Some of my works addressed and interpreted my experience of prison in this exhibition. In the following years, it is true that some of these works were forgotten to a certain extent. For a long time, I did not think of putting my prison paintings and signboards on display. That is how numerous materials, such as the photograph in *Sahne (The Stage)*, ended up classified in folders for a long while. I have this tendency not to look backwards. I am more prone to thinking about what is ahead of me, how I may catch up on it; what my surroundings are made of, what effect they leave on me; how I can exist, communicate, within this context. I am more interested in what is happening today. That explains why those images of the past did not find their way at the time and had to wait until the retrospective exhibition held at SALT in 2013. These prison images reappeared in a folder during the preparation phase of the exhibition. But there is something else: we did not value things as much back then. The kinds of concerns that we have now, like making art, how can I display my artistic production, with which resources, how can I turn it into something valuable, did not exist in our minds at the time. We were involved in an action, "what is the use?" was the question we would ask ourselves. Much time has passed since these experiences, but then again, life has taken its toll over us in the meantime. Frankly speaking, we did not have much time to look back. We had to live, to stay alive. I was making illustration work for magazines to earn a living. I remember drawing kissing couples and illustrating stories for the Resimli Roman magazine simply to earn money.

EK: You must have been married with Mr. Karamustafa when the photograph in *Sahne (The Stage)* was shot.

GK: Yes, I met Sadık during our senior year, because we were both involved in the revolutionary struggle. We spent most of our time together during the boycotts against the school. The boycott would be voted in favour of but when the time came to enforce it, only a handful of people would be around. We were really a small group who were involved in the boycott then. I remember Bülent Erkmen and a few architect friends. Prior to the March 12, we had boycot-

ted the school quite daringly for a whole month. Maintaining the boycott meant a huge responsibility. The library, the rector's office, every inch of the school would fall under your responsibility. We were brought to court once because of the occupation, but were acquitted. My father, writer-journalist Hikmet Münir Ebcioğlu, was quite popular for the radio programmes he had done in the 1950s. After opposing my will to enter the Academy for some time, he eventually agreed under the condition that I get a job on the side, arranging a technical job for me at the Istanbul Radio. After a while, I passed the producer-speaker exam and continued working there throughout my school years. That is how I got a six-months-long scholarship from the BBC Turkish Service in London. I was still in my twenties, imagine. How lively, boisterous we were. Sadık and I said we would only go if together and got married. We lived this six-month period in London in 1969 very intensely. On the one hand, there were the opposition to the Vietnam War, tremendous liveliness on the part of the political left, strikes, big union marches all the time, the effects of the upheaval of Paris still very much palpable. On the other hand, the songs of The Beatles, fashion designer Mary Quant and mini skirts, the feminists organising big demonstrations for the first time, Sadık doing signboards for them. Then again, because of the postal service's strike in Turkey, we could not communicate with the country. It is very hard to describe this impossibility to communicate to the current generations. When we left, the left was on the rise, but, because of the tension that arose, we heard that the movement had had to go underground. When we came back to Turkey, they brought a friend to our house, because nobody knew us anymore. When that friend was arrested later, he gave away our address. The police came, and transformed our place into a headquarter, in order to arrest others who would come. Then started the trial process.

EK: Had you already graduated then?

GK: I graduated in February 1969. According to our plans, Sadık would too as soon as we came back from London. We lived by the day. In the mindframe that we were in, we did not think too much over either tomorrow or the past. We felt in possession of that strange strength of the 1968 generation, that belief that we would change the world.

EK: The discrepancy between the projection in the future embraced by this generation and the state's ideology would soon grow in the aftermath of the March 12 military memorandum. A wave of violence unfolded, targetting the intellectuals and students directly, together with the psychological and political consequences that it brought. Together with Sadık Karamustafa, you were among those targetted by this wave of violence at the time, and met with a broader community during your experience in jail. How did you live this period?

GK: First, I must say that I was familiar with

this relation to the state beforehand. There had been an intense demand for scholarships to study abroad in 1969. As far as I remember, because of the political tension, almost all these applications were rejected. The students who had applied went to court and reclaimed what they were entitled to. The political fever brought about questionings as to the relation with the state. I for once found myself amid one of the most intense ways to experience it, as I have told you, when I was involved in the boycott committee. There are two other personal reasons that explain why my relation to the state is not peaceful. My uncle Mihri Belli spent 11 years of his life in jail for being part of the communist movement. My aunt Sevim Belli swung from one trial to the next for the same reason. After the May 27 military coup, my father too, who was a radio station director, fell under the radar, though to a different degree. The military's manoeuvres in 1960 involved dismissing the heads of institutions and sending them to Yassiada on flimsy grounds. When one bears witness to all these in one's childhood, deep traces are left, and it becomes hard to view the state as something fine. When I was imprisoned, I only thought that I was becoming a hooping in an ongoing chain. I remember how we had moved to Sultanahmet in the 1950s to live closer to the prison where my uncle was detained. Every week, my grandmother would bring food for the whole ward, tend to their needs. After all, the jail's entry gate was something I was already familiar with.

EK: I believe that Mr. Karamustafa stayed longer than you did, and came out in 1973, am I right? Did your relations with the Academy continue after that period?

GK: Yes, Sadik stayed for 2,5 years. He went out in 1973. While Ecevit's amnesty was still in its drafting phase, they began to gradually release political prisoners. All our connections with the Academy, the radio and everything ceased when we were arrested upon our return from London. In 1975, I passed the exam for the assistant post at the School of Applied Fine Arts, and worked there for six years. In the wake of the September 12 military coup, after I finished writing my thesis in 1981 and became a lecturer having completed my period as an assistant, I did not feel comfortable within the institution and tendered my resignation, renouncing my salary and pension. Since we are talking about memory, there is something I should touch upon: when I got the post at the School of Applied Fine Arts, all my close friends from the Academy accused me of treason unanimously. Such a reaction, at a time when I needed a regular salary, wounded me deeply. Amid this male-dominated milieu at the Academy, there was no perspective of progression, of becoming a professor for me, whereas on the other side, I passed the test under my own steam.

EK: Did you pursue political activism during the time you worked at the School of Applied Fine Arts? Or on the contrary did you take a step

back because of your position?

GK: No, there was no stepping back, it went uninterrupted. We continued to support all the publishing groups and initiatives we could with our efforts in both an intellectual and manual sense, in accordance with our beliefs. We did signboards for the May 1 demonstrations, worked with the unions: DİSK, BANK-SEN. We formed a group together with our friends Orhan Taylan, Tan Oral and many more; we tried to help as much as we could, by means of our drawings, paintings, graphic designs for publications. Until Sadik was included in the list of suspects in the trial against the *Barış Derneği* (Peace Association) after the September 12 military coup. Eventually he was acquitted, but the police had raided the little 20 m² workshop we rented in Cağaloğlu for that work. The room was adjacent to the offices of the *Birikim* journal. I produced such works as *Kıymatlı Gelin* (*Precious Bride*, 1975), *Star Wars* (1981) and *Balkon* (*The Balcony*, 1982), which have become quite famous now, on the little table in that small room, amid all kinds of difficulties. In order to earn some money, we had printed some of my paintings, and some of Sadik's signboards on postcards. We went bankrupt of course; it is impossible to earn proper money with this kind of things. Of course, there was also a harsh, 18-month long period when Sadik had to complete his military service after he came out of prison. I stayed all alone in Istanbul at that time with a newborn baby in my arms. Overall, until the end of the eighties, our life was always rocky, vagrant. We would designate this situation as "transience". This designation actually bears a wonderful signification; we often make reference to it in between us; perhaps it is the summary of our life. However, this state of vagrancy, of not being able to settle, is something that deeply hurt me. We could only find a steady rhythm during the nineties. Sadik Karamustafa started giving lessons at the school; and I could find more time to concentrate on exhibitions. After the 16 and 18 years-long confiscation of our passports ended, we started making contacts abroad.

EK: Even though it means going backwards chronologically, I would like to ask you: toward the end of the seventies, important fragmentations and visible tensions surfaced within the socialist movement. Did these cleavages have an impact on aesthetic discussions?

GK: Nowadays, Sadik is working on a book that addresses those old times. While fragmentations were occurring amid all these revolutionary groups which defined themselves in the sharpest fashion, we always stayed clear of these distinctions. Even so, I dare to think that we left an imprint on all those people, whose struggle we took a part in, and contributed to with all our heart. We produced works, animated by the sole thought of what would be beneficial for the action. We always remember how some revolutionary friends would show disdain against us, designating us as: "petty bourgeois democratic elements." According to this standpoint,

people like us, sincerely adopting democratic principles, may at best contribute to the struggle in a meaningful manner. But then again, it so happened that at some point in time, the main committee withdrew, and we "democratic elements" were left alone in the field. Perhaps there is a narcissist dimension to this, but I believe that I isolated myself from these discussions and moved on in the direction I deemed right, pursuing the things I wanted to go after.

Turgut Tarhanlı: The March 12 military memorandum was actually, to a great extent, a huge sledgehammer operation directed against Turkey's leftist intellectuals and youth circles, as has now become common knowledge from Nihat Erim's own expression. As for the September 12 military coup, it translated into a broad-scale intervention, aiming to redesign Turkey's political spectrum by binding it altogether in a sense. As an artist, when you compare both, how did you experience the September 12 military coup, what sort of "transience" were you in then? Shortly after the September 12, there was a burst of pluralism in Turkey, resembling a rainbow. Feminist formations, the Green Party, the first steps in the founding of LGBT formations, the much followed meetings organised by Mustafa Kemal Ağaoğlu in the Bilsak Cultural Centre, the *Yeni Gündem* journal issued by the circles around the İletişim Yayınları publishing house: these were as many initiatives that paved the way for the formation of a common language, aiming at the foundation of a more plural Turkey, where the concept of "civil society" would outreach the left alone and include other circles... To what extent do you think this dynamism translated in art?

GK: You have perfectly summed up that period, Mr. Tarhanlı; I too have things to say about it. That ongoing evolution has developed in time by affecting us all deeply of course. Perhaps I should remind that the time of my resignation coincided with that of the emergence of YÖK (Council of Higher Education). The debates and joyful gatherings we had with my friends from the TÜM-AS (Association of All Assistants), which I was representing at the School of Applied Fine Arts, were extraordinarily beautiful, and led us to friendships that live on today. Throughout this dynamic process which you just summarised, we had numerous opportunities to discuss all the questions that were being raised then: that of the transition from basic to complex feminism, the emergence of the issue of gender on the agenda, the new reviews... we tried to contribute to this liveliness through the production of visual materials as well as articles. Later, I should say that I went through a period of depression, which I mostly spent alone: those were the years when I did my artworks on arabesque, and concentrated on the question of the *kitsch*. I would go to Orhan Gencebay's home, make an interview with him and use a poster I saw hanging on one of the walls in his house. I also started working as an art director in the film industry, was collecting items from

houses... I have also encountered refusal, some disdainfully designating me as an "arabesque painter". People asked me what I was up to, what these rags were. Whether that was art, painting. For example, at the time of the *Öncü Türk Sanatından Bir Kesit* (A Cross Section of Avantgarde Turkish Art) exhibitions, a number of persons dissociated themselves from us, thus cleansing themselves as they put it. That is why I never considered myself as part of a group or fraction; and that is still the case.

EK: I would like to go back to Mr. Tarhanlı's question. In parallel with the industrialisation process, the socialist movement apprehended the worker and peasant figures as transformative subjects quite naturally during the seventies. Later on, together with the transitioning of massive numbers of people from the countryside to urban peripheries, a broader number of profiles came in contact, with all their cultural differences, resulting in hybridisation in a cultural sense. The works through which you approached the arabesque phenomenon also examine this dynamic plane. How do you think this interest surfaced? Did your work experiences in the field of cinema have an impact in that sense?

GK: It is a matter of change in the values... This is something I have witnessed countless times over the years in my life. The transition from the countryside to the city brings about changes in perception as well. Multi-layered, intertwined feelings, starting with hatred and rejection, and evolving into interest and sympathy... I started to think about this question of the change of values in the beginning of the eighties. Before I got married, I had never seen the Black Sea Region. Sadık being from Ünye, when we became close with his family, I noticed a number of subtle differences that I was not aware of earlier. I also noticed that these differences were not rooted in tradition. I remember noticing that the tendency toward liberalisation, which we would later collectively embrace as a result of Özal's policies, had already started to be noticeable in the villages and little towns as soon as the seventies. Among my well-known works which I have already mentioned, there is also a work titled *Kapıcı Dairesi* (*Concierge's Flat*, 1976) for example. I would observe concierge flats at the time and notice that something different was occurring there; there was such a cultural discrepancy, a collision between these flats and the upper floors. I started observing more and more, to try and understand that phenomenon; I could not stay indifferent. I started transcribing all this in drawing, in painting.

As I touched upon earlier, in the exhibition that was held in 1978 at the Taksim Art Gallery, I tried to focus on the vibrant changes that were happening, rather than on the political atmosphere which had had a negative impact on my personal life. Together with the acceleration of internal migration during the eighties, these changes too hastened. As far as I heard from my painter and academician friends, I remember that this was being actively discussed

back then. "These changes are taking some things away from us, taking us to the worst; see how they have opened the door for this musical genre in our TRT, they have changed our values", they would say. I, on the other hand, tried to tell the people around me to think twice and realise that something was going on, worth not missing out on, worth taking into account. Starting off from that angle, I then strived to show what was unseen by looking closer at, processing and adding little details. By the mid-eighties, the concept of *kitsch* had taken a concrete shape in my mind, because there was an unbelievable wealth of cross/hybrid material to work with. Of course, cinema has had an impact as well, as you said. My experience of cinema started in 1984 and went on with high intensity for six years. *Bir Yudum Sevgi* (*A Sip of Love*, 1984), the film on which I worked together with Atif Yılmaz during that period, gave me a decisive experience with regards to cultural encounters. But I must stress once again that the criticism and reactions I was met with at the time have really hurt me. I strongly believe that these changes should be looked at, but that unfortunately very few artists have addressed that subject. Mr. Tarhanlı has spoken of Bilsak. This was truly a wondrous place, thanks to the complex network of acquaintances around Mustafa Kemal. At the time, I could not find a place to exhibit the first installations that I had produced, making use of wall tapestries and *kitsch* objects. There were only a limited number of galleries then and they were not interested in my work. Eventually, I appealed to Mustafa Kemal, and ended up renting the apartment he used to use for teaching in the Bilsak building. However, it was a totally empty, pitch dark place. Still, I took upon myself to install the tapestries, and solved the lighting problem by bringing lamps from home. Eventually, without having to report to anyone for a month, I exhibited the works that I had accumulated in that period. The exhibition was met with much interest. Somehow related to that exhibition, I also had my first international solo exhibition that year, in 1988, in Grenoble, France. It was a tough period when I had to do everything on my own; all I managed to have, I had to fight for.

EK: Could we open the subject of feminism again, from where Mr. Tarhanlı left it? I believe we can say that women are granted a lot of visibility, and gender related themes are present, not only in your works dating from the eighties, but later on as well. I also believe that these subjects received much interest in the fields of social sciences and art at the time.

GK: In order to answer that question, I must go further back in time. Back in 1970, I think, I became a member of the *Devrimci Kadınlar Derneği* (DKD - Revolutionary Women's Association) founded by Suat Derviş. By the end of that period I had met with Mrs. Derviş herself, along with many other women. We, as students, would voluntarily contribute and listen to the discussions regarding feminism. At the time, the

women issue was being apprehended entirely in conjunction with the question of the revolution. Later, in 1975, the *İlerici Kadınlar Derneği* (İKD - Progressive Women's Association) was founded. I did not become an active member there; perhaps because I had started to work as a lecturer, I cannot recall for sure. But I would do my best to help them in any way I could, with the journals and brochures they issued. If their archives are kept somewhere, they will prove me right: we worked together continuously. After 1980, there was the Open University, and the works I did there. What I mean is that my interest in feminism goes far back. During the nineties, I started to participate in international exhibitions intensively, perhaps as a result of the bitterness I had felt at being locked down in the country for so long, and turned into a nomadic artist. This transition allowed me to distance myself from the discussions that occurred in the art field in Turkey, and to grasp a broader understanding of feminism beyond national borders.

EK: I would like us to talk about a series of works where you addressed the question of memory. I am talking about those works where you made use of manifestations of the founding ideology of the Turkish Republic, such as excerpts from the La Turquie Kemaliste reviews, statues dating from that foundational period, or notebooks from your primary school years... I should also add to this list your work titled *Meydanın Belleği* (*Memory of a Square*, 2005), which I know Mr. Tarhanlı has shown close interest in, and addresses issues related to Turkey's more recent past. How did these works, which involve a retrospective look, take shape?

GK: I guess that these works are the offshoots of a mind that strives to find its way while bouncing here and there, always thinking of two or three phenomena at a time. While I was involved in the creative process that shaped on such colourful contents as the *kitsch*, migration and shuttle trade; a corner of my mind was always full with the black and white images, the heap of recollections summoned by the question of memory. I may say that I am still busy with these. I guess something will come out of it in the near future as it seems that I have endless material to work with. I feel an urge to produce something before long. I fear that if what I know does not come out by going through a transformation, nobody will ever show the proper care. But this is a challenge. I am trying to remember how I became hooked to the question of memory. I believe that Vasif Kortun's exhibition titled *Anı/Bellek* (*Memory/Recollection*) in 1991 gave me a sort of a key. Memory had become one of the most discussed notions in the theoretic field at the time, as appeared in the broad literature that arose, encompassing Baudrillard in the field of contemporary art, or the likes of Jameson in that of post-colonialism. I felt a will to connect the questions and answers that arose in my mind thanks to these realisations with the debates I had born witness to. I had done a small work for the *Anı/Bellek* exhibition: three small children's

coats, containing objects I had concealed inside the lining. It was not possible to identify what the objects were. The thought for that work had stemmed from a story that my grandmother would tell, more precisely, from the fear that prompted the family members who emigrated from Crimea to Bulgaria, and from there to Istanbul, to hide their precious belongings in the coat lining of children in order to escape controls when crossing the borders. Afterwards, I continued to work on the question of memory. I started to carry out research and reflect on my childhood, my grandmother's childhood, my father, the phases society went through, the period of the foundation of the Republic. My film titled *Muhacir (The Settler, 2003)*, my installation titled *Abide ve Çocuk (The Monument and the Child, 2010)*, where I addressed the question of a childhood spent in Ankara under the gaze of colossal statues, as well as my film titled *Meydanın Belleği (Memory of a Square)*, which brings together different periods of history, are all works that sprouted from that furrow. The main difficulty I encounter of course is to emerge from that wealth of material I identify, to filter it, and concentrate it in order to produce an artwork. I believe that I have obtained satisfying results in my endeavours in that sense. The works and exhibitions that I have produced in that direction are still in circulation, commented on. Whatever the social context in which the exhibitions are presented, they allow for elements, for stories waiting to be told, to surface by association in the viewers' minds. Of course, the topics that I address continue to evolve, adding new layers of meaning. 15 years have passed since I produced the work titled *Meydanın Belleği (Memory of a Square)*, and what the Taksim Square looks like nowadays is dramatically different from that which it resembled when the film was shot. Right now, I am working on family albums. Previously, I had already used some of them after I did a pre-selection, but now I want to delve into that universe completely. Obviously, I have no idea as to what will come out of it. That uncertainty is even a bit frightening.

Hale Tenger: Like the Backs of Foggy Windows

Erden Kosova: Hale, I would like to centre our discussion on the way the concept of memory operates in the framework of your artworks. But first, I think that starting with an autobiographical introduction will help to set the general framework of our conversation, and serve as a reminder for readers. I would like to start by discussing your formative years. I remember that you received an education in an entirely different field before moving to an artistic curriculum.

