DISCLOSING THE GAZE: A COUNTER-FORENSIC READING OF JUDICIAL PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE HAMIDIAN PERIOD

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Disclosing the Gaze:

A Counter-Forensic Reading of Judicial Photography in the Hamidian Period

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DECLARATION ON ORIGINALITY

I, Fuat Doğa Erten, certify that

• I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words, including digital resources, which have been produced or published by another person or institution;

• this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;

• this is a true copy of the thesis approved by my advisor and thesis committee at Boğaziçi University, including final revisions required by them.

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ABSTRACT

Disclosing The Gaze:

A Counter-Forensic Reading of Judicial Photography in the Hamidian Period

This thesis offers a critical reading of judicial photography in the Hamidian period by combining a counter-forensic approach with Lacanian psychoanalysis. Current literature often emphasizes the Hamidian albums' efforts to impose order and assert control over the photographic image while overlooking the agency of the subjects involved in the photographic act. Challenging this approach, the thesis aims to highlight the contradictions and ambiguities that disrupt the controlling gaze by foregrounding the subject's agency. To this end, it examines two state-sponsored albums: one containing photographs of those wounded in the Ottoman Bank Raid in 1896, and another documenting the attack plans carried out by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation in İzmir in 1905. Interpreting the forensic narratives constructed by these albums as symbolic acts aimed at resolving the collective trauma triggered by the Armenian Question, the thesis explores how these photographs sought to align the viewer with a fantasmatic, masterful gaze. Drawing on the Lacanian notion of the "Real gaze", it emphasizes how this fantasmatic identification fails at certain moments. Furthermore, it explores how the ambiguities of the traumatic Real gaze open up possibilities for understanding the experiences of the subjects who participated in the albums. The thesis argues that although these subjects were exposed to symbolic violence by the state, serving either as the object or the producer of photography without full consent, they nonetheless reclaimed their agency through subtle acts of resistance against the state's controlling gaze.

ÖZET

Bakışı İfşa Etmek:

II. Abdülhamid Döneminde Adli Fotoğrafın Karşı-Adli Bir Okuması

Bu tez karşı-adli bir yaklaşımı psikanaliz ile birleştirerek II. Abdülhamid dönemine ait adli fotoğrafların eleştirel bir okumasını yapmaktadır. Mevcut akademik çalışmalar Hamid albümlerinin görsel temsile sıkı bir düzen getirip fotoğrafik imgeyi kontrol altına alma çabasına fazlaca vurgu yaparken, fotoğraf edimine katılan öznelerin failliğini göz ardı etmektedir. Tez bu yaklaşıma karşı çıkarak, kontrolcü bakışı sekteye uğratan çelişkilerin ve muğlaklıkların altını çizmeyi ve öznenin failliliği öne çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu niyetle, tez 1896'daki Osmanlı Bankası Baskını'nda yaralananların fotoğraflarını içeren albüm ile 1905 yılında Ermeni Devrimci Federasyonu'nun İzmir'de yürüttüğü saldırı planlarını belgeleyen albümü incelemektedir. Bu iki devlet destekli fotoğraf albümünün inşa ettiği adli anlatıları Ermeni Sorunu'nun tetiklediği kolektif travmayı çözmeye yönelik sembolik edimler olarak ele alarak, fotoğrafların seyirciyi fantazmatik bir egemen bakışla nasıl özdeşleştirmeye çalıştığına bakmaktadır. Tez, Lacancı psikanalizdeki "gerçek bakış" kavramını kullanarak bu fantazmatik özdeşleşmenin kırılganlığına vurgu yapmakta ve anlamın sekteye uğradığı anlara odaklanmaktadır. Ayrıca, travmatik gerçek bakışın ifşa olduğu bu anların, öznelerin deneyimlerini anlamlandırmamıza nasıl imkan tanıdığını tartışmaktadır. Bu deneyimleri mercek altına alan tez, kendi rızaları dışında fotoğraf ediminin nesnesi ya da üreticisi olan öznelerin sembolik şiddete maruz kalıp pasif bir konuma itildiğini, ancak buna rağmen devletin kontrolcü bakışına karşı örtük de olsa bir direnç gösterip failliği geri kazanabildiklerini savunmaktadır.

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As someone without a formal background in the field of history, I greatly benefited from every course I took from the History Department. In particular, I would like to express my gratitude to Yaşar Tolga Cora whose course on the history of Ottoman Armenians played a crucial role in deepening my interest and knowledge about the subject. Also, I want to thank Çiğdem Kafescioğlu, whose course on the history of Istanbul not only sparked in me a desire to learn more about the city but also taught me to approach the urban space as a multi-layered, palimpsestic text to be interpreted. I now realize how much this course has contributed to shaping the counter-forensic perspective of this thesis.

I also owe thanks to Ceren Özselçuk and Bülent Küçük from the Sociology Department. The group discussions in their seminars greatly helped me revisit the key texts of critical theory and psychoanalysis and thus allowed me to address the

gaps in my theoretical knowledge. Their positive feedback on my response papers and presentations has been deeply motivating.

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At home, my partner, Hande Tekin, along with our cats Darling and Pıtır, has been a constant source of support. Thanks to our conversations about the small details of life and our nightly film sessions that often kept us sleepless, the bleak days of the pandemic were filled with joy. During my research for the thesis, she not only helped me think through the theoretical issues that I grappled with but also steered me away from the dangers of over-reading and critical excess.

Finally, I want to thank my mother and father for their unconditional support of my academic studies, both in Turkey and abroad. From an early age, they instilled

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I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my father.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION: REFRAMING THE CONTROLLING GAZE 1

CHAPTER 2: TOWARD A PSYCHOANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR A COUNTER-FORENSIC READING OF PHOTOGRAPHY 16

2.1 State violence and counter-forensics 16

2.2 Counter-forensics as a critical strategy of reading the evidence 19

2.3 Counter-forensic analysis of photography 22

2.4 Trauma, symbolic act and the Real gaze.....29

CHAPTER 3: VIOLENCE OF REPRESENTATION AND THE AMBIGUITY OF CONSENT 46

3.1 The absent Armenians and potential perpetrators staged as victims 49

3.2 The paradox of atrocity photography and humanitarian sensibility 55

3.3 Taming the subject and the domestication of the gaze 60

3.4 Invisible faces and the eruption of the Real gaze.....66

3.5 Ambiguities of defiance 71

3.6 The colonial underside of Hamidian paternalism.....77

CHAPTER 4: THE PURLOINED GAZE AND THE AMBIGUITY OF IDENTIFICATION 83

4.1 The structure of the album 83

4.2 Retrieving the master's purloined gaze 88

4.3 The Real gaze and the failure of coherent identification 95

4.4 The question of positionality and intention.....107

4.5 Transgressing the conventions of portraiture 114

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION: WORKING THROUGH THE HAMIDIAN ARCHIVE 121

REFERENCES 125

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure. 1. Andon on the right, sitting on the bench like a suspect - İÜMK 779-71/47.....50

Figure 2. Halid on the right - İÜMK 779/71-057.....52

Figure 3. Şakir on the left and Mehmet Latif in the middle posing to the camera as potential perpetrators - İÜMK 779/71-032.....54

Figure 4. A patient whose lower body is neatly covered by a blanket - İÜMK 779/71-017.....59

Figure 5. A wounded soldier whose body is fully covered - İÜMK 779/71-001.....59

Figure 6. Wounded patients exhibited as forensic objects - İÜMK 779/71-021.....62

Figure 7. A victim looking directly at the camera - İÜMK 779/71-008.....63

Figure 8. A young victim in need of compassion - İÜMK 779/71-012.....64

Figure 9. Dervish Agha lies on the bed, frowning - İÜMK 779/71-005.....66

Figure 10. The eruption of the Real gaze and the failure of identification - İÜMK 779/71-028.....68

Figure 11. The sitter averting his gaze from the camera - İÜMK 779/71-052.....71

Figure 12. The sitter casting a confrontational look at the camera - İÜMK 777/71-033.....72