Hale Tenger: Yes, although, my initial wish was to study art. The two-hour long art class was my favourite lesson throughout secondary school in Izmir. Our dear professor Aysel Çırpanlı still lives in Izmir. We would work with a number of materials, with different techniques. I also loved the art history lesson. These were the two courses that I received my highest grades in. However, no one I was close to pushed me in this direction. The norm around me was to attend a private teaching institution after highschool in order to prepare for the university entry exam, but I insisted that I would not go. I had two other friends who did not go, but that was because they were applying for foreign universities. While I wanted to forge my own path, I did not really know how to prepare for an art curriculum. A friend of mine, who attended the Applied Fine Arts University, taught me perspective drawing during ten days, but that was all. Of course, I was not successful in the Academy exams I took in 1979. Instead, I entered computer programming, one of the two-year associate degree programmes in software engineering from Boğaziçi University, which was my first choice in the general exam. During my freshman year, I took a part-time job in programming. Thanks to this experience, I understood that I was not fit to sit in front of a computer all day long at all. I was struggling in the statistics and mathematics lessons at Boğaziçi University too. By the middle of my freshman year, I wanted to drop out already. I wanted to study art in the first place, but my family was telling me to hang on, that it was only a two-year programme, that once I graduated, I could do what I wanted, that they would support me. My father even told me that what I was learning would be like a gold bracelet in life, but the programmes I learned to use, such as Fortran or Cobol, became

obsolete only a short while after I graduated. As far as formation is concerned, Boğaziçi was a lot more beneficial to me in terms of the friends I made there, the intellectual community I was introduced to, rather than from a strictly educational point of view. Since I had attended Izmir's American College Institute in high school, I was familiar with school clubs already. There was a structural resemblance with Boğaziçi. I joined the ceramics club. I would also drop by occasionally to the photography club and I had friends in the theatre and music clubs. They had founded a music band called Mozaik: It was composed of Ayşe Tütüncü, Mehmet Taygun, Bülent Somay, Serdar Ateşer, Timuçin Gürer and Ümit Kıvanç. It was in those years that I met with Serdar, whom I collaborated with on several of my projects since the 90s.

EK: Then you prepared again in order to enter the Academy.

HT: During the summer that followed my graduation from Boğaziçi, I followed the one-month preparatory class given at the Association of the Painting and Sculpture Museum. Afterwards, I heard that the standard preparation lasted at least one year, possibly even two. At the time, there was a different exam for each section; I wanted to join the sculpture section but was unsuccessful. However, I just made it to the waiting list, which was enough to join the five-year degree, including the masters in ceramics. The years that followed the September 12 military coup were marked by a general climate of repression. Some teachers were sacked for not shaving their beards. I had hoped to join a more relaxed atmosphere when entering the Academy, but this was not the case. I was surprised by the level of brutality and conservatism that I encountered there; everything seemed limited by government duty. Some of our professors tried to open our minds but overall, a bureaucratic understanding prevailed. The Fundamentals of Art lessons that were given to the students of all disciplines at once happened in some sort of huge hangar, where it was impossible to take care of students individually. Social activities were close to nonexistent, cross-department visits were not viewed favourably. Perhaps I was also shy by nature, but in any case, I spent those five years turning mostly in on myself, trying to be as happy as I could working with clay. I thought that if I took so much pleasure from what I was doing, even in such an unpleasant environment, it meant that I should go on in that direction; it even made me sure of it.

EK: Your transition from Boğaziçi University to the Academy coincided with a critical period in political terms indeed. Do you think it is possible for you to draw a comparison between both schools in terms of political connections?

HT: The centre of attention for leftist high school students involved in politics at the time was ODTÜ (the Middle East Technical University). Compared to ODTÜ, Boğaziçi was

underestimated. Nevertheless, all existing factions were active in Boğaziçi. I was close to the left intellectually, but I was distant from political groups. I was especially shocked and at odds with their prescriptive views on what women should wear and how women should look. I was neither ready to make concessions on how I dressed, nor willing to wear parkas or ethnic dresses or to quit wearing makeup. However, the Academy was the one place where all these issues were not being discussed, where people acted as though they did not exist. After Boğaziçi, the hierarchy-driven, brute approach to education that reigned at the Academy really shocked me; moreover, seeing the academic staff's unwillingness to listen to the students' voice, and the cultural drought that prevailed within the university was a huge disappointment.

EK: Were there other students who criticised the education system, who aspired for other aesthetic horizons within the Academy?

HT: In our department, there were interesting students like Sarkis Paçacı or Latif Demirci who were mostly interested in caricature. But the academic staff was considerably conservative: when someone tried to go beyond the classic use of clay, they would cause problems. I will never forget: Sarkis' graduation project was extraordinary and insane of course; but it was rejected, and he graduated together with us after losing a year. One of our professors even asked me once whether I thought I was actually doing sculpture. Being met with this kind of attitude, the most common mindset was to complete school as soon as possible, and to wait to try out new things later. I sensed a feeling of weariness on the part of our professors, as well as a messy, sloppy education system. For example, when a letter came from the Royal College of Art to our department, one of the teachers handed it to me, telling me to read it and see what we could answer, because my English was decent. I read it; it was a proposition for a student exchange programme. I looked at the date: it had arrived exactly a year earlier, and it still had not been answered! On top of that, the professor who handed me the letter was a graduate of the American College Institute. I do not know whether the letter was answered or not, but such a programme was never implemented. Only ill-intention can explain that such an important opportunity went down the drain. At any rate, I ended up concentrating on my personal production, keeping my head down until I graduated.

EK: Then you went to Great Britain.

HT: During my senior year, I heard an assistant say that the British Council was granting scholarships; there were announcements up in the administration floor. I only first heard of it a few days before the application deadline. Someone I knew, who had already been granted a scholarship, told me that these were usually given in fields such as medicine or economics

and that it was unlikely that I would receive the scholarship without high-ranked influence at the ministry. Until that year, the Ministry of Education was the institution to always conduct the English level assessment exam for this scholarship. But when the cronyism scandal unfurled the very year I applied, the British Council decided to supervise every step of the application and evaluation process. I passed the language test easily; the interview, which took place in Ankara with a very pleasant jury, went well, and I got the scholarship. The decision as to which university the grantee would attend belonged to the British Council. I had indicated ceramics-sculpture as the master's field in my application. They called me, saying that there were only 3 universities offering a curriculum in ceramics in the country, that they were struggling to find a suitable one, and asking whether I would oppose being placed in a sculpture master programme. In my practice, I leaned on sculpture as it were, but the bullying I had been submitted to by my professors, who told me that what I was doing was not sculpture, had ruined my self-confidence and I insisted on ceramics. Eventually, I was admitted to a master programme in ceramics-sculpture in Wales, at the South Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education in Cardiff. The programme that I joined offered tailor-made education to all 12 students involved, according to our needs and interests. Beside academic courses, we had workshop sessions twice a week with two different professors from our department. We soon reached such a level of mutual trust that we would tell each other about our dreams in these lessons that actually felt more like mind opening conversations, but they were part of the evaluation nonetheless. What they aimed to do was to instil a system of thought, a holistic approach. The sudden transition to such a relaxed, free atmosphere after five years spent at the hands of the Academy's prescriptive approach, where our presence in class was checked upon, paralysed me a bit in the beginning. That is, until the day they told me: "What are you doing, waiting around in the workshop? Go take a walk." Shortly after, the head of the department perceived what our needs were, and directed us toward the department of sculpture, together with one of my peers in the programme. I had the chance to visit many workshops, to do welding, bronze casting, even woodworking. My range of materials grew considerably as a result of this opportunity. Beyond the knowledge of materials and techniques, this period was really foundational for the formation of my language, for its very structure. The works that I produced at the time were made mostly in a variety of materials such as cast iron, bronze, mercury, glass and wood, while I also made use of clay figures of much smaller proportions than those of the entire work. In the UK's educational system, inspectors assess both the students' and professors' proficiency by midterm. After this inspection, I received a letter from the department, warning me that if I did not increase the overall proportion of clay in my works, they

might not be able to award me with the diploma. In short, they did not tell me that I could not go on in that direction, they merely said that if I did, they might not be able to give me the diploma. My graduation project was essentially a large installation, but it also comprised small scale bronze statuettes. As far as the visual impression went, iron and clay were equally present in the installation, but I used clay in a very thin shape, almost like an envelope. Eventually, my project was appreciated and earned me my diploma, but this became clear in my mind: I did not want to become an academic. That is why I actually did not care about getting the diploma or not. The material language that had opened up before me was so exciting that I was positive this was the direction I would be pursuing from there on.

EK: Did you go back to Turkey immediately after graduating in 1988? Or did you have the chance to stay a little longer?

HT: I went back one week or ten days after graduating, because these were the terms of the scholarship agreement: the British Council booked a flight shortly after the graduation. At the time, I remember thinking this, with regards to my future: I want to live in Istanbul, but also to be able to show my work to an international audience. I am trying to remember the works and exhibitions that impressed me during my years as a student. I would definitely mention the exhibitions held at the Taksim Sanat gallery, the *Yeni Eğilimler (New Tendencies)* exhibitions held at the Osman Hamdi Cultural Centre, the *10 Sanatçı 10 İş (10 Artists, 10 Works)* exhibitions (A, B, C, D) and *Günümüz Sanatçıları (Artists of Our Times)* exhibitions (the 11th edition of which included one of my works in 1990) held at the AKM (Atatürk Cultural Centre), the *Öncü Türk Sanatından Bir Kesit (A Cross Section of Avantgard Turkish Art)* exhibition, the first biennial held in 1987 and, perhaps the exhibition that marked me most, the exhibition where Sarkis's *Çaylak Sokak* installation literally metamorphosed the atmosphere of the Maçka Sanat gallery, a tough location.

Since we are talking about memory, of course, these exhibitions bring back recollections of the areas and places we have now lost. The Hareket Kiosk in Dolmabahçe is gone. We used the garden of the *Resim Heykel Müzesi* (Painting and Sculpture Museum), but now it serves a different purpose. Was it replaced by anything? No, it was not. The Atatürk Cultural Centre is gone; The Academy's Osman Hamdi Cultural Centre no longer hosts different voices of our times. The Taksim Sanat gallery, which hosted the exhibitions of countless artists from the previous generation such as Füsün Onur, Cengiz Çekil or Gülsün Karamustafa, contemporary artists from my own era like İnci Eviner, Aydan Murtezaoğlu and many more... There is also the Tarık Zafer Tunaya Cultural Centre... and all these were valuable, active public venues which we could access free of charge. The *Kadın Eserleri Kütüphanesi* (Library of Women's Works)

which hosted my exhibition titled *Nezih Ölüm Gardiyanları: Bosna Hersek (Decent Guardians of Death: Bosnia-Herzegovina)* in 1993, in addition to countless other beautiful projects in those years... *The Atatürk Kitaplığı* (Atatürk Library), which hosted my exhibition titled *Havanın Lüzumu (The Necessity of Air)* again in 1993, as well as other important exhibitions... After the municipal election, the team that took care of the exhibitions at the Atatürk Kitaplığı was dismissed; now only exhibitions on marbling and embroidery are being held. These lost public places have yet to be replaced by new ones. A few exceptional not-for-profit private institutions have tried to fill in the space that these have left for years. The remaining space consists of galleries, institutions and museums whose survival depends on the support of major corporations.

EK: Your very first exhibition was held in 1990 at Galeri Nev, I believe.

HT: Yes, it was comprised of works that were both independent from one another and distinct from the classic understanding of sculpture, yet works that I would describe as sculptural. They contained different forms and pushed the boundaries of what I could define as statues, wall installations or wall statues, made of such diverse materials as found objects, cast bronze and plastic, deprived of a pedestal but standing / trying to stand nonetheless.

EK: In the years that followed, your work became more spatial, evolving toward atmospheric spatial installations containing psychological and political references. Perhaps these were the first works corresponding to the notion of installation to appear in Turkey.

HT: To me, the real pivotal moment coincided with my participation in the 3rd Istanbul Biennial with my work titled *Böyle Tanıdıklarım Var II (I Know People Like This II, 1992)*, which happened simultaneously with my solo exhibition *Havanın Lüzumu (The Necessity of Air)*, upon the invitation of Zerrin İren Boynudelik and Gül Dirican at the Atatürk Kitaplığı. By uniting objects that I had found from second-hand booksellers, or from my personal collections, with works and books from the Atatürk Kitaplığı's archives and pieces of furniture from its warehouse, I reframed the gallery, which was used as an exhibition space within the library, submitting it to a spatial transformation. I designed it as period themed rooms like in ethnographic museums. The viewer had the feeling that the place had always been arranged that way when they entered. This experience, where I aimed at metamorphosing the space, surprising the viewers, enveloping them with illusions, truly excited me. Thus, I went on conceiving atmospheric spatial setups that appealed to all the senses.

EK: Your work titled *Sandık Odası (The Closet, 1997)* is the first that comes to my mind among those that can be defined as spatial setups. That work did not only appeal to the viewers'

senses, but to their memory as well. With the choice of furniture, as well as the TRT radio programme being played back, the viewers found themselves within a space that referred to a specific period in time – a period that they may have witnessed themselves if they were old enough, thereby carrying their minds to those interiors they had experienced the privacy of.

HT: Yes, *Sandık Odası* was a typical example in that sense. My aim was to appeal not only to the viewers' senses, but also to the accretions in their memory, that is, to their entire cognitive existence and presence at that particular moment. The scope of this moment of reach was not limited to the particular setup exhibited or the persons experiencing it as viewers. In a broader sense, it actually encompassed the atmosphere (*Zeitgeist*) of the time. By atmosphere, I mean social, political scopes as well; both in the particular geographic location and on a global scale as well. I do not mean only in a geographic sense, because we are now confronted with a huge global issue. If I use Aylin Vartanyan's interpretation of the concepts of aesthetic and anesthesia in the works we have done together, these works which I have constructed as open-ended spaces of encounter, of liminality, as thresholds of sorts, focus on awakening what has been repressed, forgotten; the exact contrary of anesthesia, they stir up what has been put to sleep. As you said, a mental residue may awaken and resurface in the mind of the viewers of *Sandık Odası*. The spatial setup that I have laid out comprised three separate rooms that overlapped. In the first room, a newsreel from the period of the September 12 military coup and a live broadcast of a soccer match from that period played loudly on a radio. There was also a dinner table there, that conveyed an icy feeling. In the second room, the viewer entered a place that was a cross between a study and a bedroom, equipped with three beds. The sound of the radio could still be heard there, although dimmer. Finally came the closet. As opposed to the cold light and grey scales that characterised both previous spaces, the light took a distinctively warmer touch there, while colours exploded and the viewer was presented with a comfort zone, where the sound of the radio could not reach. It served as a refuge. Far from the brainwashing radio, a snug and tiny little place that allowed for one to fantasise one's own world, if only for a moment.

If we consider the spatial setup of the installation as a whole, it not only comprised political implications, but also hinted at the intersections between the masculine and feminine, the collective and the particular. The global calamities that have been occurring for a while remind us of how everything is constantly interacting and evermore interconnected. The moment you go home and shut the door, the reality that you have left behind, the contacts that you have made all day do not just stay outside. The climatic, political, economic, collective and individual crises that are

unfolding globally are all linked to one another; it is impossible to dissociate them. My personal concerns are also the concerns of the society I am living in, they are the same outcomes of the same common causes. In this period in time when we are compelled to rethink the notions of permeability and transmissivity, we are suddenly taking notice again, perhaps even remembering, after a long period when this knowledge was put to sleep, how human life and non-human forms of life are actually placed in a continuous interaction and transformation on the surface of the earth. With *Sandık Odası*, my aim was to expose this permeability, with its social, psychological and political dimensions.

EK: I remember how I interpreted this work, dating from 1997, as the allegory of a country that underwent a grave isolation syndrome as a result of the Cold War's paradigm, a country that was worn out in its own insulation. I remember how I felt that it translated this country's senescence, its ponderousness, making it incapable of responding to the transformations that were occurring outside. Perhaps I associated it with your exhibition *Devren Satılık* (*For Sub-Sale*), which you held the same year at Galeri Nev. I remember that you made use of objects, memories, heavy with a past, being stored seemingly after a loss, perhaps death.

HT: For the exhibition at Galeri Nev Istanbul, I had actually started to work on something else, but the Susurluk accident occurred precisely at that time. The project that I was involved in suddenly seemed sterile to me in light of the truths that were being exposed with this accident, and that is how I started working on *Devren Satılık*. The project that I abandoned consisted in covering all the walls of the gallery with reliefs of the three wise monkeys and white wallpaper. I first described *Devren Satılık* as the emesis of my workshop in the gallery to Serdar Ateşer so that he could make sound preparations for the exhibition. The eight-track sound recording gave one lots to hear: the swearings-in of members of parliament, folk songs heavy with political implications, the way Hikmet Şimşek would explain every single word at length when making children learn the national anthem by heart on the TRT, but glossed over the word "violence", saying "you all know what violence means anyway", etc. Similarly, if we should go back to *Sandık Odası*, in the middle room, we would see traces of the official ideology staring at us from inside the school textbook lying open on the table. Below a photograph of a justice trial reproduced in one of the books, the caption said "the independence of the courts". These are things that we still bear under our skin, that we could never truly free ourselves of.

In one of my works from 2007, I merged the verses by Edip Cansever: "Did we pull the body from underwater / We didn't pull the body from underwater" with the wind produced by numerous fans laid on the ground, working at a high speed and producing a loud humming. The installation's atmosphere was very dark

and heavy but there was also, somehow, no matter how thin, an effort towards ventilation (finding hope). I did this work shortly after the assassination of Hrant Dink. In the exhibition I held in 2019, *Rüzgârların Dinlendiği Yer* (*Where the Winds Rest*), I went back to the same poem, this time in its entirety, but used the same verses again: "Did we pull the body from underwater / We didn't pull the body from underwater", this time placing them in a never-ending loop that in turn plunged them and pulled them out of a tank full of pitch black motor oil.

Before the Gezi events in 2013, I had prepared a work titled *Böyle Tanıdıklarım Var III* (*I Know People Like This III*, 2013) for the *Haset, Husumet, Rezalet* (*Envy, Enmity, Embarrassment*) exhibition in Arter. This work included photographs printed on x-ray film and brought together images related to the state violence in Turkey's recent past, beginning in the contemporary era and symbolically ending in 1955. Immediately afterwards, I had a solo exhibition at Galeri Nev. It was comprised of a film where the motif of the three wise monkeys was used as an animation, in the background of which I used a seemingly sweet child lullaby by Frank Sinatra; except that when one paid closer attention to the lyrics, one noticed that they actually threatened the children who failed to obey with being transformed into another being (donkey, pig etc.). While this video was on display, I accepted an invitation for it to be included in another exhibition in Berlin. Immediately afterwards, the Gezi events erupted. At last, the three wise monkeys had opened their eyes, and, after witnessing what Gezi was, I realised that I could not show the film in that way anymore; I decided I had to intervene. I prepared a new version, that incorporated video and audio recordings from the streets during Gezi. This time, the monkeys would chant the chorus "Sık bakalım" ("Spray it if you dare") altogether, wearing gas masks. Both films were shown in a loop one after another. Yes, we were very hopeful after Gezi. However, we returned to the same old chorus afterwards.

EK: The question of what should be exhibited, and when, raises the question of temporality. I am reminded now of another dimension of temporality that I believe influences your artistic practises related to memory. Perhaps we may speak of two ways in which you operate and incorporate memory. First, by reexamining the past and reinterpreting the experiences that are stuck there and are stagnant, or revealing hidden crimes, losses, and pain and creating the necessary discussion environment to prevent it from happening again. We already spoke of *Böyle Tanıdıklarım Var III* (*I Know People Like This III*), which operated on a visual archive that stretched back until 1955. But I think we can also speak of efforts on your part to keep a record of problematic situations which we are living in the present, in order to prevent these events from being covered up or repressed, and to allow for

a comprehensive and holistic perception in the future. A perfect example of this is *Nezih Ölüm Gardiyanları*, the work that you produced on what occurred in Bosnia-Herzegovina at the beginning of the nineties.

HT: Actually, both *Nezih Ölüm Gardiyanları: Bosna-Hersek* (1993) and *Böyle Tanıdıklarım Var III (I Know People Like This III)*, 2013) address ongoing violence. As you said, on the one hand, these works try to keep record of a problematic and ongoing situation, and to prevent it from being covered up; on the other hand, they support and propagate the voices of those who witnessed such war and torture, rather than forcing these people to helplessly witness the suffering caused by ongoing war, genocide, violence and the absence of international response (specific to the case of Bosnia, with regards to the date when the work was exhibited). By keeping a record, or an archive, in historical terms, they also serve to allow for a comprehensive perception and holistic understanding in the future. In a similar way, *Böyle Tanıdıklarım Var III (I Know People Like This III)*, which serves as an index for the events and casts a look at state and political violence in Turkey between 1955 and 2013, on the basis of archival images, allowed for a comprehensive approach of the chronicity of this past from today's perspective by shedding light on the variety of forms, continuity and consistence of violence, and assumed the task of protecting the archive it relied on, by translating it into a different language, by producing a record of it with a different method, in order to preserve the possibility of a new understanding in the future.

We are placed under the burden of such a heavy trauma in the geography that we live in that we have to carry an impossible responsibility accumulated over the generations layer after layer, and stand beneath the mass of losses, sufferings and injustices forced upon us in the present as well. This collective mental state, which has become chronic, triggers different protection mechanisms in the individuals: some try to cope with these traumas by means of complete negation, others through partial anesthesia, others still lower the level of their sensitivity in order to be able to stay constructive, to keep on living, without losing their mental or bodily sanity. I could define what I am trying to achieve through my works as preventing these states of dormancy, of numbness, from lasting, pulling us, poking us out of this torpor.

* The present text is an edited transcription of the interview conducted with Hale Tenger on 23 December 2020 by Erden Kosova.

Asena Günal: Under Close Watch

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Erden Kosova: Asena, we first met in your office at the İletişim publishing house. Later on, when you undertook the management of Depo, we started seeing each other more often, and collaborated on several occasions. Would you remind us how you transitioned from the social sciences and publishing to the art field?

Asena Günal: I would not say that I was much involved in art before I started to work at Depo; nor was I that good of a viewer. I remember following the Istanbul Biennial, the activities of *Karşı Sanat* and the exhibitions of the *Hafriyat* Group. The first direct contact I had was through the work of Dilek Winchester, specifically in her exhibition held by Anadolu Kültür at *Karşı Sanat*. Dilek was involved in a residency programme at the time of the exhibition and had asked me to take care of the installation of her work, and of the necessary maintenance throughout the duration of the exhibition. After working for the İletişim publishing house for seven and a half years, I quit in order to focus on my doctoral research. Once I completed my PhD, I did not want to go back to publishing. I only stayed within the editorial council of the *Toplum ve Bilim* (Society and Science) review. My doctoral advisor at Boğaziçi University was Ayşe Buğra. I already knew her, as well as her husband, Osman Kavala, from the İletişim publishing house. I had met with Mr. Kavala earlier, in a job interview for the *Birgün* newspaper, but I did not go through with it because I was in the process of completing my PhD then. When I completed it in 2008, after deciding not to go back to publishing, I met with Mr. Kavala again and he told me about the project to found Depo. If Anadolu Kültür had developed another project in that period, I could have worked on it as well. So, it all unfolded as a coincidence in terms of timing. I believe that my background in social sciences and publishing rather than in art suited the idea for Depo that Mr. Kavala had in mind. That is, not only a place that would hold exhibitions, but also interdisciplinary discussions and presentations. I must confess that I was very hesitant because of lacking a background in arts, but eventually, I trusted that my education, accumulated knowledge, and the relationships I had established over the years would eventually work out in Depo. There was something appealing and exciting about the idea of bringing together artists and social scientists. However, I must stress that I experienced tremendous difficulties in drawing my personal network, composed of

left-winger social scientists, to the field of contemporary art. A sort of *de facto* interval remained somehow insurmountable. They would attend documentary projections, but would not show much interest in the exhibitions.

EK: Perhaps we may speak of a paradoxical encounter. On the one hand, there has been a growing tendency for artistic practices to embrace social issues, cultural-geographic specificities and problematics since the second half of the 90s. This sort of junction, a convergence could have been expected in that regards. On the other hand, ever since the beginning of the 2000s, a dynamic toward institutionalisation-commercialisation has appeared, and, as a result, we have witnessed how the political discourses have both gained prominence and been absorbed into a comfort zone determined by corporate mentality in the field of art. This might be one of the reasons that explain why this interval could not be overcome.

AG: I would not say that I was much aware of these dynamics before I started to work at Depo. I was very interested when I saw the themes we would discuss in the field of social sciences –official ideology, official historiography, gender issues, multiculturalism and collective memory– addressed in the field of art, and very excited to grasp the way these were shaped within art. When *Hafriyat* founded a platform titled *Misafirperverlik Alanı (Hospitality Area)* within the scope of the 9th Istanbul Biennial, I remember how passionately I started to follow their activities. I remember every little detail: how we went there with Dilek, how I met with Banu Karaca. For me, it was a new and inviting field. The contacts established between institutionalisation and capitalism mostly coincided with the period when I was at Depo. After reading Sibel Yardımcı's book, I started to apprehend such topics as the role played by biennials in the world capitals' promotion. At the time, these dynamics were not that perceivable yet. There were numerous initiatives and independent project spaces. The weight of institutions became prominent only later. Whereas nowadays, independent initiatives are close to nonexistent.

EK: If we go back to Depo's inception phase, I believe some things were not quite clear regarding the overall policy. I seem to remember that there was a hesitation as to the exact balance between art and social issues. An advisory board was established in order for the art side not to be underrepresented, but I believe it did not really work out.

AG: Yes, indeed, there was something like a blood incompatibility within the board, as you said. A sort of impossibility to overcome the differences between an interest for interdisciplinary works and a purely art-oriented perspective. When we saw that this advisory board system was not functional, we started to act in light of our own discussions, spontaneously implementing a policy of seeking advice from the people

whom we trusted when needed. I remember that Mr. Kavala granted much thought to "cooperation between regions" in this initial period. By regions, I mean these broad geographic areas that surround Turkey, such as the Caucasus, the Middle East and the Balkans. The project that Mr. Kavala had in mind consisted in contributing the stimulation of interactions between these geographic areas through art. This was probably in line with the general state of cultural liveliness and priorities determined by cultural policies that characterised this period. However, in the following years, Depo went in other directions, in light of the needs that appeared in and of themselves in Turkey. We too, as the staff, followed our own priorities. The limited number of institutions which offered critical points of view through artworks translated in a high interest and demand for what we offered. This period also coincided with a time when *Karşı Sanat* was not very active. When talks began for the organisation of the *Ateşin Düştüğü Yer (Where Fire Has Struck)*, 2011 exhibition for the 20th anniversary of the foundation of TIHV (*Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı – Human Rights Foundation of Turkey*), there was no other location conceivable apart from us. The organisation of this exhibition, which brought together some 130 artists, was entirely undertaken by a committee made of volunteers among those artists.

The same was also true for exhibitions of a political nature, as well as periodic exhibitions such as *Uzayda Bir Elektrik Hasıl Oldu (A Kind of Electricity Appeared in Outer Space)*, 2012, and *Açık Şehir (Open City)*, 2010. Similarly, a number of artists who refused to work with galleries began to ask to use our space as well, so that in time, Depo was entrusted with a sort of mission, because of the state of the contemporary art sphere. This was not something that had been thought of or decided upon. This is how Depo, not being a traditional institution in Istanbul, became a flexible place where one could simply knock on the door, easily communicate, speak with the director, and discuss openly, even critical voices. These characteristics took shape under both our influence as the staff, and that of what Anadolu Kültür had been doing over the years. Eventually, the regional emphasis that had initially been sought as a result of global cultural policy-making and funding priorities gradually gave way to something else. I must stress that relations with the neighbouring countries never receded however; a number of activities in that sense, as well as the publication of the red-thread.org review, are still pursued. In an interview, Mr. Kavala commented on the evolution of Depo in the following way: "It has undergone a mutation from an institutional standpoint. The absence of any commercial expectation, the fact that it was not articulated with an institution's public relations agenda have allowed for Depo to evolve freely. Eventually, its own personality has emerged, shaped by its own circles, that is, by Depo's own direction and by the artists, academics and non-governmental initiatives it has established relations with. I believe

that those who come to Depo are aware that they are likely to come across exhibitions that address political and social issues from a critical perspective. The independence and openness of this venue, as well as its humility, are a part of this personality."

Ezgi Bakçay: Today, whenever someone needs equipment in the field of contemporary art, they come to Depo. What fascinates me most about Depo is the existence of this physical community. "Is there a monitor? Let's ask Asena" has become a usual phrase around here. This element of solidarity, which keeps places alive, comes into play here.

AG: We are not only trying to exist as Depo, we are also trying to contribute to the success of others. Anadolu Kültür works a bit in that way as well. It is not just a place that only concentrates on its own projects; instead, it facilitates the realisation of projects by other entities. That sentence perfectly qualifies Mr. Kavala: someone who does not reject anyone who knocks on his door, who will help find funding, introduce them to people who may be interested, contribute by giving advice and opinions... On our own scale, that is what we are trying to do at Depo, too. Of course, we will never be an impeccable institution. I guess there is also this character or personality of the place itself. During its renovation, it was intentionally not excessively polished, but rather kept in its more organic state.

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EK: You mentioned the institutional memory that was inherited from Anadolu Kültür a little earlier. Anadolu Kültür aims at ensuring the continuity of the cultural heritage that has lived and is still living on Anatolian lands. This interest in lost cultures within this wealth was instrumental in the activities organised in Depo in order to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 1915 genocide. How does the interaction on this issue work between both institutions?

AG: I do not think that the question of memory was as emphasised during the establishment of Anadolu Kültür back in 2002. Six months after Anadolu Kültür was created, the DSM (*Diyarbakır Sanat Merkezi* – Diyarbakır Arts Centre) was inaugurated. The objective behind the creation of the DSM was to bring the different sides together, thanks to art and culture, in an area where conflict prevails, to set the stage for dialogue to occur, and to connect Diyarbakır with Turkey's other metropolises and Europe. As for Anadolu Kültür's overall objective, it could be defined as the stimulation of the potential outside of major cities. In this respect, one cannot say that the foundation of Depo in the heart of Istanbul particularly fit that priority. Yet, we hosted Anadolu Kültür's activities, and served as a secondary exhibition space for activities that had been initiated in different cities. In the following period, Anadolu Kültür also founded the *Kars Sanat Merkezi* (Kars Art Centre), conceived as a place that would host cultural activities uniting people not only from Kars but from the surrounding countries as well (Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan,

Iran). When the municipality of Kars swung to the AKP, the centre closed. There was a venture to found a centre in Antakya, but it soon withered. Afterwards, the question of memory started to occupy the forefront of Turkey's political agenda. When I went to university, issues such as the Armenian genocide, Dersim, the 6–7 September events or enforced disappearances were not discussed much. Imagine: I studied political sciences and international relations at ODTÜ, and we would not run across these subjects. I acquired knowledge of them later, through my work in the publishing sector. The editorial supervision of Rifat Bali's books gave me ample opportunity to study the discriminating policies that Jews and non-Muslims were submitted to in depth. This was a time when we started to question the culture of oblivion, when we left behind the mechanism of *forgetting in order to move on*, which we had inherited from the Enlightenment. In this regard, Anadolu Kültür has played a pivotal role in allowing for the transition toward remembrance and confrontation in the fields of civil society, publishing, academy, art and culture.

Before doing this interview, I looked back at the exhibitions we held. We have always pursued the goals of integrating the repressed past within collective memory, to eliminate the lack of awareness, to correct misinformation and prejudice, and to open up room for dialogue. All the 12 exhibitions that we have held in 2015 were prepared here, together with Armenian artists living in Armenia or from the diaspora. Since 2015, we decided to assign a theme to *Saturday*, the documentary projection programme which we have co-organised with Documentarist since the establishment of Depo, and we chose genocide and crimes against humanity as our first theme. Within the scope of the same programme, in cooperation with *Hafıza Merkezi*, we have focused on enforced disappearances for one year. In cooperation with Hamiş, we have dedicated another year of this programme to Syria and refugees. Last year, we prepared a programme addressing resistance against coups and military regimes, in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the September 12 military coup. We did our first projection in the beginning of 2020, but the pandemic prevented us from implementing the rest of the programme. We hope to be able to do so by the 41th anniversary. Of course, it saddens me that most of last year was spent without being able to realise much regarding the September 12 military coup commemoration.

Eylem Ertürk: Perhaps now would be an appropriate time to mention the project *Bir Daha Asla* (*Never Again*, 2013), which you have put much effort into.

AG: This was a very extensive project. We formed a team together with Sinan Birdal and Önder Özengi. For a year, we investigated the way in which eight countries were confronting their past, and how they eventually apologised for it. The Bloody Sunday in Great-Britain, Willy

Brandt's genuflection before the memorial of the Warsaw Gettho Uprising, the apology not given by France to Algeria, Serbia's approach of Srebrenitsa... We scanned archive material and the literature, carried out interviews, and eventually proposed an exhibition that was all but bad. We also prepared a reader, which Mr. Tarhanlı contributed with an essay, published by İletişim Yayınları.

Turgut Tarhanlı: I seem to remember that this exhibition was also shown outside of Istanbul. How was its reception in other cities?

AG: Yes; it was shown in Diyarbakır, Samsun, Ankara, İzmir and Bursa, where it infallibly received a warm welcome. The municipality of Nilüfer in Bursa had asked for the exhibition to be brought there. Mr. Tanıl Bora gave a lecture to a full audience within the scope of the exhibition. During the question and answer part, people who could be designated as "nationalists" expressed their views. It was a warm and reciprocal conversation. These kinds of encounters are not really possible in Istanbul. As a matter of fact, this exhibition constituted a milestone for me. It was the first time that I focused this hard on one subject after my doctoral thesis, and I found the process particularly enriching. My experience with the exhibition led me to participate in the Historical Dialogue and Accountability Program at Columbia University for one semester, as well as in the Faculty Seminar of the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC. In short, I ended up delving deep into these subjects without having previously planned for it to the extent that we even issued a book, titled *Hatırlayan Şehir (A City that Remembers)*, together with Murat Çelikkın, who participated in the Columbia University's programme one term before I did. I must mention that the newspapers and television channels close to the ruling party featured the *Bir Daha Asla* project, and held interviews with us. Later on, when I was placed under arrest, they would ask me repeatedly whether I had "held an exhibition in order for Turkey to apologise to the Armenians?". This constitutes a perfect thread to witness the turn in state-backed attitude toward these questions in Turkey over the recent years.

EK: Actually, there are other exhibitions among those held at Depo that could be viewed as linked with the question of memory.

AG: Yes. During the preparation phase for the project by the *Hafıza Merkezi*, and the reason for our conversation, Sevim and Eylem have scanned all the exhibitions ever to have been held at Depo, and recorded the artworks that were shown. The first exhibition that comes to my mind is *Ateşin Düştüğü Yer*, which we have already talked about. *Bellek Kutusu (Memory Box)*, which Evrensel Belgin produced for this exhibition, is one of the works that has left a profound impression on me, that I find exceptionally valuable. In the beginning, we are placed against the flag of Turkey. Images related to traumatic moments in the history of Turkey are

then shown to us in an implicit way, in pairs. As the images are uncovered one by one, we try to remember the previous images and to associate them with one another. There was even an online version, which I sometimes played with. But the exhibition comprised countless other striking works. It also encompassed several activities. BEKS, the collective constituted by a team from the department of Sociology at the Mimar Sinan University, was a part of it. They had conducted interviews with a number of people, from various generations and political opinions, with regards to the September 12 military coup. Audio recordings of these interviews, accompanied by the newspaper clippings used by the team to remind the people of that period, were shown in the exhibition, along with a conference that gave an in-depth account of the team's research.

I have mentioned the exhibitions that were held throughout the year in 2015. To name a few, Diana Markosian's photography exhibition titled *1915* (2016), Norayr Şahinyan's photography exhibition, Anita Toutikian's exhibition titled *N'Akışlar (Exbroideries, 2015)* and Silvina Der Meguerditchian's exhibition titled *Torunlar (Grandchildren, 2015)*, which brought together Armenian artists from several countries, and was opened simultaneously with the Istanbul Biennial. The exhibition by Armen Marsoobian, a philosophy professor living in the USA, which explored the archive of photographs taken by his grandfather Dildilian, an amateur photographer in Merzifon, and by other members of his family, drew much attention. It was titled *Bir Ermeni Ailesinin Yitik Geçmişine Tanıklıklar: Dildilian Kardeşlerin Objektifinden (1872-1923) (Bearing Witness to the Lost History of an Armenian Family Through the Lens of the Dildilian Brothers (1872-1923), 2013)*. Later on, this exhibition was also shown in Ankara, in the Church of Saint Giragos in Diyarbakır and in Merzifon.

For example, when I try to think about what else we did, I remember the exhibitions where we focused on this notion of the archive. These include Patrizia Bach's solo exhibition, and the group exhibition which she shaped on Walter Benjamin, and the series of conferences she gave as a part of it. Daphne Vitali's exhibition on archive, *Şimdi Tarih Olduğunda (When the Present is History, 2019)*, included works by such artists as Ege Berensel, Banu Cennetoğlu and Barış Doğrusöz.

TT: I remember the exhibition titled *20 Dolar 20 Kilo (20 Dollars 20 Kilos, 2014)*.

AG: Yes, true. We held this exhibition in 2014, in cooperation with the Babil association, for the 50th anniversary of the forced migration of Istanbul Greeks in 1964. It included works by Hera Büyüктаşçıyan. But there were other ones still: the exhibition titled *Hafızayı Harekete Geçirmek: Kadınların Tanıklığı (Mobilizing Memory: Women Witnessing, 2014)*, co-prepared by Ayşegül Altınay and Işın Önel in cooperation with the Columbia University, which did not

only comprise artworks, but also accounts of the works of the *Hafıza Merkezi* and a documentary work by the Nar Photos team, or *Acının İki Yüzü/ Du Rûyên Êşê (Both Sides of Suffering, 2014)* an exhibition which united the stories of both Turkish and Kurdish families who had lost children to the conflict, were some of the other works where we addressed the question of memory.

EK: At times, there are criticisms claiming that the efforts to bring together issues, artists and traces of populations involved in a conflict merely create an artificial agenda. I remember how the exhibition titled *Torunlar* was criticised for that particular reason, as was the essay I wrote about it. The criticism argued that the exhibition was founding a consensual zone that overlooked ongoing, unresolved problems. Some raised attention as to how fundings from western institutions were being used to emphasise this kind of consensual vision. How do you respond to this after your experiences at Depo?

AG: The relationships with funding institutions is also a topic that I think about a lot, and, I must confess, take little pleasure in. I already told you how in its initial years Depo had received financial support from cross-geographic funding institutions. Actually, this would be an unfair way of presenting things, but the way in which resources were allocated primordially to the Balkans at a particular period helped shape priorities. Still, I do not think that Mr. Kavala showed an interest in these subjects in anticipation of their capacity to receive funding. He genuinely valued the potential for possible interactions. Nor do I think that funding has had any impact on the current structure. Yes, there have been times when different expectations have come into conflict. Anadolu Kültür and Depo both have their own priorities and funding is sought for on that basis; it sometimes so happens that none is obtained. Projects for which funding is not found must be put on hold. As for the resources available to Depo, which nurtures no commercial relations, they are self evident. A considerable amount of money is needed merely to keep the place and staff running, which is being covered by Mr. Kavala himself. Apart from that, when exhibitions require important production costs, especially when customs, transport, accommodation and travels are at stake, fundraising becomes inevitable. In order to give you an idea, the preparation of the *Bir Daha Asla* exhibition required three people, including myself, to work full-time for one year. Derya Bengi worked on the preparation of the *Uzayda Bir Elektrik Hasıl Oldu* exhibition for a year too. Retribution for the work put in by these people has to be given somehow.