Figure 13. Mehmed Reşad on the left and his threatening gaze - İÜMK 779/71-056.....74

Figure 14. Anastas in the middle, refusing to show his wounds - İÜMK 779/71-019.....76

Figure 15. The two soldiers' refusal of passivity - İÜMK 779/71-023.....77

Figure 16. The “civilized” Monsieur Jacques, dressed in his elegant suit - İÜMK 779/71-49.....81

Figure 17. “Docile” soldiers, submitting to the camera’s disciplinary gaze - İÜMK 779/71-026.....82

Figure 18. The postcard sent from Athanassiades's studio in Candia to Istanbul (1907).....88

Figure 19. The pleasurable effect of bombs contained within the frame - İÜMK 90641/4.....98

Figure 20. Bombs and weapons contained by the state’s controlling gaze - İÜMK 90641/6.....99

Figure 21. Fetishistic treatment of bombs, undermining the viewer’s safe distance from the image - İÜMK 90641/3..... 100

Figure 22. The original photograph by Guillaume Berggren - İÜMK 90497/22....103

Figure 23. The recycled version of Berggren’s photograph in Athanassiades’s album- İÜMK 90641-16.....103

Figure 24. A tranquil view of the customs building - İÜMK 90641/23.....105

Figure 25. Dark silhouettes disrupting the viewer’s voyeuristic gaze - İÜMK 90641/10.....106

Figure 26. The photograph of the watchtower targeted by the Committee - İÜMK 90641/11.....107

Figure 27. Ghostly figures implicating the viewer (digitally enlarged version.....108

Figure 28. Celebration by the Armenians in honor of the Ottoman Constitution. (August 22, 1908).....113

Figure 29. The group portrait of the railway workers in the Basmane Station - İÜMK 90641/14.....114
Figure 30. One of the arrestees, Dikran, whose criminal status is emphasized by an eye-level, frontal pose - İÜMK 90640/4B.....117
Figure 31. The honorific portrait of Mirliva Said Pasha, emphasizing his authority as a high-ranking bureaucrat - İÜMK 90641/2B.....118
Figure 32. The dignified portrait of the arrestee, Varabet Ohannes - İÜMK 90640/3D.....119
Figure 33. Moşah's well-groomed appearance contrasting with his status as an arrestee – İÜMK 90640/11C.....120
Figure 34. The awkward frontal pose of Kamil Pasha, subtly undermining his authority – İÜMK 90641/1.....121

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: REFRAMING THE CONTROLLING GAZE

Although much has been written on the Hamidian photographic archive in the last three decades, most of these accounts have remained reductive and formulaic in their critical endeavour. As rightly pointed out by Ahmet Ersoy and Deniz Türker, historians of photography in the Ottoman context have shown a tendency to overemphasize the gift albums sent to the Library of Congress and the British Museum and adopted a largely overdetermined vision fixated with imperial self-portrait.[1] Drawing attention to this problem at length in his recent work, David Low uses the metaphor of a tunnel to describe this fixation and rightly argues that histories of photography in the Ottoman period have been typically written either through the lens of the paradigms of Orientalism and modernism, or from the vantage point of the imperial capital that excluded the vernacular.[2] These two tunnels, Low asserts, have limited the scope of critical inquiry into the Hamidian photographic archive, leading historians to leave aside the question of state violence. While scholars have emphasized how these photographic productions spoke back to the violence of the Western colonial powers, they have rarely interrogated how power and violence were practiced by the Hamidian state photography itself.[3]

Increasingly aware of this major lacuna in the current scholarship, a number of historians working on photography in the Ottoman period are moving away from the usual paradigms of orientalism, modernity and self-representation, increasingly

[1] Ersoy and Türker, "The Hamidian Visual Archive (1876-1908): A User's Manuel," 326.
[2] Low, *Picturing the Ottoman Armenian World: Photography in Erzurum, Harput, Van and Beyond*, 10-12.
[3] Ibid.,17.

turning their attention to potential or alternative histories that can be reconstructed through an imaginative and critical use of photograph as historical document. I characterize this new approach as counter-forensic turn in the historiography of Ottoman photography in that it expressly takes distance from the ideological perspective of state power which instrumentalizes the photograph as a seemingly neutral, self-evident document and instead focuses on the ambiguous and polysemic nature of the image. In accord with the notion of counter-forensics and its ethico-political concerns as delineated by critics such as Thomas Keenan, Eyal Weizman and Allan Sekula, these historians interrogate the photographic archive in an effort to foreground the experience of the subjects overshadowed and oppressed by state violence.