As for your other question, I must say that, to my knowledge, I do not think that we ever acted as though these problems did not exist in any of our exhibitions. As a matter of fact, when a problem of this nature does exist, the work generally does not go through. Last year, we had to cancel our exhibition project titled *Geleceğin Geleceği (The Future of the Future)* because of

the war. We had begun this project thanks to funding granted by the Gulbenkian Foundation. It was supposed to bring together young artists from Turkey and Armenia. But when such a point is reached, there is nothing anyone can do. As I already stated, rarely have we been brought to such a point where we had to soften our discourse, make concessions or show a consensual attitude. Actually, this only occurred on one occasion. It was after Mr. Kavala's arrest, during the preparation process for our exhibition within the scope of the *Hatırlamak ve Anlatmak için Şehre BAK (BAK: Revealing the City through Memory)* project, when our lawyers told us that two videos that touched upon the ongoing conflicts in Kurdish regions could present a risk. At first, we put the project on hold, before eventually having to cancel it. But, nevertheless, we found opportunities to show these works later.

EK: It looks as though the probability to run into this kind of situations will continue to rise in the years to come.

AG: Recently, I have been thinking that in order to properly address such issues as memory, trauma, violations, and to look at the past in general, active conflict and repression have to stop first. When we addressed these issues, the atmosphere was comparatively less tense. Right now, I have neither time nor mental strength to devote to the question of the confrontation of the past. When you are under the constant threat of arrest, when the founder of the platform you work for is imprisoned, when you are placed under close watch by security forces, judicial and financial authorities by means of tax liabilities, and unprecedented trials intended to push for your dismissal, you lack the stamina, or breath, to carry out works in these areas. We spend our whole lives with counselors and lawyers. What is more, we have reached the very limit of the will to resist. I believe that other non-governmental organisations also face similar problems.

EE: Perhaps we can draw a conclusion on the following note: during the last three years, which Mr. Kavala has spent in jail, and Anadolu Kültür and Depo under threat, we have witnessed how artists have actively positioned themselves. This was only made possible thanks to the sympathy, the appropriation brought about by the very language created by Anadolu Kültür and Depo through past experiences. A lot of valuable campaigns are also under way.

AG: That is because artists are aware of the efforts given by this institution to grant them proper conditions to produce and create. Over the years, a relationship has been established with a huge number of artists. When Mr. Kavala was first arrested, many artists shared posts on social media, reminding how they had been a part of activities carried out at Depo or by Anadolu Kültür. Afterwards, the programme titled *Vardiya (Shift, 2018)* was carried out at Depo, during which an uninterrupted, continuous and collective artistic production took place for 72 hours. A group visit to the Silivri prison

was organised on eight occasions, and a team of artists was always present at the hearings. On important days, collective photographs were taken as a show of solidarity. Videos and animations were made. A book was issued as a birthday present, with the participation of numerous artists. Due to the intricate web of relationships that link them with the capital and the state, by producing no communication in the public sphere, the institutions have left us alone. Perhaps they thought that they would pay the price if they did. We are paying the highest price at the moment because we did not shy away from speaking publicly. However, I must emphasise how artists and workers in the field of art have been by our side from the very beginning.

Barış Seyitvan: In Spite of Everything

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Erden Kosova: Barış, you were born in 1982. You have witnessed the hardships which your region underwent in the nineties, when you were a secondary school / high-school student. As far as I know, you had already started to closely follow up on cultural activities and initiatives by then. During your masters at the Artuklu University, you wrote a thesis on the experience of migration and refugeedom in the Kurdish geography, specifically in that it is divided in four separate pieces. Later on, you have become an active member of cultural production as an artist and curator. You have had institutional experience. You have undertaken the management of the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality's exhibition space and of the Amed Art Gallery in the Sümerpark, curating many exhibitions in both of these venues. Perhaps you can give us an overview of your story, starting from the 80s.

Barış Seyitvan: As you said, I was born in 1982 in the Kulp district of Diyarbakır. I went to primary school in the Ağaçalı village of Kulp. Then, due to the intense conflicts in the early 90s, we had to migrate to the centre of Diyarbakır. With their villages being burnt, hundreds of thousands of people like us took refuge in Diyarbakır, suddenly bringing the population of that town from 250.000 to over 1 million people in only a few years. Of course, a number of infrastructural problems accompanied this already tough period. 5 to 6 families sharing the same home was not something unusual. Both the war process and the forced migration of people from the countryside to cities brought about other problems as well. At the time when we fled our village, I was attending secondary school. Afterwards, in 1995, I started studying at the Fine Arts Highschool of Diyarbakır. I then studied at the Painting and Teaching Department at Dicle University, which I graduated from in 2004. I completed the master thesis that you talked about later, in 2017, at the University of Artuklu.

Actually, long before the nineties, there was a process that dates back to the Eastern Reform Plan, which was a state policy designed to assimilate the Kurdish people and to erase Kurdish culture, put into effect in 1925. It is difficult to speak of a genuine cultural production under conditions in which those who refused to become assimilated were submitted to such measures as forced exile. Throughout this process,

there has been a specific effort to obliterate the Kurds' mothertongue. Therefore, teaching Turkish to young Kurdish mothers was critical for the assimilation of younger generations. The level of oppression which rose in the 1980s with the help of the state of emergency evolved into all-out war in the nineties. Oppression and violence were actually felt to different extents in the four separate pieces of Kurdistan. Nevertheless, in all four regions, both internal migrations and asylum seeking in Europe have occurred on a wide scale.

Within the social environment that prevailed in northern Kurdistan, artistic productions were constantly controlled. This supervision prevented freedom of expression from thriving and expanding. The state provided its own expectations and framework, and those who attempted to create outside of this structure were censored and the organisations they were involved in were shut down. Among the institutional initiatives that exist in Diyarbakır, we should mention the independent theatre founded in 1988 by Cuma Boynukara, under the designation of *Diyarbakır Sanat Tiyatrosu* (Diyarbakır Art Theatre), which organised performances in the Emek cinema. The Diyarbakır State Theatre was inaugurated the same year. In 1990, the City Theatre was founded within the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality. In 1995, the city mayor from the *Rifah Partisi* (Welfare Party) dissolved this theatre. Among the theatre's staff members, some were reassigned in other cities, others were sacked, others still were employed as cleaning staff or municipal police agents. Those who were sent to other cities tried to found private theatres and had to work in harsh conditions, trying to play in basements and so on. They have struggled to be able to rent the State Theatre's stage and show their plays there. Apart from these, the Emek and Dilan cinemas were crucial for social life in Diyarbakır and in the region. The *Mezopotamya Kültür Merkezi* (MKM – Mesopotamia Cultural Centre) first opened in Istanbul in 1991, before opening a branch in Diyarbakır in 1993.

EK: Later on, branches were also opened in Mersin and Adana...

BS: Yes, in Izmir, Antep and Urfa as well. The Diyarbakır branch carried out musical and folkloric activities. At the time, Koma Azad was among the most popular music bands. In 1995, this centre was closed in a police raid. Efforts were made to try and open it again in 1997 and 2000, but each time, it was closed down again quickly. Later on, attempts were made to reopen it under the names of Medkom, *Dicle Fırat Kültür Merkezi* (Tigris Euphrates Cultural Centre) or *Dicle Fırat Kadın Merkezi* (Tigris Euphrates Centre for Women); but they were closed down once more. Apart from these, there was also the Department of Painting and Teaching at the Education Faculty of the Dicle University. Most ac-

tive artists nowadays graduated from this institution. But a huge number of art students went away to Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara and Adana to pursue their studies. Throughout the 1980s and 90s, there was only one art gallery in Diyarbakır. This was the place we would call *Dağkapı Burcu* (the Dağkapı Tower), inside the walls of Diyarbakır. Of course, holding an exhibition in this place was a challenge. All communications were closely monitored and the chances to obtain the authorisation to hold an exhibition, even after providing tons of documents, were low. Even then, the police would come and constantly control the contents. The theatres were placed under similar surveillance. In the 90s, before a play could be staged, the text had to be communicated to the security forces. Most plays staged would remain limited to classics by Aristoteles, Brecht, Chekhov, Euripides or Shakespeare, and even these texts had to be communicated prior to the staging. The security would remove the sentences they deemed inappropriate and send back the corrected version. During the performances, they would come and record the play with at least two cameras, only to ensure that the removed sentences were not used. Such recordings were not only made during theatre performances, but in all our cultural and artistic activities. I often say it as a joke: our most extensive archive is somewhere at the security forces; if we could only obtain it, it would be useful for us.

EK: I believe a collective energy emerged in this period, which valued and emphasised group work and the sense of belonging. Later, in the 2000s, other dynamics were set in motion, when a movement of institutionalisation started. Another kind of artistic practice also surfaced, together with the formation of relations with Turkey's other metropolises.

BS: Between the 80s and 90s, there was a preference not only for collective production, but even beyond that, for a communal way of life in all artistic branches, especially music and folkloric groups. The main reason for this was actually the development of a defensive mechanism against the state's oppression, through task sharing.

EK: You mean, taking the load off from the individuals' shoulders and dividing it in smaller parts to many people?

BS: Yes: dividing it, sharing it. Making art in the Kurdish region, especially in the 90s, required a lot of courage. The police would carry raids before a music band or theatre company would go on stage, threatening to forbid them from performing if this or that player was on the show. People could not even speak Kurdish in public spaces. Under such conditions, is it possible that the people respect the rules? People would secretly meet inside their homes to sing and play music. That is how the *Dengbêj*¹ would

¹ Translator's note: Singer/storytellers of specific genres of Kurdish oral literature.

share their stories with the people. Despite all obstacles, the 90s represented a valuable period for us, when important works were carried out. Because of this constant repression, an accumulation of energy formed, ready to burst, which is what happened during the 2000s, both on an individual and institutional level.

EK: At the same time, you also had to carry a heavy traumatic burden. There was an effort to heal the mental and physical wounds caused by countless deaths and cases of torture.

BS: Absolutely! During the 90s, the number of murders by unknown assailants in one district alone would reach thousands. The violence that both the JITEM² and Hizbullah unleashed triggered a war path that devastated the people's spirits. Cultural production, even travel from one place to another, were being prevented. When we reached the 2000s, there was a new development: when the HADEP (the People's Democracy Party) took office after winning the local elections, there was a positive impact on cultural production. Support was granted to all artistic branches, from theatre to music and visual arts, by means of new festivals and accompanying workshops. These festivals would last between a week and ten days and encompass intense activities. During that period, countless artists were invited to Diyarbakır and the region. After a while, beside festivals, the newly founded *Dicle Fırat Kültür Merkezi* and other institutions and independent theatre companies further contributed to this liveliness. This plentiful period lasted about ten years.

EK: These activities also helped motivate and mobilise the younger generation. It also lighted a beacon of hope for cultural production in the future.

BS: Yes, especially for our generation, who experienced the effects of the 90s during their childhood. There was definitely an enthusiasm in the beginning of the 2000s. People were excited. They wanted to have fun, to share, and to make art. The festivals would provide a welcome institutional support, but there was still a problem regarding locations because the new municipal teams had only just taken office. The places that had been opened previously, such as theatres, had been transformed into conference halls. The opening of the *Diyarbakır Sanat Merkezi* (DSM - Diyarbakır Arts Centre) by Anadolu Kültür in 2003 coincided with that period. The DSM allowed for artists and directors from Istanbul, other cities in Turkey and Europe to be invited to Diyarbakır. Attendance was always high, theoretical discussions were organised and examples of European cinema were screened. Important exhibitions also came from Istanbul and Europe. Workshops on photography, caricature and cinema were held. Curators who were impressed by the region's tempestuous agenda and the lively artistic response that echoed it

started to come to Diyarbakır. However, we artists still had trouble accessing proper resources that would allow us to effectively follow the current developments in the field of contemporary art. We would ask those of our friends who went to Istanbul to bring back books and reviews, before photocopying and passing them on between us. That was our method to keep ourselves updated on what was taking place in Turkey and the rest of the world. All in all, we can say that all these activities have allowed to establish a suitable ground for debate. These were the years during which a great number of our friends in Diyarbakır had the opportunity to intellectually blossom.

Throughout this period, we were mostly in contact with the Istanbul cultural field: its position in the world and important cultural inheritance make it an important centre in itself, as well as a gateway toward Europe. That was precisely why a high number of artists from the region went there during that period. In the 2000s and later, I believe that the two cities that clearly stood out in Turkey in cultural terms were Istanbul and Diyarbakır, which let its significance in terms of position and historic inheritance show. The institutions and artists from these two cities were involved in an intense exchange from many points of view during this period. Over the course of recent years, other cities have joined in this exchange: artists from Izmir and Ankara stepped in on joint projects.

EK: Other cities started gaining visibility recently as well.

BS: That is true. There has been a significant awakening in the fields of art and culture in Mardin, Batman and Van too. For example, the Yılmaz Güney movie theatre was very significant for Batman. Later, it was destroyed in a fire, which was presented as an accident. We, on the other hand, are convinced that it was intentional and criminal. Today, the place that it occupied is desperately empty. However, the film festival that bears the name of Yılmaz Güney continues to be held in Batman. The eighth edition was co-organised by the municipality of Batman, the *Ortadoğu Sinema Akademisi* (Middle East Cinema Academy) and *Yeni Sinema Kolektifi* (New Cinema Collective) between 25–29 March 2020. I must also mention the Heskif Orchestra, supported by the Municipality of Batman, which staged Kurdish epics in the form of musicals.

EK: As far as I understand, the emergence of different actors and organisations, of different cities on the foreground, and the intensifying discussions that these gave rise to, have allowed for a welcome diversification. That positive dynamic went on until 2015 I believe.

² Translator's note: The Jandarma İstihbarat ve Terörle Mücadele

BS: Yes, that transitional period was very important. After 2010, the way the municipalities were run began to become more professional, the number of art venues increased, the City Theatre also became more professionally run, the Amed Art Gallery was opened, the cultural activities gained an increased importance within other municipalities, the Cegerxwîn Academy was founded, equipped with classes, projection and conference rooms, workshops and a gallery, by the Municipality of Kayapınar. There was the emergence of the *Aram Tigran Kent Konservatuvarı* (Aram Tigran City Conservatory), supported by the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality, which was something I have been personally involved in. I would give lessons on the Fundamentals of art and art history there. Of course, the fact that these classes were held in Kurdish was also very important. During our first year in 2010–11, we received as many as 1000 applications. This academic experience lasted three years. Afterwards, a children's orchestra was created and efforts were made in order to open a conservatory for children. Thanks to the positive atmosphere that the peace process nurtured, a number of beneficial projects have been implemented. Unfortunately, the discontinuation of the peace process in 2015, the wave of repression, as well as the process of appointment of municipal administrators by the government that ensued, have put an end to these positive developments.

EK: If you agree, I would like to hear your opinion on the Mardin Biennial before moving on to that post-2015 period.

BS: The Mardin Biennial is very important of course, but one has to know that art production in Mardin is not limited to the Biennial. There are other important works carried out. Especially, as you know very well, the works and efforts of the Kızıltepe group of artists. We should definitely remind readers of the exhibition they held in 2013, *Yersiz: Kader Birliği (Uprooted: A Common Fate)*. Numerous important artists were invited to take part in this exhibition curated by Emre Zeytinoğlu. Later on, they held another important exhibition: *Sen Ne Sanıyorsun (What Did You Think?)*. Ferhat Özgür's exhibition *Davetinizi Aldım (I Received Your Invitation, Thank You)* in 2009 was also very important, because this was the exhibition that led to the creation of the Mardin Biennial. The Sabancı Museum was inaugurated in 2009, but I consider it as more of a touristic venture. Obviously, the prevailing thought was: Mardin is a beautiful city, let us have a place there. At least that is what its management indicates. On the other hand, the Mardin Artuklu University has truly benefited both Mardin and its regions. The opening of its departments of Kurdish Language and Literature and of Fine Arts have significantly contributed to Mardin's cultural liveliness.

EK: Criticism was also voiced as to the Mardin Biennial's relation with localness, underscoring the lack of integration of local actors in the deci-

sion-making processes. I believe these problems resemble those related to how the exhibitions brought to Diyarbakır in the earliest phase of the DSM were designated as "imported".

BS: Yes, this has always been a topic of discussion. The DSM was criticised for not casting sufficient light in showing local artists. They even questioned themselves a lot because of this, asking to what extent they were in touch with localness, whether they should pursue their activities in Diyarbakır or not. Once places which belonged to local municipalities started to appear, they thought they had completed their role. That in turn led later to the decision of maintaining the DSM in Diyarbakır as an office whose purpose would be the development of projects.

The Mardin Biennial was held for the first time in 2010; before its subsequent editions were held in 2012, 2015 and 2018. The exhibition planned to take place in 2020 had to be postponed because of the pandemic. The problem that you mentioned has been overcome in recent years, at least partially. The third edition was held thanks to the support of the *Bienal Sinema Derneği* (Biennial Cinema Association) and of the artists from Mardin, as a collective work. My personal view is that the Mardin Biennial could be criticised for the following reason: the Biennial is being held in a region that is surrounded by countries such as Syria, Iran and Iraq. The city carries the legacy of numerous civilisations; it is a place that has been inhabited by numerous peoples: Kurds, Assyrians, Arabs, Turks and even Armenians. But it is true that the Biennial should place further emphasis on its vicinity, the region it is surrounded by. Right opposite the city, one sees Syrian soil. Syrian artists, Kurdish artists from Iraq could have been included in the Biennial. Perhaps this can be achieved in the future.

EK: We are gradually closing in on the current period. When would you say the atmosphere changed? Of course we know when it did in the political sphere, what about its translation in the cultural field?

BS: The period when we enjoyed being granted a little bit of freedom by the state, when cultural production was supported by municipalities suddenly broke down with the war that started in 2015. That is when the attacks on Kobane and Rojava by ISIS began. The fact that some were upset by the electoral success obtained by HDP and would not accept it has been the reason for our being dragged down to the point where we are now. The years 2015–16 saw the systematic appointment of administrators in HDP-led municipalities implemented. Among a team of mayors elected with 70–80 percent of votes, some had to leave the country while countless others are currently imprisoned. Throughout this process, countless municipality employees at all levels have been fired.

EK: You yourself were heading the Amed Art Gallery, backed by the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality, during this period.

BS: Yes, I was the director of the Amed Art Gallery and was working at the city conservatory as well. By the end of 2016, an administrator was appointed to the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality. The administrator's very first action was to close our gallery, and 32 artists who worked for municipality-backed initiatives were the first persons to be fired. I always say this: for us, art and art institutions are very important because we ensure that there is a dialogue between the people and the institutions. The closure of art spaces linked to municipalities by the administrators was a deliberate, systematic act of cultural decimation. The only aim of these actions was to mutilate us, severing our arms, legs and all sorts of body parts. The conservatories were closed down, and replaced by centres where religious education is emphasised. The metropolitan municipality's exhibition room was turned into a prayer room; as for the Amed Art Gallery, it was turned into a sports centre. The city conservatories were closed, the municipal theatre dismissed. The few independent art centres that existed were closed, as was the case for the *Dicle Fırat Kültür Merkezi*. This was a conscious strategy to put the whole cultural sphere under control, moreover, to obliterate a page of history.

EK: Perhaps you could tell us about the kind of activities that you organised at the Amed Art Gallery before things reached that point.