Ahmet Ersoy and Mehmet Kentel's study of the panoramic photographs documenting the aftermath of the 1870 Great Fire in Istanbul clearly represents this counter-forensic approach. Giving direct reference to Weizman and Keenan's notion of forensic aesthetics, employing it as their operative concept, the authors discuss how the insurance agents dealing with the disastrous event used the technology of photography and the panoramic genre as diagnostic tools to calculate the damage and "neutralize the formidable shock of the disaster"[4]. Such instrumentalization of the photographic medium, the authors argue, was intended to overlook the experience of people who endured the traumatic event. Yet, this was not a fully successful operation due to the excess of information conveyed by the photographic image. No matter how rigorously the photographs served to reflect the mastery of an institutional, panoramic gaze, they could not help revealing visual evidence of suffering, which inevitably brought to the fore the traumatic, human experience of

[4] Ersoy and Kentel, "'Burnt panorama': forensics, photography, and the 1870 Pera fire," 185.

the disaster.[5] Drawing attention to this chaotic appearance of the cityscape, the authors underscore the ambivalence of the panoramic vision.

Although it does not invoke the term explicitly, Kalliopi Amygdalou's analysis of the photographs documenting the 1922 Smyrna Fire can also be considered as engaging in a counter-forensic reading in that her study tries to reconstruct the photographic event by "digging under the layered meanings of the image."[6] While Amygdalou underlines how the images of refugees desperately waiting on the quay to be rescued by warships have been archived, circulated and instrumentalized in the service of competing Turkish and Greek national narratives, she draws attention to the ways in which these images invite the viewers to an ethical responsibility to witness the suffering experienced by these people who were abandoned as non-citizens. Precisely for the reason that these photographs were taken from the point of view of "bystanders witnessing these events just a couple of metres away, who had the immense privilege of being located in a little boat or a tall and castle-like warship"[7], Amygdalou argues, drawing on Ariella Azoulay's work, that the relation between the photographer and the photographed subjects can be re-worked for the ethical purpose of acting in solidarity with the refugees whose citizenship can be confirmed through this alternative, affective interpretation of the photographic event.

Zeynep Devrim Gürsel's recent work on Ottoman Armenian expatriation photographs, or *terk-i tabiiyet* portraits, should also be considered as a contribution to a counter-forensic reading of the state archive. Conceptualizing these photographs

[5] Ersoy and Kentel, "'Burnt panorama': forensics, photography, and the 1870 Pera fire,", 185.
[6] Amygdalou, "Déjà Vu at the Archive: Photography, National Narratives, and the Multiple Histories of the Smyrna Fire," 323.
[7] Ibid., 327-328.

as “portraits of unbelonging”, which served as tools of governmentality for the Ottoman state in its effort to control the physical mobility and legal citizenship status of Armenian families in the late 19th and early 20th century, Gürsel tries to understand “not only what these photographs signified at the moment of their production but also how they resonate in the present.”[8] To this end, she juxtaposes the narrowly defined, bureaucratic frame of these photographs imposed by the state with the alternative, affective memories and meanings attributed to the same photographs by the descendants of those depicted. Describing her method as “looking together”, which she supports by conducting interviews with the members of the family and listening to their stories about the past, Gürsel endeavors to piece together different narratives with an effort to build a history around the expatriation photographs. It is also worthy of mention that she underscores the agency of the family members who re-appropriated these portraits in accord with their own wishes. For instance, she recounts how the letter halftone production of a portrait from 1905, which was originally required for bureaucratic processes, “adamantly transformed a repressive photograph done by the state into an honorific portrait.[9]

Although the abovementioned studies have significantly enriched the field and expanded the scope of critical research on the Hamidian visual archive, it is difficult to say that this counter-forensic perspective has been sufficiently reflected in studies dealing with judicial photography. Certainly, scholars have discussed the ways in which photography was employed in criminal records, passports, travel documents, hotel registrations and dactylographic work, emphasizing how these photographic practices served as a modern tool of surveillance for the Hamidian

[8] Gürsel, “Looking Together as Method: Encounters with Ottoman Armenian Expatriation Photographs,” 219.
[9] Ibid., 215

state[10]. However, they have rarely addressed the formal qualities of the photographs themselves. For instance, İlkay Yılmaz, in a series of articles focusing on the Ottoman state's adoption of standardized file-based photographic methods, such as Bertillon's antropometry and *portrait parlé*, has significantly helped us understand the historical context within which police photography emerged as a means of surveillance and power apparatus in the Ottoman state[11]. However, her research has been mostly concerned with the production and circulation of the mugshots as a method of criminal identification. A critical discussion of how the Ottoman state actively used the rhetorical, argumentative aspect of the photographic image in the construction of forensic narratives has been mostly absent in her account.

My contention is that one encounters another 'tunnel' here because the prevailing tendency to neglect questions of form and the implicit faith in the transparency of the photographic index leads to an overemphasis on the intentions of the state and its official rhetoric. Since scholars often privilege historical and contextual concerns over the formal and affective aspects of photography, that is, focusing solely on the thematics at the expense of poetics, they turn their attention away from the ambiguities of the image and instead try to build a linear and coherent narrative about the historical development of judicial photography. This inevitably feeds the illusory image of the Hamidian state in control of photographic meaning and limits the possibility of a counter-forensic analysis that would foreground the agency of the subjects taking part in the photographic event.

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[10] See, for instance, Sarıyıldız, "Osmanlı Bürokrasisinde Fotoğraflı Belge Kullanımı ve Parmak İzi Uygulaması," 183-208. Bingöl, "Osmanlı Devletinde Tanzimattan Sonra Kriminal Kimlik Tespit Yöntemlerine Dair Notlar ve Belgeler," 845-880. Akbabaöz, "Eşkâle Dayalı Kimliklendirmeden Kriminal Kimliklendirmeye: Osmanlı İç Güvenliğinde Biyometrik Unsurlar," 409-416.

[11] See her online article Yılmaz, "Photography as Policing Infrastructure During the Late Ottoman Empire",11.03.2021, https://trafo.hypotheses.org/27186, and "The Ottoman Empire, Police Photographs and Anthropometry," 90-100.

This thesis aims to fill in this lacuna in the current histories of judicial photography in the Hamidian period. By shifting the attention to the rhetorical dimensions of photography, I want to demonstrate how the Hamidian state employed the evidentiary aspect of the photographic medium to construct forensic narratives. What really interests me, however, is to offer an oppositional, counter-forensic analysis of these narratives by practicing a critical close-reading that would expose the formal contradictions and gaps that disturb the discourse of power and uncover the presence and agency of the subject which did not fully accord with the intentions of the state.

To this end, I examine two different photographic projects as case studies. The first consists of photographs of wounded patients compiled in the aftermath of the Ottoman Bank Incident on August 26, 1896. The second is a photographic album compiled in İzmir as part of the investigative process initiated after the ARF's failed attempt to assassinate Abdulhamid II on July 21, 1905. I contend that these two state-sponsored photographic projects are well suited to the aims of this thesis because the rhetorical dimensions of forensic aesthetics explicitly come to the fore in them. Both projects privilege a rationalizing, neutral, yet imaginative approach in their forensic aesthetics. Although differing from each other in terms of their generic structures, (one depicting wounded bodied, the other crime scenes) they follow a similar logic in presenting visual evidence to an imaginary audience tasked with assessing the validity of the arguments propagated by the photographs. Functioning as a forum in which viewers are invited to imagine the unseen criminal act, both series of photographs try to articulate a forensic truth by presenting visual evidence designed to prompt moral and legal judgments.