BS: The Amed Art Gallery was renovated as a part of the Sümerpark, which was transformed from an old carpet weaving factory to an arts centre. It soon became one of the most significant contemporary art centres in the region and country. The gallery comprised workshops on the one hand, and on the other hand offices used by the campaign advocating for the transformation of the Diyarbakır Prison No. 5, infamously known for the horrendous torture that was implemented there in the aftermath of the September 12 military coup, for being ranked among the ten worst incarceration centres in the world, and still in use. By a cruel irony of fate, it so happens that Gültaş Kışanak, the mayor at the time when this campaign was started, is currently detained in this very facility.

As you know already, the very first time when the idea of turning the prison into a museum was discussed was during meetings held with our friends at *Karşı Sanat*. These discussions even led to the compilation of archives of all prisoners since the foundation of the prison until today, which we called the Prison Coordination Centre. The *78'liler Derneği* (78ers' Association) in Diyarbakır, whom we are constantly in contact with, played a crucial role in that period. Interviews were carried out with friends who had witnessed the worst moments of the prison's history. Their books, poems and daily objects which they used inside were gathered in anticipation of the constitution of the museum's

collection. We received tremendous support in this respect from the families who had lost their relatives while detained there. Throughout this process, we also carried out workshops and exhibitions about these topics in the centre.

The last exhibition we held, *Kadınlar ve Diyarbakır 5 no.'lu Cezaevi* (Women and the Diyarbakır Prison No. 5), focused on the women detainees of the prison during the post-1980 period. Most of the testimonies we had heard regarding this prison so far were the men's. The women's testimonies had scarcely been heard. During the preparation of this exhibition, which I curated, we worked within a focus group that brought about a hundred people together for a year. We contacted women who had been detained in the prison or went there to visit their relatives. Over the years, the people had dispersed a lot. Some had relocated to Ankara, İzmir, Antalya, İstanbul or even Europe. Women who did not want their children or family to know what they had been through refused to talk to us. Eventually, we carried out interviews with 21 women who had frequented the prison during that period. Of course, the serious work we had conducted moved them very much.

At the Amed Art Gallery, we organised the *Uluslararası Fotoğraf Günleri* (International Days of Photography) three times. We organised workshops and exhibitions with the participation and attendance of important artists from Europe and the rest of the world. We also organised exhibitions titled *Bakur*, open to all artists from the region willing to participate. We held an exhibition titled *Kürdistan Buluşması* (Kurdistan Encounter), which I coordinated myself, with the participation of about 230 artists, supported with symposiums and seminars. Of course, the use we made of the term *Kurdistan* in the title caused a lot of troubles for me later on. We received threats because of the billboards we had used.

As the Amed Art Gallery, we would hold ten separate exhibitions each year. This allowed us to constitute an important collection. We also had various publishing activities, and undertook an extensive archiving operation throughout the period when we were active. We were in the process of laying the foundations for the opening of a museum. As I said, the Amed Art Gallery was closed down as soon as the administrator was appointed. The Prison Coordination Centre was closed down, too, and all the material accumulated was seized. It now stands ominously empty and hollow. I recently heard that all the stock of our publications, which we kept in the depot, had been destroyed by fire. This contributes to the ongoing cultural decimation that I mentioned earlier.

The works which we carried out received no support whatsoever from universities, the Ministry of Education or the governorate. The exhibition posters which we would send to the university were always rejected, on the ground that the rector would not allow for them to be hung.

As the metropolitan municipality, we would send buses with our own resources in order to have groups of primary and secondary school pupils see the exhibitions. We worked in cooperation with the art teachers. Later on, this procedure was officially forbidden by the regional office of the Ministry of Education, and pupils were warned not to go. Yet, the pupils that we could not bring ourselves brought their parents along on the weekends to visit our exhibitions. Overall, our average attendance for each exhibition was 5000 people.

Of course, we went through harsh periods. Following the attacks by ISIS, we had to cancel an exhibition, and instead used the exhibition space to accommodate and host guests who had fled the attacks in Iraq. Under such conditions, one starts questioning the necessity, the role of art, in the face of deliberate threats made to life itself. Such is the region which we live in. After the attacks by ISIS, most of the Yazidis in Sinjar had to flee the area. In the initial phase, approximately 5000 migrants arrived in Diyarbakır, needing shelter. We had to accommodate them as soon as we could in sport centres, and other facilities belonging to the municipality. One of these facilities was our gallery. We removed the exhibition material and hastily arranged separations in order to accommodate families. The Prison Coordination Centre too was put to use for the same purpose.

These were hard times for us. A war is being waged somewhere nearby, and you have to cope with its consequences, and the pain that ensues. At the time of the Kurdistan exhibition that I mentioned earlier, attacks were being carried out on Kobane. You are trying to organise artistic events, but there is already a heavy agenda to follow. During the last exhibitions we held, fighting was occurring only a little further, in the district of Sur. There was heavy bombing too. Of course these constitute major traumas, whose traces will stay for a long time. If we look at what happened in Sur alone, most of the neighbourhood –except for a few churches– was razed to the ground, its historic texture gone for good. Countless old houses were destroyed, replaced by ugly buildings.

EK: You spoke of archiving works. Could what you gathered be saved from all that destruction?

BS: In the initial periods, we cannot say that we conducted much archival work, except for some individual efforts. Considering this shortcoming as a problem, we initiated a joint archiving mission of the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality and Amed Art Gallery from 2009 onwards. We made an effort not only to record these works digitally, but also to keep hard copies and originals, physically, as part of the Amed Art Gallery's collection. That is because we were working on a museum project, which all our artist friends were extremely happy to back up, in effect donating their works for that purpose. In return for the works, we signed a contract with the art-

ists. We did not let the appointed administrator damage our digital collection. After all, this collection, gathered by virtue of innocent intentions and tremendous efforts, is confidential in a way. I am against its being seized or accapitated by or used for the benefit of any influence group. The conditions still need to be met for it to be made public again, for research purposes. We will be focusing on how we can make it available in the upcoming period.

EK: As a result of the process of appointment of administrators, public funding has been cut away from all cultural and artistic activity. But as far as I can see, the intensity of activity, sharing and production in that field has not receded. It seems as though the collective spirit which you identified during the 90s has again come into being.

BS: Right now, the administrators work together with those artists and institutions they consider close to them or at their mercy. Most institutions which support independent works refuse to be involved with them on ethical grounds of course. The way in which public resources are being allocated is blatantly unfair. Farcical projects which they have their precincts work on are awarded astronomical amounts of money. As soon as the places labouredly founded by local administrations during the 2000s were taken possession of by the administrators, space became a problem again, thereby constituting a serious obstacle for both the production of artistic works and their presentation to the public.

Apart from the *Merkezkaç Sanat İnisiyatifi* (Merkezkaç Art Initiative), which we founded with friends who live and work in Batman, Mardin and Diyarbakır before the appointment of the administrators (in 2015), a number of independent institutions, such as Loading, A4, Tango MED, Ma Music, Amîdart and *Mordem Kültür Merkezi* (Mordem Cultural Centre), were founded in Diyarbakır in the upcoming years, and are currently undertaking the whole weight of cultural life on their shoulders, by means of very serious work. I could not fail to mention the support given by the *Kültür için Alan* (Spaces of Culture) project, because such support is vital in order to sustain cultural liveliness in the region. The Diyarbakır Chamber of Commerce and Industry also supports by giving access to facilities in its possession or funding projects. We see how such initiatives as *13 Metrekare Sanat Kolektifi* (13 Square Meters Art Collective), or Mişar Art in Mardin, outside of Diyarbakır, are organising in-depth events and talks on contemporary art. Serious works are still being carried out by the Bat Art Lab and other theatre centres in Batman. These initiatives bear crucial importance for the region as a whole. However, when considering how the political repression rises, while the economic crisis deepens, it is difficult to predict how long this sphere created by independent groups will hold.

EK: What are you working on at the moment?

BS: Right now, I am working on a thesis project involving the digital mapping of the Kurdish artists who have fled the Middle East for Europe. The project should allow one to view in real time, on Google Maps, who lives and produces where, by navigating the map of Europe. We are working on technical issues at the moment. We are holding the necessary discussions and meetings. Because of the pandemic I work mostly online. I had already paved the way for this project when working on my thesis on migration and refugeedom in the framework of contemporary art while living in Diyarbakır. Now, I find myself in the position of a migrant too. I am struggling with the difficulties that arise from having to work from Berlin.

** The present interview is an edited version of the transcription of the online conversation held on 2 December 2020 as part of the Chromatic Wednesdays event at the Apartment Project Berlin. Our deepest thanks go to Emre Birışmen and Melih Sarıgöl, for transcribing the first version of the text.*

On the Memory and Arts Research: the Present of the Past, the Future of the Present

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**Lara
Fresko Madra**

Ayşe İdil
Enis Köstepen
Eylem Ertürk
Gamze Hızlı
Meltem Aslan
Sevim Sancaktar

The Hakikat, Adalet ve Hafıza Çalışmaları Derneği (Truth, Justice and Memory Studies Association, in short *Hafıza Merkezi* –Memory Centre) was founded in 2011 by lawyers, journalists and human rights defenders. 10 years later, the population concerned by both its agenda and influence widely surpasses the professionals in the fields of law, journalism and activism. Could you tell us a bit more about this process of institutional interdisciplinary expansion?

Meltem: Turkey possesses an uninterrupted history, comprised of piled-up layers of unfaced rights violations and of covered-up, twisted truths. The view which constitutes the common ground for the team that founded the *Hafıza Merkezi* is that neither tending to a lasting peace with the ending of the war which has been going on for over 35 years nor the constitution of a democratic society respectful of human rights is possible without proper confrontation and acceptance of this history. In a sense, the variety of disciplines and experiences which the founders brought on the table has helped define the scope and methods of the actions carried out to help achieve this confrontation and acceptance. The prominent academic and journalistic background among our members has led us to produce knowledge on the basis of research and data, to examine the manifestations of collective memory; whereas the knowledge in law provided by others has given birth to our law-based analyses and works focusing on judicial trials.

As a matter of fact, this unfronted/unaccepted, multi-layered history and its consequences constitute a topic that concerns not only the human rights defenders but also a wide range of disciplines. We knew from the start that the issues we focused on and goals we set ourselves

were actually shared by a number of different work fields and groups. Therefore, we always considered it one of our long term objectives to establish these connections.

Perhaps this process was accelerated due to the external factors which have rapidly developed over the course of the ten years since our establishment. Turkey has lined up with a global trend of democratically elected authoritarian regimes, indifferently striking, silencing and criminalising every kind of opposition, no matter where from. Human rights defenders, journalists, artists, academics... they have all become targets. Especially over the last 4 to 5 years, voicing out criticism of the ruling party's anti-democratic actions has become reason enough for one to become directly targeted. All these factors have pushed us to seek ways for our voices to be heard more strongly –and perhaps more safely– through more cooperation, more collaboration, more solidarity.

In a nutshell, factors both internal and external to the institution have led us to share our methods and to search for new ones together with other disciplines of common interest. That is precisely how the theme of Memory and Arts, and this very project, took shape.

The *Hafıza Merkezi* is essentially a non-governmental organisation. Could you tell us a bit more about the geographic, social and intellectual context that gave rise to the idea for an NGO to carry out a project so intertwined with art as this?

Enis: I first heard of the *Hafıza Merkezi* in 2013, before working there, when I saw *Bûka Baranê*, the documentary produced by the centre, in the Istanbul Film Festival. The film's producer, Murat Çelikkan, was also the co-director and among the founders of the *Hafıza Merkezi*. Another co-director, Meltem Aslan, has long worked as the director of both Anadolu Kültür and the *Hafıza Merkezi*. The *Hafıza Merkezi* has shared its offices with Depo, Anadolu Kültür's exhibition space for a long time. Briefly put, the view that human rights and art go together, side by side, organically, like neighbours, is constitutive of the *Hafıza Merkezi*. Among the resources indicated on the *Hafıza Merkezi*'s website are references to films, literary works and popular songs that address issues of enforced disappearances and losses. As for this project in particular, the first thought was initiated in 2017, when the state of emergency that followed the last coup attempt and the end of the peace process prompted civil society into a rapidly escalating helix of tension. This was a period when we could not share the outcome of our works. Consequently, or because of direct obstruction, we had to renounce

going forward with a number of projects. Then again, the *Hafıza Merkezi*'s major concerns like the confrontation and coming to terms with the past were not only addressed by the human rights movement or the academia, but were also on the art field's agenda. This is something that we could notice from up close in our offices shared with Depo. Therefore we departed from the following question: at a time when all future perspectives are blocked, can we focus on what we have accumulated over the past, tidy it up as it were, bring together the human rights movement, academics and artists around this task and create an enthusiasm to search for a new language, for a common ground, such as would stimulate creation?

The *Hafıza Merkezi* is essentially a non-governmental organisation. Could you tell us a bit more about the geographic, social and intellectual context that gave rise to the idea for an NGO to carry out a project so intertwined with art as this?

Enis: I think there is a sort of a cluster of information that the human rights movement, artistic practices and academia look at, address and sometimes approach with common references. All in all, there is a space where we can all share a common language, common concerns. However I do not think that this space has been sufficiently discovered or used until this day. As someone who closely follows cinema, I can give you this example: there are films and documentaries that should be watched by everyone working in the field of human rights in Turkey, but even in my closest circle, some of my colleagues may not be aware of them. There is a need, beyond everybody's own endeavour to deepen their own knowledge, to produce and share common knowledge. Especially now that everyone is concerned with the narrowness or shrinking of their audiences... I am convinced that establishing a selection/archive –whatever we may call it– in the fields of visual and performing arts can be instrumental in achieving this space where we can eventually come together.

Eylem: On the other hand, there are important gaps between different artistic disciplines: one could speak of art spheres that, in time, have become unaware of each other's fundamental topics of discussion. Of course, on a global scale, current artistic practices are becoming more and more entangled, to the extent that distinctions between disciplines almost disappear. Yet, we continue to stick to our habits, and there are artistic comfort zones as well. For example, there are not many points of contact between the sphere of contemporary art and that of those who produce theatre, dance and

other kinds of performances. With this project, we pursued the aim of identifying, deciphering those few points of contact between otherwise introverted artistic practices and of creating opportunities for potential interactions. That is what drove us to focus primarily on visual and performing arts, fields where theoretical discussions and approaches to social issues show remarkable alignment. Therefore, we have tried not only to allow for the field of human rights, the academia and arts to meet on a common discussion ground, but also to stop and look more at each other by opening up room for and give a chance to unpredictable partnerships between various artistic disciplines.

Sevim: I would like to add only this to what Enis and Eylem have just said: as much as it can reflect the environment which it stems from, art can also be the founder of such fields. Somewhere in her essay, Ezgi Bakçay touches upon the process of making an exhibition as a manner of political action. Beyond the question of the political nature of the exhibition's content, this view emphasises how political the very relations, encounters, common decision-making and implementation processes involved in the preparation of an exhibition are. What remains of these processes? We think that the choices and discussions involved in the constitution of this selection carry a similar potential, and hope that it will pave the way for other fruitful partnerships. These kinds of collective production processes unfold as adventures of their own. And the temporary associations that form around them allow for experiences of cooperation in the face of political repression.

I believe that a wide range of interdisciplinary approaches also exists within the team that you have put together in order to constitute this selection/archive. Could you tell us a bit more about who the team was made up of, and how the members' different backgrounds contributed to the project?

Gamze: Many people from diverse fields have contributed to the work done and discussions raised: 15 persons whom we have invited to respond to the selection/archive as well as various artists, curators and academicians whom we have sought for advice and gotten feedback from during the research process. This interdisciplinary approach has allowed for a very lively sphere of discussion tackling the themes chosen for the series of talks, where those artworks produced over the course of the last twenty years were apprehended from the perspective of such varied fields as arts, social sciences, philosophy and human rights law. The research team was made up of Ayşe, Eylem and Sevim, with whom we had previously collaborated in different occasions. All three of them actually had a more contemporary art-oriented background, but they were also familiar with the intersection

points between arts and politics, because of their previous works and through the cooperations and experiences they had had with the civil society. Ayşe is an artist focusing on the relations that bind image-mourning-memory in her works. Within this project, she was the one who made the preliminary selection, raking through a massive number of artworks produced in Turkey in relation to memory, which has exposed her to more artworks and information than those finally included in the selection/archive. Sevim is an artist and curator; aside from her personal interest in archival works and memory studies, she works as an exhibition designer on the production of research-based exhibitions that involve several disciplines at once. As a researcher and curator, Eylem carries out projects in contemporary arts and performance related to memory studies, which have been

shaped by both the civil society work through her experience at Anadolu Kültür and the academia through her ongoing doctoral studies. A number of other people working in different projects at the *Hafıza Merkezi* have played an active role throughout the project process, both in the working groups and later, during the discussions whose framework was determined by the initial research.

Eylem: The *Hafıza Merkezi's* team is composed of lawyers, journalists and human rights defenders. Enis, who was involved in the working groups from the *Hafıza Merkezi* team, is also a member of the editorial board of the *Altyazı* Cinema Magazine and a film producer. Gamze has had extensive experience in non-governmental organisations working on human rights issues, initially at Anadolu Kültür before joining the *Hafıza Merkezi*. Aside from her experience at Anadolu Kültür, Meltem, who has worked in the field of human rights for years, has focused in the recent years on the issues of transitional justice and coming to terms with the past. Kerem Çiftçioğlu, communications coordinator at the *Hafıza Merkezi*, tries to bridge the spheres of non-

governmental organisations and arts and culture through collaborative projects. Özlem Zıngıl, a human rights lawyer, is a long-time contributor to both the *Mülksüzleştirme Ağları* (Networks of Dispossession) and the *Mekânda Adalet Derneği* (Center for Spatial Justice). After completing her studies in sociology, Gülistan Zeren, a relatively new member of the team, started working at the *Hafıza Merkezi* to promote and broaden works carried out in the field of collective memory. In a nutshell, the contribution of the *Hafıza Merkezi's* team, fueled by perspectives emanating from various disciplines, has been crucial. The diversity of fields, the differences in the language which we have strived to articulate with art and the incompatibilities between the degrees of emergency of all the items on the agenda have generated difficulties of course. We may not speak the same language at times, but as we spent more time together, I believe that we have helped new, refreshing, different viewpoints surface thanks to the questions we asked each other. Overall, I think that the variety of disciplines existing in the team was perceived as a creative potentiality rather than an obstacle.

When it was initiated, your research prioritised artworks related to collective memory in the field of arts, but, over time, the human rights framework has come to the foreground. In your research notes, you mentioned the process of narrowing the project's scope. Could you elaborate on the theoretical and practical intersection points and, on the contrary, on what distinguishes both subjects –collective memory and human rights– especially in relation to the project?

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Eylem: When conceiving the Memory and Arts project back in 2017/18, we had set a goal to research the intersection between memory studies and artistic practices in Turkey. The idea of examining the reflections of collective memory on artistic creation led us to initially adopt an anthological methodology. In a way, it was probably a result of the *Hafıza Merkezi's* previous core work being based on documentation. Actually, in a slightly broader understanding, we had already transformed the notion of anthology into a project that would include many different activities. Aside from establishing an archive and selection, these encompassed workshops, lectures in universities, public talks, publications, an online platform as well as an exhibition. Due to the delays in fundraising, we decided to narrow down the project initially to forming a selection, organising public talks and preparing a publication. Methodologically speaking, narrowing the project's scope of activities was a first step, but I must say that the defining and narrowing of the conceptual framework proved to be a much more difficult process.

By artworks that address collective memory, we mean such an approach that takes into consideration not only the process of coming to terms with the past, but also all practices of remembrance and oblivion in the present and future as well. By adopting such an approach, we soon realised that we would be compelled to include almost all "politically engaged" artworks, and that it would be an almost impossible task in

such a vast field. Of course, aside from the limits of this research in terms of time and human resources, the concrete nature of the issues apprehended by the *Hafıza Merkezi* too has driven us to re-assess our framework, which then evolved from memory studies in general to an emphasis on the human rights field in particular. At this stage, we chose to focus our efforts on artworks which address issues that fall practically within the scope of the *Hafıza Merkezi's* operational fields rather than on a theoretical framework of memory studies. When examining artworks produced and exhibited in Turkey over the last 20 years, a viewpoint on human rights that does not only take into consideration the rights listed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but, widening the spectrum to all sorts of rights that are the subject of actual struggles, presented us with a very broad framework once more. The question of what the right approach would be in order to examine the subjects, themes and issues that were indeed related to the intersection points between human rights and arts kept us –both the interdisciplinary research team and *Hafıza Merkezi's* team– busy for quite some time. Especially when we considered the variety, extent and multi-layered nature of the events and issues designated as rights violations, which have led to collective trauma in the geography we live in... Eventually, we chose a framework that encompasses artworks, exhibitions and performances that question the official discourse on social issues repressed in the collective memory in Turkey and involve vio-

lence and gross human rights violations, and the systematic discrimination that paved the way for such events.

The selection/archive brings together artworks dealing with the memory of military coups, massacres, pogroms, enforced disappearances and murders by unknown assailants, the Kurdish issue, the Gezi events and the country's various ethnic and religious minorities, as well as contemporary artistic productions that can be perceived within the framework of these topics or as memory works in general. It comprises artworks which memorialise experiences from the past by directly referring to particular events and relying on testimonies; that is, such artworks that build memory by revealing the traces of the state violence in Turkey. It also includes works that cast a look at the collective memory from a more indirect and conceptual approach, works that reflect the will for peace by taking a stance against violence, gross human rights violations and systematic discriminations.

As you pointed out in your research notes, the terminology of human rights actually proposes a limited number of criteria –genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Did realising this project under the umbrella of an NGO devoted to investigating and documenting human rights violations reveal unexpected advantages? What were its limitations?

Eylem: It is enough of a difficulty in itself trying to grasp the nature and polisemic potentialities of art that "eludes categories" through the language particular to the field of human rights, which can sometimes slip on the side of technical terminology. In order to find our way in the research process, we therefore had to set ourselves limits and to create some indicators to be able to produce this selection within an immensely diverse pool of artistic production. The "tags", temporarily used to categorise the artworks in the selection/archive in order not to get lost and gain in concreteness, led us to name events involving such gross rights violations as genocides, pogroms and military coups, and their dominant signification heavy with violence. We should not forget that even though this approach presented technical advantages regarding the diversity of works which we were dealing with, it involved unconscious pitfalls of delimited discourse. This became one of the most discussed topics within the Memory and Arts working groups. However, involved as we were in such an interdisciplinary endeavour, it was of great significance to step in and out of our respective fields, languages and terminologies, contemplate the potentialities for new perspectives which this interaction could help

Enis: Within the debates in historiography, an important step in the development of collective memory studies is the formation of an alternative, opponent conscience of history that challenges the history that is written by the dominant classes, the winners. From this perspective, it is clear that the histories of violence ignored by the sovereign, the dominant, those who write official history, link collective memory with the disciplines of human rights focusing on coming to terms with past issues. Therefore, the struggle to expose the "root causes" of problems, of conflicts, especially in the perspective of transitional justice, inevitably transforms collective memory studies into mechanisms of transitional justice. As long as official histories remain written by those who adopt the perpetrators' perspective, no word will be made of massacres, of genocides, of cases of torture, of enforced disappearances and of their perpetrators. And a human rights movement that should fail to set itself the confrontation of these perpetrators as its goal will not be able to contribute to the social change that it wishes for.

us attain while being lucid about its limitations. For instance, it allowed us to notice how a specific artwork included in the selection/archive with a tag referring to the Armenian genocide could actually be linked to a number of different rights violations in this geography. It allowed us to gain an in-depth understanding of the focused themes and languages used by artworks dealing with issues of identity and memory. Besides, it has given visibility to the possibility of opening theoretical approaches to new readings on artworks that do not focus on specific events and can be considered as belonging to memory studies in a general sense. I consider that the legal follow-up, researches and field-work carried out by the *Hafıza Merkezi* in the sphere of human rights for years constitutes a crucial contribution. For example, when discussing the questions of the body, void, violence and memory in arts, we benefited from the valuable research work carried out by the *Hafıza Merkezi* on enforced disappearances, assessing the actual reality and dimension of the issue at stake in this geography. I also believe that seeing such transitivity bears crucial importance for the foundation of a language at the intersection of arts and politics.

When I look at the list of institutions whose archives were raked through as part of the project, I see that quite a lot of commercial galleries which were active toward the end of the 2000s and the beginning of the 2010s are missing. Among these, a significant number had to close because of the political, economic and cultural turbulences that occurred by the mid-2010s, a lot of them without leaving anything behind, not even a website. Within an environment affected by a memory condition, prone to repress its own memory by its own will, sometimes even creating memory gaps on purpose as a protection mechanism, what were the technical difficulties, ethical concerns and responsibilities you felt and encountered with regards to the present day and future when building, compiling this archive?

Sevim: With regards to the Memory and Arts project in particular, progressing with a clear distinction between the archive itself and the research process in mind was decisive. Although the selection/archive has more visibility, it is the outcome of a research process in the background, which by no means claims to be complete. Research is an open-ended process. It merely deals in possibilities; rendering everything visible is an impossible task. With this prerequisite understood, the questions of ascertaining which language should be used in the research approach, which tools of communication should be chosen, of who makes those calls, of what the data collected encompasses, and what potentiality it carries were primordial. By contrast, archives intrinsically carry a claim of exhaustivity. What is it that they keep, what is it they preserve? What do they grant visibility to? What invisibilities do they create while thinking they make something visible? These are the questions which define our approach to the concept of archive. These questions have determined our ethical concerns as well.

During the research phase of the project in the years 2018–2019, we have raked through the exhibition and activity programmes of around 40 prioritised art venues and events over the course of 20 years. When seeing things from this perspective, it is obvious that there remains a lot of places to look at. As you pointed out yourself, an important number of institutions and initiatives have closed down their facilities. In the following stages of the research, these will need to be included of course. Currently, we have started to keep the record of what was produced in the face of the prevailing regimes of remembrance by prioritising some institutions across various cities. We have included those artworks from exhibitions and performances held in cities such

as Istanbul (for the most part), Çanakkale, Diyarbakır and Mardin that fit in our framework of the archive. In each of these cities, we have tried to keep the number of institutional bodies and alternative venues, initiatives and artistic events in balance. We have investigated the possibilities of looking at the processes of remembrance and oblivion in Turkey through art. Initially, we had aimed at allowing for works representative of these processes to be interpreted within the frameworks of the relations between arts and politics, violence and collective memory, the politics of representation in arts, the possibilities allowed for by the archive as well as violations, censorship and self-censorship. In the next stages, the frameworks for interpretation of the selection would, together with the same ethical concerns and responsibilities, encompass such new areas as the questions of class, gender and relations between arts and capital.

The public debate initiated during the Talks on Memory and Arts, on what and how we will remember, has underscored the dire need to come together. The questions and comments raised during the talks have reminded us of our critical responsibility in terms of historiography in the fields of arts and culture in Turkey. In a country where institutional culture is inexistent, where the society's responsibilities and state's duties face each other in a quandary, the lack of archive is a decisive issue. In such an atmosphere, carrying out this kind of research work is another form of taking social responsibility. In light of the above, keeping all possibilities of interactions between researchers and archives full of potential –however weakly– intact, bears undeniable importance in a politically repressive environment.

Then let us pursue with the terminology that Sevim has raised. We have touched upon the possibilities of expanding this research and its outcome: the selection/archive compiled so far. Most of the artworks included in the project gain meaning in different ways in different chronological and geographic contexts, inasmuch as they respond to the political and social dynamics. Contemporary art simultaneously points at current times and at the future; and as a global practice, it is visible at both the local and international level. Where does the archive position itself in light of these temporal and geographic axes?

Sevim: The political and artistic contexts within which the artworks arose, and the way these works are perceived and interpreted change according to temporalities and geographies. Over the course of recent years, we have seen how rapidly the conditions of exhibiting can change for a number of artistic productions. That is why the circulation of artworks in physical and virtual environments, especially under the wind of globalisation, bears crucial importance. We need to raise such questions as what topics mediums that promise circulation open up room to, what resources they are created with and what remains outside of the picture in various geographies and contexts in spite of all the manoeuvres developed by artists and institutions to elude censorship and self-censorship. The artworks included in the selection/archive were select-

ed from the ones exhibited in Turkey. Because it was important to remember the discussions generated by the artworks when put in circulation in this terrain. This viewpoint also helped expose the need to produce knowledge on the reasons why some artworks were never exhibited here. Therefore, in the future stages of the research, we would give much importance to the inclusion of works produced by artists from the diaspora in the selection/archive, and opening up to the ongoing international discussions.

We have already talked at length of how the collection of artworks which we have compiled was shaped around the violence systematically exercised in all kinds of fields by the regime of denial in Turkey. Through the artworks which we have focused on throughout our research, we were

reminded once again of how difficult it is to simply maintain certain topics and discourses alive within the current political and social dynamics, or how tough a struggle and negotiation it requires. For instance, in her essay in this book, Nora Tataryan reminds us to look at the crises of representation that arise and the shaky ground artworks fall on when struggling with the representations of violence. In this regard, widening the scope of our archival work and diversifying the discussion with an international approach in order to be able to examine works from a broader perspective have a lot to teach us. While calling for remembrance of something, we try

to be conscious of what and how we question and grant visibility or invisibility to, remembering that contradiction may or may not give rise to potentialities. Besides, we are all partners in this probe, standing on this shaky ground imposed upon us by the current conditions of this country. As this continues to remind us that we are a part of a particular social structure, in the same way that every artistic production or gesture holds responsibility, this kind of researches have the duty to diversify their sets of lenses, increase their partners and widen their fields of vision.

Oral history is a method that is widely used in the fields of human rights and contemporary art. I believe that the present archival project will help further develop these kinds of work. However, oral history recordings are not systematically included in the scope of your archival work yet. Do you consider expanding your methods of scanning, compiling and gathering in that sense at a further stage of the archive's development?

Sevim: In order to provide a basis for discussion on the selection/archive, we have opened our research to responses by artists, researchers and critics. It was important for us to build this common platform in such a way that it would grow in time and encompass new readings by bringing us together. The official websites, printed brochures and catalogues issued by biennials, museums, festivals, performing arts venues, galleries and art initiatives constituted our primary sources, while we included essays, articles on artworks published in reviews and other publications or information obtained from direct interviews in the selection/archive as secondary sources. At times, we could not access information about certain works even though we knew of their existence and chased down their sources. We ran across the exact difficulty which you mentioned some questions back: that of following the trace of a body that disappeared without leaving even a website behind. At times, information about artworks produced and exhibited were already obtained from existing sources in circulation. In most cases, the alternative sources we found were merely echoing the main sources. In these situations, we would meet with the artist or the curator or institution they worked with and tried to fill the missing parts of the puzzle regarding their artistic production over the last 20 years.

With regards to this particular point, when taking into consideration the scarcity of art criticism, the importance of the oral history approach for this research becomes clear. Access to some information, such as anecdotes, is generally impossible from textual or visual resources. Oral history is unquestionably one of the most important research methods nowadays. Erden Kosova's contribution to this book actually stemmed from such a pursuit. In order to gain in-depth understanding of the artistic creation covering the 2000–2019 time period and of all the field's dynamics, he met with particular people who were active in each decade, from the 80s to present day. While discussing the theo-

retical and political aspects of these periods, he actually investigates the notion of collectivity within the environment of artistic production. At this stage, we have opened the selection/archive to a plurality of readings, and regarded different research methods as an asset, as was the case in this example. Therefore, in the upcoming stages, it is highly probable that, with the participation of people who carry out oral history research, we would be able to include information that was previously unsought for or remained unrecorded.

If we think of today, for example, there is not much discussion about the artistic production because of which students from the Boğaziçi University were arrested in the first months of 2021. As far as I am aware, no comprehensive writing has been issued on the subject either. We simply cannot talk about the obstacles that hinder freedom of expression no matter what the artwork is. It is obvious that, 10 years from now, when we remember these artworks, we will not access information about them through the resources in circulation. The fears that, following the closure of the paper-printed *Radikal* newspaper (1996–2016), which had played a crucial role in the constitution of memory/archive of the artistic field in the recent years, its archive would close too, epitomises the whole process that I am trying to account for –which is also important to remember. That is why the conduction of oral history works, the multiplication of responses made on artistic productions, the insistence on creating printed resources against the volatility of digital resources, the increase in the number of art critics and, most importantly, in the number of mediums granting us access to these information, bear critical importance. As the research team, we hope that the number of works and of their interpretations will only grow, with the help of various dialogues, rather than for the selection to become a static archive in the years to come.

Could you expand a little on the difference between the terminology of state violence and that of collective violence within the scope of the project?

Eylem: There were a number of concepts which, from the very beginning of the project, we ended up knee-deep in no matter how hard we tried to avoid: violence, state violence, collective violence, psychological violence, violence to women/workers/children... Of course, one can approach the collective dimensions of violence from different perspectives depending on how, why, against whom and by whom violence is exercised. Being aware of what the language that we use could reproduce, no matter how hard we tried to elude the concept, a significant proportion of the artworks included in the selection/archive involved significations to violence. During our discussions about the intersection of violence, memory and arts especially in the first working group, Turgut Tarhanlı, an important figure in the field of human rights law in Turkey, made a distinction which I would like to remind here once again. In a nutshell, Tarhanlı speaks about how rights violations are not necessarily perpetrated by the state alone, how violations committed indirectly by various related groups can also be apprehended within the context of state violence nevertheless. In this light, three dimensions are at stake here, with regards to the origins and methods of violence and col-

lective violations: Vertical violations, whereby individuals and institutions endowed with public authority are the perpetrators. Horizontal violations, which designate interferences carried out by actors with no connection to the state. However, this "disconnection" is often not clear and may potentially cover situations where specific public institutions carry the responsibility. And, lastly, diagonal violations, in other words a "subcontracting" of sorts: cases of violence where individuals and institutions linked with the state appear as hidden perpetrators in the background. The significance of this distinction for our research in the field of arts lies in the way that, in Turkey, aside from blatant cases of censorship, indirect violent interferences too determine –perhaps even more– the conditions of art creation and exhibition. Thereupon, I would like to mention the efforts by *Siyah Bant* (Black Ribbon, www.siyahbant.org) to document interventions in artworks, exhibitions and performances in the recent years and the apparition of new actors and different interference dynamics in the field. Some exhibitions and artworks included in the Memory and Arts selection/archive were identified through the scanning of these reports.

Specific cases of violence against women and LGBTI individuals are not yet part of the selection. Hasn't dissociating these categories created more difficulty, considering how deeply interlinked state violence is with militarism, and collective violence with patriarchy?

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Sevim: The framework of the selection stands on the gross human rights violations which the *Hafıza Merkezi* has been focusing on ever since its inception. Even though this framework appears to narrow the scope, it actually grants room for the work to breathe. As one delves into the question of rights violations, one realises how broad a signification spectrum the concept of human rights expands to. Forms of violence are by no means dissociated from one another. What is at stake here is such a helix that the violence exercised by a man on a woman, by the state on citizens or by people on nature are all interlinked. In that sense, the struggles for gender equality, for the right to live, children's rights or movements opposing other specific forms of violence, form a web of connections. It seems that in order for the selection/archive to expand without being reductive, it is in need of interpretations that reach beyond categories. I am convinced that the selection/archive will manage to overcome these hardships by moving forward together with the discussions that will form around these and similar questions.

Ayşe: When I joined the project team in March 2019, the framework had already been determined. We were aware that, by pursuing work

on a subject which initially might have been perceived as merely a collection of political artworks, with its grey zones and cracks, we were stepping into a field whose boundaries were both blurry and endless, rather than one that promised to provide a beneficial accumulation. Which of the works we looked at could have called for me to say: "This is not political"? It seemed impossible not to look at any of the works as an effort for memorialisation. I remember sensing a powerful feeling of being caught somewhere in between when looking at things from the perspective of the framework which we had initially agreed on, that of the themes of gross human rights violations and systematic discriminations, especially with regards to such issues as migration, violence against LGBTIQIA+ individuals and women, and child abuse. As Sevim pointed out earlier, these contradictions kept surfacing and, as we conducted our discussions and working meetings at an intense pace (and probably for longer than one can expect) as a team, we realised that staying within the boundaries of the *Hafıza Merkezi's* fields of operation and designations would lead us toward a clearer, more inclusive and healthier selection/archive.

While the subject of interrelated histories of violence is on the table, ecological violence and destruction in Turkey are often interlinked with forced displacement of populations, the enforcement of an oppressive social control by means of police stations, gendarmerie camps and fortified bases under the pretence of security, the appropriation of natural resources and the destruction of historical patrimony of humanity. Some art projects contribute to our understanding beyond social sciences inasmuch as they address these intersections. How does the selection grant space to such intersections and initiatives?

Eylem: Examples of such intersections can be found in the selection/archive. Even though we could not look at all the works, especially in the fields of ecological violence and struggles for living areas exhibited over the last 20 years, works which address the recent destructions in the district of Sur, in the general context of the human rights and living space violations in Diyarbakır, or the Gezi events, fit that description. For example, *Hafriyat (Rubble)*, the installation produced by Gülsün Demir and Uğur Oluş Beklemez in 2018 within the scope of the BAK: Revealing the City through Memory project, originated from the way in which the remains of a whole destroyed district and of people who had lost their homes were being

designated under a single term, that of "rubble". It is inevitable to talk of rights violations on a theoretical level, together with its legal dimensions. However, being able to feel the void left by the disintegration of every person, every life, every story can only be achieved with another approach, perhaps with the help of the cracks and questions opened up by arts. In this light, the realisation of the Memory and Arts project under the auspices of an NGO may constitute an important move forward with regards to noticing the intersection points between memory studies and artistic productions in Turkey, and looking at the evolution possibilities that these will give birth to.

Transitional justice proposes a conceptual and practical framework that often bridges art and memory studies. For now, in Turkey, this framework only exists as small steps in this direction, missed opportunities and an expectation for the future. May one encounter the seeds of transitional justice within this project's conception?

Enis: Four main approaches, all closely linked with one another, come forth in transitional justice. Criminal justice and trials, the search for truth, which leads to the constitution of such bodies as the truth commissions, restorative justice mechanisms and the implementation of reforms in the legal and institutional fields. Restorative justice can encompass a very large field, and give rise to symbolic mechanisms. For instance, it was precised in the Colombian Peace Agreement that 3 statues would be made from the weapons handed over by the FARC, and that these statues would be installed in Bogota and Havana, where the Peace Talks were held. As well as memorialisation initiatives to say "Never again!", for similar violence never to unfold again. Even though none of the works we looked at were produced within such a transitional justice framework, I believe that the civil society may endow some of them with the strength of memorialisation. In that sense, the archive carries the potential to become a "place of memory". Notwithstanding the ongoing thorny debate over whether the archive should be made accessible to the public, in order to give you just a small example, we could think of *Sus (Shut Up)*, 2010, the photograph by Şener Özmen included in the selection, underscored by Umut Tümay Arslan in her talk. This photograph constitutes the image on the home page of failibelli.org, the trial watch website which the *Hafıza Merkezi* has inherited from TESEV. This photograph, showing

a man bent over a well, making a gesture as though to hush someone with his one hand and to keep someone at bay with the other, constitutes a powerful image of the perpetrators and their allies in Turkey. The fact that the *failibelli* website's audience is mostly composed of people involved in the human rights movement and academics has, even if barely, turned this image into something beyond an object belonging to a gallery. It is up to us to increase the number of these images. A number of ways can be explored to make such images public. Of course, the priority is to ensure access to the inventory/archive/selection/anthology of such powerful images. Not only for us to access it; we must search for ways to transmit it to newcomers (with regards to interest or age) in the human rights, academic and artistic fields and to those who will join in these fields in the future. *Small Axe* (2020), the anthology directed by artist and cinematographer Steve McQueen for the BBC, consisting in 5 films telling how Afro-Caribbean English persons suffered racism and what forms of struggle they developed against it, constitutes a good example from the current popular culture. The anthology brings the experience of the past to the present day but on the other hand, 20 years from now, the mechanisms that will grant access to it and make it a part of collective memory, or the Afro-Caribbean people, will circulate it from hand to hand.

This book is a compilation of the works carried by the researchers who were given access to the selection/archive. Could you tell us more about how you chose these working groups, how they worked and what your plans are for the future?

Eylem: In this selection, there were 5 themes which we thought of focusing on: we have formed working groups tackling issues related to the reflections of violence and memory in arts; political representation in arts; looking at memory through the body, issues of trauma and testimony as well as questions of archiving. As we tried to identify 3 persons to invite to take part in each of these groups, we specifically looked for academicians, critics and artists from different disciplines who lack platforms of collective debate and who would be open to a new language, approach and opportunities for discussion. Aside from these, we pursued other specific focuses in identifying certain groups. For example, it was very important to include people from the field of performing arts and theatre critique in the group devoted to the question of the representation of the body. Zeynep Günsür Yüceil and Özlem Hemiş were a part of it from the start. We also thought that the group which focused on looking at violence and memory from a historical perspective would benefit from the contributions of a person from the field of human rights law, such as Turgut Tarhanlı who, even though he is not an artist, devotes thought to the intersections of these fields.

We have tried to proceed with an interdisciplinary approach as much as possible. Of course interdisciplinarity carries a high potential for creativity but also makes for a difficult assembly. Is it possible to look at contemporary art using a terminology that emerges from the field of human rights? Should the critical stance which is at the core of art translate into a benefit to the field of rights? Beyond the themes we had determined to focus on, we gave a lot of thought to this kind of structural questions, both when forming the groups and throughout their work-

ing processes. We spent 3 months working with each group separately, whose meetings would typically occur once a week. During this process, all members would examine artworks from the selection on the basis of their own fields of interest, while discussions shaped by the selected themes involved the whole group. At some point, we even considered the publication to focus on the recordings of these insightful discussions. Each group was composed of one person from the research team and one person from the *Hafıza Merkezi*, aside from 3 persons invited.

Gamze: Discussion is still ongoing regarding the future of the selection/archive. As we pointed out numerous times already, both the research and selection have or had their limitations and defaults of course. Yet, without ignoring them, seeing how the research and selection have helped create a valuable ground for discussion, a platform –however small it may be– for thought exchange between civil society, art and the academia, just as we hoped it would, is truly valuable. As a first step to extend this platform, we are currently searching for the proper method in order to expand the selection and open its access to artists, art critics and researchers. We are continuously looking for ways to meet with people from other disciplines, who were not a part of this work, and to create the right conditions for dialogue to occur outside of the technical language specific to the fields of memory studies or human rights.





Index of Artworks

This index of artworks lists the references concerning the artworks commented on within the scope of the present book, whether these works be included in the selection/archive of the Memory and Arts research project or not. The exhibitions or shows that have led for the artworks to be commented on are mentioned in the last line of the references. Other artworks mentioned during the talks have not been included in this index.

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Ahmet Şık, *Başkasının Acısına Bakmak 2 (Regarding the Pain of Others 2)*, 2006, Photography series. Karşı Sanat, 2006, İstanbul. **32, 33, 168, 223, 224.**

Ali Bozan, *Bu Bir Toros Değildir (This is not a Toros)*, 2009, Photograph. yerolmayan, DEPO, 2009, İstanbul. **16, 122, 123, 166, 181.**

Ali Miharbi, *Duvarı Kırbaçlayan Makina (Machine that Whips the Wall)*, 2013, Installation, Photograph: Rıdvan Bayrakoğlu. Ruhun Mekanik İşleyişi Üzerine (On the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit), Pilot Gallery, 2013, İstanbul. **125, 126.**

anti-pop, *Bellek Kutusu (Memory Box)*, 2011, Digital media (memory game). Ateşin Düştüğü Yer (Where Fire Has Struck), DEPO, 2011, İstanbul. **211, 245.**

Aram İkrâm Taştekin, Gözde Özkurt, *Taş (The Stone)*, 2016, Video (7'40"). BAK: Revealing the City through Memory, DEPO, 2016, İstanbul. **152.**

Aret Gıcır, *Ateş ve Kılıç Arasında (Between Fire and Sword)*, 2015, Oil painting on canvas (140×180 cm). Ateş ve Kılıç Arasında (Between Fire and Sword), 2015, Öktem Aykut Gallery, İstanbul. **72, 156, 157.**

Arzu Yayıntaş, Neriman Polat, *İstikrarlı Ölüm (Stable Death)*, 2016, Installation (3322 nails on chipboard panel). Kayıpta Saklı (Hidden in Loss), Karşı Sanat, 2016, İstanbul. **213.**

Atom Egoyan, *Auroralar (Auroras)*, 2007, Video (11'), Source: İKSV Archive. 10th İstanbul Biennial (Not Only Possible, But Also Necessary: Optimism in the Age of Global War), Antrepo No. 3, 2007, İstanbul. **71, 72, 73, 158.**

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Banu Cennetoğlu, *Liste (The List)*, 2006, Installation (poster, billboard and printed materials exhibited in public space). Yama, 2015, İstanbul. **192, 202.**

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Berat Işık, *Delik 2 (Hole 2)*, 2012, Video (colour, silent, 3'25"), Source: Arter Archive. Haset, Husumet, Rezalet (Envy, Enmity, Embarrassment), ARTER, 2013, İstanbul. **97, 100, 158.**

Burak Delier, *Madımak'93*, Tersyön (Reversedirection), 2007, Installation (fire resistant suit and videostill). Gerçekçi Ol, İmkansız Talep Et (Be Realist, Demand the Impossible), Karşı Sanat, 2007, İstanbul. **156, 157.**

Burak Delier, *Maya (Yeast)*, 2020, Intervention at Ek Biç Ye İç, Installation (HD video, 18' 21", bread and yeast), Installation photograph: Zeynep Fırat, commissioned by Protocinema.

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Cengiz Tekin, *Untitled*, 2008, Video (1'58").

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Dilek Winchester, *İlk 3 Türkçe Roman (3 First Novels in Turkish)*, 2009, Installation, Photograph: Mustafa Hazneci, Courtesy of the artist and SALT.

Yüzyılların Yüzyılı Sergisi (A Century of Centuries), SALT Beyoğlu, 2015, İstanbul. **65, 66.**

Dilek Winchester, *Okumak ve Yazmak Üzerine (On Reading and Writing)*, 2007, Installation view, Photograph: Mustafa Hazneci, Courtesy of the artist, SALT and the Ars Aevi Museum of Contemporary Art.

Yüzyılların Yüzyılı Sergisi (A Century of Centuries), SALT Beyoğlu, 2015, İstanbul. **65, 66.**

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Doris Salcedo, *A Flor de Piel*, 2012, Installation, Source: <https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/31379>.

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A Flor de Piel, Guggenheim Museum Collection, 2012, New York. **188.**

Doris Salcedo, *Untitled*, 2003, Installation, Photograph: Muammer Yanmaz, Source: İKSV Archive.

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Ekmel Ertan, *Bugünün Tarihi (Today's History)*, 2019, Installation (ceramic, 3D laser print, video and light installation – consisting in three parts accumulating on top of each other, extending over a period of time).

Bugünün Tarihi (Today's History), PASAJ, 2019, İstanbul. **153, 154.**

Elçin Ekinci, *Untitled*, 2010, Installation.

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Eva Haule, *Tutsak Kadınların Portreleri (Portraits of Women Under Captivity)*, 2007, Photography series.

Karşı Sanat, 2007, İstanbul. **35, 36, 37.**

Evrin Kavcar, *Dikkat Boşluk Var (Beware of the Void)*, 2015, Installation and artist book. 3rd Mardin Biennial (Mythologies), between Mardin's old and new town and Atamyan Mansion, 2015, Mardin. **11, 97, 100, 102, 184, 185.**

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Fatoş İrwen, *Duvar (Wall)*, 2019–2020, Records of time (stone, layers of plaster and similar materials ripped off of the prison, stuck on a pillboxes with toothpaste). Walls of the Diyarbakır Prison No. 5, Diyarbakır. **174.**

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Gencer Yurttaş, *Ölüm Oruçları (Hunger Strikes)*, 2007, Photograph.
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Gülsün Karamustafa, *Apartman (The Apartment Building)*, 2012, Installation, Photograph: Cem Berk Ekinil.
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Gülsün Karamustafa, *Duvar Örüldürken (Making of the Wall)*, 2003, Video.
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HaZaVuZu, *Akışı Kes (Cut the Flow)*, 2007, Performance.
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Hakan Akçura, “*Kemalizm bir ibadet biçimidir.*” (*Murat Belge'den*) [*“Kemalism is a form of worship.”* (*quoted from Murat Belge*)], 2007, Poster (70 × 100 cm).
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Hale Tenger, *Böyle Tanıdıklarım Var III (I Know People Like This III)*, 2013, Installation (photographs from press archive, dry laser print on x-ray film, plexiglas plate, LED, metal),
Wide angle photographs: Murat Germen, Close-up photographs: Ali Erdemci, Courtesy of Galeri Nev İstanbul and the artist.
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Hale Tenger, *Çıkardık mı su altındaki ölüyü? (Did we pull the dead from underwater?)*, 2019, Kinetic sculpture (iron, aluminium, burnt motor oil, plexiglas, mechanical parts, electronic control unit, 42 × 88,5 × 43 cm), Photograph: Laleper Aytek, Courtesy of Galeri Nev İstanbul and the artist.
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Hera Büyüktaşçıyan, *Dalgaların Dalgası (The Wave of All Waves)*, 2018, Installation, Photograph: Murat Germen.
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Hera Büyüktaşçıyan, *Panarchia*, 2012, Installation (sculpture, wooden plinth, Fabergé eggs blocked by stones, stone, gold leaf).
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İz Öztat, *Ölüm Sonrası Üretim Serisi (Başına Buyruk Yazı, Utopie) [Posthumous Production Series (Wayward Script, Utopie)]*, 2013, Installation (woven reed, plant fibres). **73, 97, 103, 104.**

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Levent Yıldız, *Antigone*, 2017, Video installation (9-channel video installation, colour / black and white, various lengths).
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Sonia Balassanian, *Taşların Sessizliği (Silence of Stones)*, 2015, Installation (12 carved pumice stone pieces), Photograph: Şahir Uğur Eren, Source: İKSV Archive.
14th Istanbul Biennial (Saltwater), Istanbul Modern, 2015, Istanbul. **129, 130**.

Stüdyo Oyuncuları, *Euridike'nin Çığlığı (Eurydice's Cry)*, 2006, Play (65'), Source: İKSV Archive.
15th Istanbul Theatre Festival, Atatürk Kültür Merkezi, 2006, Istanbul. **114, 115, 117**.

Şener Özmen, *Bayrak (The Flag)*, 2010, Photograph (99,06 × 149,86 cm), Courtesy of the artist and the Pilevneli Gallery.
13 Eylül (September 13), Diyarbakır Arts Centre, 2010, Diyarbakır. **125, 127**.

Şener Özmen, *Canlı Bir Güvercine Barış Nasıl Anlatılır? (How to Tell of Peace to a Living Dove)*, 2015, Video (04'32"), Courtesy of the artist and the Pilevneli Gallery.
Çıkış Var (There is a Way Out), Pilot Gallery, 2015, Istanbul. **97, 103.**

Şener Özmen, *Sus (Shut Up)*, 2010, Photograph, Courtesy of the artist and the Pilevneli Gallery.
13 Eylül (September 13), Diyarbakır Arts Centre, 2010, Diyarbakır. **159, 265.**

Şermola Performans, *Antigone2012 (Çardeh Sal Berê)*, 2012, Play (60'), Written and directed by Berfin Zenderlioğlu, Photograph: Nazım Serhat Fırat.
Şermola Performans, 2012, Istanbul. **114, 117, 118, 119.**

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Taldans, *Solum*, 2005, Performance, Photograph: Ebru Ahunbay & Aslı Girgin.
Centre National de la Danse, 2005, Paris, France. **97, 105.**

Timur Çelik, *Untitled (Eyewitness series)*, 2017, Oil painting on canvas (30 × 24 cm). **169, 170.**

Timur Çelik, *Untitled (Eyewitness series)*, 2019, Oil painting on canvas (30 × 24 cm).
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Timur Çelik, *Untitled (Eyewitness series)*, 2020, Oil painting on canvas (32 × 25 cm). **170.**

Timur Çelik, *Yangın (The Fire, Eyewitness series)*, 2017, Oil painting on canvas (22 × 14 cm). **170.**

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Volkan Aslan, *Ölüye ağlayamayan insanların huzursuzluğu içindeyim (I am unrestful like the people who cannot weep for the dead)*, 2018, Video (HD video, colour, silent).
Beni Vur! Beni Onlara Verme! (Shoot me! Don't Turn Me Over!), Pi Artworks, 2018, Istanbul. **187.**

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Zehra Doğan, *Ez Zehra, ne poşmanım (I am Zehra, I have no regrets)*, 2019, Writing, menstrual blood, ballpoint pen and hair on bed sheet (191 × 137 / 40 × 81 × 20 cm), Tarsus Prison, Photograph: Ute Langkafel MAIFOTO.
Ez Zehra (I, Zehra), Maxim Gorki Theatre, 2021, Berlin. **172.**

Zehra Doğan, *Untitled*, 2018, Ballpoint pen on bed sheet. **172.**

Zehra Doğan, *Külotumdaki Kırmızı Ordu (The Red Army In My Pants)*, 2016, Rosehip tincture and ballpoint pen on clothing fabric (65 × 83 cm), Mardin Prison, Photograph: Ute Langkafel MAIFOTO.
Ez Zehra (I, Zehra), Maxim Gorki Theatre, 2021, Berlin. **173.**
Zehra Doğan, *Nusaybin*, 2016, Digital image, Nusaybin, Mardin. **171.**

Zehra Karakoç, *Geometrik Desenlerden Taşıyıcı Kaburgalara (From Geometric Patterns to Supporting Frames)*, Installation, Photograph: Begüm Özden Fırat.
Senin Bir Sanatın Var (You Have the Art of Your Own), Yeditepe Biennial, Gülhane Park, 2018, Istanbul. **90, 93.**

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Zişan, *Çete-i Nisvan, Çete-i Nisvan Beyannamesi (Women's Gang, Declaration of Women's Gang)*, 1925, Print on paper. **73, 75.**

English translation of the *Declaration of Women's Gang*:

- Being a wife and a mother are neither commands of nature, nor sacred rules.
- Compulsory conscription should be abolished and children should not be granted to the nation.
- Faith in morals and the nation do not free women, instead they instrumentalise women for societal stability.
- Ethnic nationalism is not patriotism.
- Political rights cannot be gained by voting or entering the parliament in a single party regime.
- Education should contribute to personal freedom and will, instead of the motherland and nation.

Zişan, *Cezire-i Cennet / Cinnet Haritası (Map of Cennet/Cinnet (Paradise/Possessed) Island)*, 1915–1917, Ink on paper (25.5 × 18 cm).

Here Together Now, Matadero Madrid, 2013, Madrid. **72, 75.**

Zişan, *Felaket (Catastrophe)*, 1923, Ink on paper. **73, 74.**

Zülfikar Tak, *Büyük Kapatma (The Great Confinement)*, 2007, Charcoal drawings. Karşı Sanat, 2007, Istanbul. **22, 36, 37.**

Biographies

Aşlı Zengin is currently an assistant professor at the Rutgers University's Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Before joining Rutgers, she taught at the universities of Brandeis, Harvard and Brown. She completed her PhD at the University of Toronto's joint programme of Anthropology and Women and Gender Studies. She is also the author of *İktidarın Mahremiyeti: İstanbul'da Hayat Kadınları, Seks İşçiliği ve Şiddet (Intimacy of Power: Women Prostitutes, Sex Work and Violence in Istanbul)*. Zengin's papers are published in countless national and international reviews and compilations. Her fields of research include the excessive and atypical forms of gender and sexuality, sovereignty and violence, health and law policies, death and societal afterlife, the anthropology of proximity and emotions and the feminist, queer and trans movements.

Ayşe İdil graduated with a major in visual arts from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. In her practice, which researches the resembling emotions and possibilities of familiarity inspired by the artificial and the original, İdil hints at the disconnections encountered in various relationships and translations. Her first solo exhibition, *Hep açık, olmayan kapı (An absent door, always open)*, was held at Poşe in December 2018. In collaboration with Deniz Kırkalı, she runs the programme titled *Garp Sessions*, which allows for different facilitators and participants each year to experience collective learning, thinking and saturation methods in Babakale, Çanakkale. Together with Larissa Araz, she used to co-host *Kirli Çakı*, the programme broadcast by Radio Modyan where both would interview a variety of actors in the field of culture and arts. She currently hosts the *Mehtapta Safari* programme on the same platform, where she programmes music by appealing to free association and expectation. She took part in Arter's Research Programme and Galeri 5's Devir Programme in 2019. *Hafıza Borcu (Debt to Memory)*, the essay where she addresses the relations that bind image-mourning-memory, was published by Arter publishing.

Banu Cennetoğlu is an artist living in Istanbul. Her works focus mainly on the production, classification and distribution policies of "knowledge". K21 Ständehaus, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf (2019), the Sculpture Center, New York (2019) and the Chisenhale Gallery, London (2018) are among the institutions that have held some of her solo exhibitions. *...of bread, wine, cars, security and peace*, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (2020); *Actually, the Dead Are Not Dead*, Bergen Assembly 2019, Bergen (2019), *Beautiful world, where are you?*, Liverpool Biennial (2018); *Documenta 14*, Athens and Kassel (2017) are some of the collective exhibitions she took part in. In 2006, she founded BAS, which focuses on the production and archiving of artists' books and publications in the field of visual arts. Since 2003, she has been contributing the endeavours of the non-governmental organisation *UNITED for Intercultural Action* to compile, update and grant visibility to the "List" of people who died (as much as can be identified) because of Europe's anti-immigration policies.

Banu Karaca's research encompasses such fields as political anthropology, critical theory, art and aesthetics, cultural policies and feminist memory studies. Her recent work focuses on the freedom of artistic expression, the social gender dimension of war, the representation of political violence, and visual literacy. The collective book *Women Mobilizing Memory* (Columbia University Press, 2019) and *The National Frame: Art and State Violence in Turkey and Germany* (Fordham University Press, 2021) are among the works that stand out in her recent bibliography. One of the founding members of the *Siyah Bant* initiative, which investigates, reports and analyses the cases of censorship in arts in Turkey, Karaca's current research within the *Forum Transregionale Studien* in Istanbul and Berlin focuses on how the processes of dispossession in the history of the late Ottoman Empire and of the Republic of Turkey has shaped art historiography.

Begüm Özden Fırat is an associate professor in Sociology at the Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University. She graduated from the University of Ankara's Department of Political Sciences, before completing her master's at the Middle East Technical University (METU)'s Department of Sociology. She then completed her PhD at the Amsterdam University's Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis programme. Her fields of work encompass urban and cultural sociology, visual cultural studies and social movements. She was among the editors of such books as *Commitment and Complicity in Cultural Theory and Practice* (Palgrave/Macmillan, 2009), *Cultural Activism: Practices, Dilemmas, Possibilities* (Rodopi, 2011) and *Küresel Ayaklanma Çağında Direniş ve Estetik (Resistance and Aesthetics in the Age of Global Rebellion)*, İletişim, 2015). Her *Encounters with the Ottoman Miniature: Contemporary Readings of an Imperial Art* was published in 2015 by I.B.Tauris. She directed the experimental video titled *Boşluk (The Lightwell)*, 2020) and took part in the collective that undertook the direction of the documentary *Hoşgeldin Lenin (Welcome Lenin)*, 2016).

Dilan Yıldırım graduated from Istanbul's Boğaziçi University with majors in Sociology and Political Science. She is currently pursuing a PhD at Harvard University's Department of Social Anthropology. She is also running the Political Anthropology/Ecology work group at the same university. In her PhD, where she strives to present an anthropological perspective on the political ecology of conflictual geographies, she focuses on such fields and issues as space and power, the anthropology of value, dispossession, violence, securitisation and militarisation, political culture and state ethnography.

Ege Berensel is a visual researcher and media artist living in Ankara. Berensel's videos *Mü/hür* (1992) and *Panoptikon* (1994) have been awarded prizes in national and international festivals. His three-channel video installation *Orasıburası (here (t) here)* was exhibited in the Kunst-Werke Berlin in 2005, and in the Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona in 2007; his three-channel video installation *Türkü Söylemeyen Tepe (The Hill Doesn't Chant Anymore)* was exhibited in the 10th International Istanbul Biennial in 2007 and his multi-screen video installation *Dinamo Mesken* in SALT Ulus in 2015. His video installations *Devlet Dersi (State Lesson)* and *Militan Sinema (Militant Cinema)* were screened in MSUV, Novi Sad in 2016, and *Kadınların Filmleri (Women's Films)* and *Grev (Strike)* in DEPO Istanbul in 2019. He took part in SALT Beyoğlu's exhibitions *Yazlık: Şehirlinin Kolonisi (Summer Homes: Claiming the Coast)* in 2014 with his film *1963*, and *İdealist Mektep, Üretken Atölye (Idealist School, Productive Studio)* in 2018 with his visual research *İmgeler Okulu (Imagery School)*. His video installation *Cevat Kurtuluş* was exhibited in AVTO Istanbul in 2020. He took part in the 4th Istanbul Design Biennial in 2018 with *Laboratuvarlar Laboratuvarı (Lab of Labs)*. He runs the "Archive of Turkish 8mm Family Films".

Enis Köstepen was born in 1979 in Izmir. He studied international business and sociology at Istanbul's Boğaziçi University, and anthropology at *The New School for Social Research*. Among the founding members of the Altyazı Monthly Cinema Magazine in 2001, Bulut Film in 2007, the Mithat Alam Educational Foundation in 2008, and the Altyazı Cinema Foundation in 2019, Enis Köstepen has also produced films such as *Uyku Sonra (Sleep and Then)*, short film, 2004), *Tarihe Şerh: Irak Dünya Mahkemesi (For the Record: The World Tribunal on Iraq)*, 2007), *Bahtı Kara (The Dark Cloud)*, 2009), *Tepenin Ardı (Beyond the Hill)*, 2012), *Hayatboyu (Lifelong)*, 2013, co-producer), *Abluka (Frenzy)*, 2015) and *Kız Kardeşler (A Tale of Three Sisters)*, 2019, co-producer). Actively involved, outside of cinema, in academic work and non-governmental projects in the fields of human rights and social and economic change, Köstepen has been working as project coordinator and fundraiser within the *Hafıza Merkezi* between 2013–2020.

Biographies

Erden Kosova is an art critique. Since 2013, he has been contributing content for the visual arts activities held by Berlin's Maxim Gorki Theatre. His series of talks titled *Art in Dark Times*, which he conceived together with Galit Eilat, was hosted in 2020 by bi'bak, one of Berlin's alternative project venues. Kosova is also a member of the editorial board of *red-thread.org*. He also wrote the main text of the artist monography *Cengiz Çekil: 21.08.1945-10.11.2015*, which was published in 2020.

Eylem Ertürk is the co-curator of the Memory and Arts project, and a PhD candidate at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. She carries out researches and contemporary art projects focusing on memory and public space. She has completed master's degrees in Social Design at the University of Applied Arts Vienna (2019) and in Fine Arts Photography at Marmara University in Istanbul (2007) after graduating from İTÜ (Istanbul Technical University) with a major in Management Engineering. She has led/initiated/worked in several projects and art institutions in Turkey as a researcher, editor, curator and manager. She has taught at the Istanbul Bilgi University Art and Cultural Management Programme, and edited the book *Yerel Kültür Politikaları El Kitabı (Local Cultural Policies Handbook, 2011)*. In her work at Anadolu Kültür (2010–2017), she focused on contemporary art and cultural dialogue, and co-curated the *Hatırlamak ve Anlatmak için Şehre BAK (BAK: Revealing the City through Memory)* project, publications and exhibitions.

Ezgi Bakçay, born in Istanbul, is an art and culture theorist and sociologist. She graduated from the Department of Cinema and Television at the Faculty of Communication at Galatasaray University. She then completed a Master in Sculpture at the Faculty of Fine Arts at Marmara University and a PhD at the Department of Sociology at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University. Since 2006, she has been a member of the educational staff of both the Marmara University's Faculty of Fine Arts and the Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, where she teaches visual culture and art theory. Ezgi Bakçay undertakes the curatorship of *Karşı Sanat Çalışmaları*, and organises seminars, workshops and exhibitions in a number of culture and arts institutions. Her productions cover such fields and notions as public space, image, memory, culture, aesthetics and politics.

Gamze Hızlı graduated from the Middle East Technical University (METU)'s Department of Political Science. Between 2003–2005, she followed the curriculum of the Cultural Studies Master Programme at Istanbul Bilgi University. From January 2005 to March 2012, she was responsible for the development, implementation and reporting processes of projects at Anadolu Kültür. She has been working at the *Hafıza Merkezi* since March 2012.

Gülistan Zeren graduated from the Department of Sociology at Galatasaray University in 2016. She then completed her master's from the École Normale Supérieure de Lyon's Analysis of Contemporary Societies Programme. Her master's thesis concerned the neoliberal transformation of health policies. The focus of her research was placed on the institutionalisation of the Turkish medical sector, and the impact which the family doctors have had on the construction of professional identity. She has been working within the *Hafıza Merkezi* since 2019. She also coordinated *Faili Belli*, a blog that monitors human rights trials, as well as the processes of researching and producing new content for the *Memorialize Turkey* website, which presents a selection of various memorialisation initiatives in Turkey. She is currently working as a member of the Memory and Peace Works team.

Kerem Çiftçiöğlü graduated from the Department of Social and Political Sciences at Sabancı University before completing his Master in the Theory and Practice of Human Rights Programme at Essex University. After his graduation in 2004, he was involved, both as a volunteer and a employee, in numerous non-profit organisations such as the *Helsinki Yurttaşlar Derneği* (Helsinki Citizens' Assembly), Istanbul Bilgi University European Institute and Europa Nostra's Turkey Office. Since 2014, he has been working as the *Hafıza Merkezi*'s communication coordinator.

Lara Fresko Madra is currently completing her PhD on the reflections of social violence histories in contemporary art in Turkey at the Department of History of Art at Cornell University. Her writings have been published in such reviews as the *Afterall Journal*, *Art Forum*, *Art in America* and the *Art Review*, exhibition catalogues and various online mediums. *Burnumuzun ucunda duran gizli bir dünya (This Secret World that Exists Right there in Public)*, held at Rampa in 2014 and *Bir iç mekân bahçesi (An Internal Garden)*, held at Depo in 2017, are some of the exhibitions that she has curated.

Meltem Ahıska is a professor in Sociology at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul. Aside from *Radyo'nun Sihirli Kapısı: Garbiyatçılık ve Politik Öznellik (The Magical Door of Radio: Occidentalism and Political Subjectivity*, Metis, 2005), she has written and edited many books. Her features and essays on occidentalism, collective memory, national identity and gender have been published in numerous reviews and collective books. Together with Zafer Yenal, she supervised the editorial development of the exhibitions and publications *Hikâyemi Dinler misin? Tanıklıklarla Türkiye'de İnsan Hakları ve Sivil Toplum (Would You Listen to My Story: Human Rights and Civil Society in Turkey through Testimonies*, 2004) and *Aradığınız Kişiye Şu Anda Ulaşılamıyor: Türkiye'de Hayat Tarzı Temsilleri, 1980-2005 (The person you have called cannot be reached at the moment... Representations of Life Styles in Turkey, 1980-2005*, 2006). *Havalandırma* (Metis, 2002), *Anda* (together with Sahir Erdiñ, Everest, 2008) and *Yad* (Metis, 2020) are among her poetry/experimental books. She was an active member of the editorial boards of such reviews and publishing collectives as *Akıntıya Karşı*, *Zemin*, *Defter* and *Pazartesi*. She is currently a member of the *red-thread.org* review's publishing collective and the Critical Times review's editorial advisory board.

Meltem Aslan is one of the founding members and co-director of *Hafıza Merkezi*. She was the executive director of *Anadolu Kültür* between 2009-2018. She received her BA in Business Administration from Boğaziçi University in Istanbul, and a master's degree from Columbia University, School of International and Public Affairs as a Turkish Education Foundation (TEV) scholar. Within the scope of her second master's, which she carried out under the European Union Human Rights and Democratisation Programme, she wrote a thesis on the violations of freedom of expression in Turkey in the name of state security. Aslan, who has recently focused her work and research on transitional justice, methods of coming to terms with the past, dialogue and reconciliation through culture and arts, has also done work related to local governance and women's rights at NGOs like TESEV (Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation) and *Kadın Yurttaş Ağı Derneği* (KAYA - Association of Women Citizens Network). She has attended conferences and workshops on these topics, and given seminars in the field of transitional justice at various universities in Turkey.

Nora Tataryan graduated from the Galatasaray University (Istanbul) and Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (Paris) University's Department of Philosophy. She then went on to complete a Master in Cultural Studies at Sabancı University and a PhD in Women and Gender Studies at the University of Toronto. Currently assistant professor at the Department of Communication at Bahçeşehir University, Tataryan's fields of expertise encompass theory of aesthetics, feminist philosophy and psychoanalysis.

Özlem Hemiş graduated from the Department of Theatre Critique and Dramaturgy at Istanbul University, before completing a Master in Performing Arts at Dokuz Eylül University and a PhD in Theatre Critique and Dramaturgy at Istanbul University. She is the author of *Gözün Menzili: İslami Coğrafyada Bakışın Serüveni (The Eye's Range: The Adventure of View in Islamic Geography*, Vakıfbank Kültür Yayınları, 2020). Together with Leman Yılmaz, she edited *20: 1989'dan Bugüne İstanbul Tiyatro Festivali (20: Istanbul Theatre Festival from 1989 Until Today)*. Hemiş, who teaches at the Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University State Conservatory and the Istanbul University State Conservatory, is also currently an assistant professor at the Theatre Department at Kadir Has University. She is also a member of ARC-NET (European Network of Research and Documentation of Performances of Ancient Greek Drama) and the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality City Theatres' Literary Board, as well as the general secretary of Turkey's Theatre Critiques' Federation.

Özlem Zıngıl graduated from the Marmara University Law Faculty in 2001. She received her LL.M in Law of Economics from Galatasaray University in 2007, and MA in Cultural Studies from Istanbul Bilgi University in 2011. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Public Law at Istanbul Bilgi University. Zıngıl has been a member of the Istanbul Bar Association since 2005. Aside from her professional activity as a corporate and private lawyer, she has worked as the project coordinator and general coordinator of Transparency International, and supported initiatives run by the Hrnt Dink Foundation and the Van Bar Association. Since 2013, she has been contributing to the independent collective Networks of Dispossession. She is currently a member of the Law Works Team within the *Hafıza Merkezi*.

Biographies

Seçil Yersel was born in 1973. She studied sociology and art. Since 1994, she has been working with and within photography, searching for intermediary and different locations; she takes part in exhibitions and publications with sound-text-montages; walks, gathers, writes, narrates and shares. Her works have been exhibited in numerous cities worldwide including Istanbul, Tokyo, Berlin, London and Munich. Together with Özge Açikkol and Güneş Savaş, Yersel has been a founding member of the artists collective Oda Projesi since 2000. Oda Projesi places itself at the heart of Istanbul's energy and looks towards the rapid physical and social transformations of the city's texture and of its inhabitants by creating ways of constituting alternative places and by building solidarity ties through solid relations. After its inception in Istanbul, the project was extended to numerous cities such as Berlin, Munich, Gwangju, Venice, San Fransisco, Copenhagen and Vaasa. Seçil Yersel has been living and working in Berlin for two years.

Sevim Sancaktar's productions as an artist, curator and exhibition designer stem from a practice that is rooted in archival research and contemporary art. She graduated from the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences at Uludağ University, before completing a Master in Visual Arts at Sabancı University. As one of the founders of the artist collective REC Collective and of Karşılaşmalar, a group that produces exhibition solutions, she has had the opportunity to collaborate with a great number of artists and art institutions through production and exhibition processes. She has contributed in the curatorial and design processes of many publications and exhibitions such as *Drawing Thoughts*, *Erol Akyavaş Photography*, *Füreyâ*, *Kitabın Yazgısı (Fata Libelli)*, *Aşıkâr Sır (Hafıza Merkezi)*, *Ara Güler*, *Islık Çalan Adam* and *Paylaşılan Kutsal Mekânlar*. She has been a co-curator of the Memory and Arts project for approximately two and a half years. She is one of the facilitators of the *Omuz*, *Dayanışma ve Paylaşım Ağı*, a solidarity platform founded during the Covid-19 pandemic crisis.

Tamıl Bora was born in 1963 in Ankara. He graduated from the Istanbul High School and the Faculty of Political Sciences at Ankara University. Between 1984–88, he wrote for the weekly news magazine *Yeni Gündem*. Since 1988, he has been the chief editor of the İletişim Yayınları publishing house's research-essay collections. He has been the chief editor of the quarterly social sciences review *Toplum&Bilim* between 1993–2014. He writes in the monthly socialist culture review *Birikim*, which he has been the chief editor of since 2010. Political thinking and ideologies in Turkey constitute his main field of research. He has published numerous papers and books on these issues.

Turgut Tarhanlı became a professor of International Law and Human Rights Law at Istanbul Bilgi University Law Faculty in 1999 after studying and lecturing at Istanbul University. He has been the dean of Istanbul Bilgi University Law Faculty between 2002–2019, and the head of the Human Rights Law Research Centre there between 2000–2020. He teaches *International Human Rights Law*, *Business and Human Rights* and *Human Rights Activism* in graduate programmes. In the latter mentioned class, he stresses the importance of embracing a cross-disciplinary approach that establishes bridges especially with contemporary artistic practices. He has taken part in projects focusing on conflict resolution, negotiation, international crimes and restorative justice in Harvard and Princeton universities; he has also been appointed twice as guest researcher at the New York University. He has published six books, aside from numerous articles both in Turkish and English. In 2001, he was awarded the certificate of appreciation by the UNHCR for his contribution to refugees' rights in Turkey. He is a member of the Istanbul Bar Association, and a founding member of many non-governmental organisations.

Umur Tmy Arslan was born in 1975 in Ankara. She graduated from the Department of Environmental Engineering at the Middle East Technical University (METU). She then completed her PhD at the Department of Radio, Television and Cinema of the Ankara University Faculty of Communication. Her works, which combine social theory and film studies, have been published in several mediums. She currently pursues her work as an assistant professor in Sociology at the Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University. *ok Tuhaf ok Tanıdık: Vesikalı Yarım zerine (Strangely Familiar, Familiar Estranged: On My Prostitute Love*, Nilgn Abisel et alii, Metis, 2005); *Bu Kbuslar Neden Cemil?: Yeşilam'da Erkeklik ve Mazumluk (Why These Nightmares Cemil?: Masculinity and Oppression in Yeşilam*, Metis, 2005); *Mazi Kabrinin Hortlakları: Trklk, Melankoli ve Sinema (Spectres of Grave Called Past: Turkishness, Melancholy and Cinema*, Metis, 2010); *Bir Kapıdan Gireceksin: Trkiye Sineması zerine Denemeler (You Will Enter Through a Door: Essays on Turkish Cinema*, compilation, Metis, 2012); *Kat, Sinema ve Etik (Layer, Cinema and Ethics*, Metis, 2020) are some of the books she has published.

Zeynep Gnsr Yceil studied sociology before working on Indian Culture and Indian Classical Dances at the University of Delhi. She then completed a Master in Performing Arts at the Middlesex University and a PhD in History at Boğazii University. As an associate professor, she is the head of the Theatre Department at Kadir Has University. Gnsr has been independently producing cross-disciplinary works as a director and performer since 1990. Since 1999, she has produced works in the field of movement theatre together with *Hareket Atlyesi Topluluęu*, the company that she has founded.

Zeynep Sayın is a literary theorist, art theorist and professor. She was born in 1961 in Istanbul. She studied poetics, art history and philosophy in Istanbul, Salzburg and Vienna. She has taught in numerous universities in Istanbul, at the Faculty of Architecture of Mardin Artuklu University, at the fine arts academies of Vienna and Linz and at the University of Jena. She is currently teaching at the Hochschule fr Grafik und Buchkunst Leipzig (Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig). Her bibliography includes *Mithat Ően ve Bedenyazısı (Mithat Ően and Bodywriting*, Kakns, 1999), *Noli me tangere* (Kakns, 2000), *İmgenin Pornografisi (Pornography of the Image*, Metis, 2003), *Ktlk Cemaatleri (Communities of Evil*, Tekhne, 2016) and *lm Terbiyesi (Manners of Death*, Metis, 2018).

Imprint

The Memory and Arts Project

The Memory and Arts project, coordinated by *the Hafıza Merkezi*, aims to cast a look at today's Turkey through the lens of artistic creations in an environment where the rule of law, human rights and democratic values are wearing out and non-governmental initiatives struggle with all sorts of threats. The research project, which focused on artistic creation in the fields of visual arts and performing arts from 2000 onwards, consisted in two phases: the first was the constitution of a selection/archive, the second, its opening to interpretation. In order to allow for multiple readings, the productions included in the selection were opened for interpretation by 15 academics, critics and artists from various working fields and debates were carried out within working groups, concentrating on specific themes. The essays which constitute this volume are based on the Talks on Memory and Arts, carried out online between 16–25 December 2020 as the first publicly open programme of the project.

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Project Curators

Eylem Ertürk, Sevim Sancaktar

Project Coordination

Gamze Hızlı, Kerem Çiftçioğlu

Project Supporters



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Research (2018–2020)

Ayşe İdil, Eylem Ertürk, Sevim Sancaktar

Archives of Institutions

The research process involved a scanning of the exhibitions and shows spanning the years 2000–2019 and held by 40 prioritised art venues and events.

Biennials/Festivals: Istanbul Biennial, Mardin Biennial, Çanakkale Biennial, Istanbul Theatre Festival, iDans Performance Festival, A Corner in the World, Amber Platform

Museums/Galleries: Istanbul Modern, Pera Museum, Sabancı Museum, Arter, Salt Beyoğlu, Salt Galata, Pilot Gallery, Depo, Karşı Sanat, Galata Greek School, Akbank Sanat, Yapı Kredi Kültür Sanat, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Taksim Art Gallery

Performing Arts Venues: Şermola Performans, Çıplak Ayaklar, Galata Perform, İkinci Kat, garajistanbul, Mekân Artı, Kumbaracı50, performistanbul

Other Initiatives/Institutions: Diyarbakır Arts Centre, Hafriyat, Atilkunst, 5533, Apartment Project, Loading Art Space, HaZaVuZu, x-urban collective, Domates Biber Patlıcan, siyahbant, July 15 Museum and collaborative solidarity exhibitions of NGOs and the art field

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Working Groups and Participants (September-December 2020)

Violence, Collective Memory and Arts

Erden Kosova, Ezgi Bakçay, Turgut Tarhanlı, Eylem Ertürk, Meltem Aslan

Political Memory in Arts

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