These two state-funded photographic projects call for a counter-forensic reading because they demonstrate significant formal contradictions in their narratives. In the case of the photographs of the wounded from 1896, the contradiction is most apparent in the posing of the photographed subjects. While some of the pictures in the series represent the wounded merely as forensic objects to be surveyed by the neutral, clinical gaze of the camera, others divert from this logic by aesthetizing the injured bodies as dignified, reclining figures. As for the 1905 album, one observes a striking contradiction in that the outdoor snapshot photographs, which are intended as crime scene reconstructions, do not reveal any visible trace of crime but rather ordinary, quotidian street scenes. Commissioned to an Ottoman Greek studio photographer named Athanassiades, the album significantly relies on the evidentiary status of the documentary image. For instance, it presents carefully staged photographs of the bombs captured from the Armenian revolutionaries along with the formal portraits of high officials and the detainees. Consequently, the purely imaginary aspect of the outdoor scenes, which strangely make the viewer witness the absence of the photographic index, creates a curious issue to be interpreted.

My analysis endeavors to make sense of these formal contradictions as indicative of ideological fantasies that serve to cover over political and social antagonisms in the Hamidian period. However, I complement the analysis of the serial structure of the albums with detailed, textual close-readings in order to explore the ambiguities inherent to the immediacy of the photographic event. The central argument I propose is that both photographic projects tried to identify the viewer with the seemingly masterful gaze of the camera in an effort to insert them into a fantasmatic state narrative. However, I insist that these fantasmatic identifications did

not operate seamlessly. In certain instances, they were disrupted by symptomatic ambiguities and gaps that attested to the failure of the masterful gaze and brought to the fore the lived experience of the subject who resisted the intentions of the state in subtle ways.

To articulate this failure of mastery and our encounter with the presence of the subject, I benefit from an eclectic, theoretical framework in which I synthetize the conceptual thinking of counter-forensics with Lacanian psychoanalysis as the critical idiom offered by the latter allows me to reflect on the repressed, psychic dimensions of the ideological narratives constructed by the photographs as well as the reading the ambivalent identificatory processes at work in the immediacy of the photographic event.

There is, however, a more fundamental reason for the integration of psychoanalysis in this thesis. By foregrounding the discourse of trauma as conceptualized by Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, I aim to re-interpret the historical period during which judicial photography became an urgent tool for the Hamidian regime in its struggle against revolutionary militant groups and the increasingly negative, anti-Ottoman sentiment in the Western public opinion. While scholarship on this period, particularly Selim Deringil's important work, which aptly employs the term "image-management"[12], has emphasized the role of photography in alleviating the anxieties of the Hamidian regime that desperately aimed to assert its legitimacy and desired self-image in the eyes of the West, these studies have not sufficiently addressed how these anxieties were not fully resolved, leaving traumatic traces within the photographic frame. On the contrary, indeed, historians have often tended to emphasize how the Hamidian albums strictly controlled the gaze in their

[12] See Deringil, "Ottoman Image Management and Damage Control," 135-149.

effort to portray a modern image of the Ottomans. Wendy Shaw, for instance, argues that it was actually this rigorous effort to control the photographic image and reduce it to its informative, purely indexical status that distinguished photographic practices in the Ottoman empire from those in the West. Shaw writes:

Whereas European photography was increasingly characterized by its intention and ability to move beyond the surface of the image, Ottoman photography aimed at the purely indexical image in which each category – human, building or landscape – could be neatly segregated and in which the subject gave no more or less information than was intended. Rather than indicating a truth beyond the surface of the image, most Abdulhamid Album photographs filtered out anything beyond the index.[13]

Shaw may be partly right in suggesting that Hamidian albums reflected a positivist impulse by "erasing the uncontrolled elements of the image"[14] What is problematic in her account, however, is that it does not consider the necessary failure of this controlling gaze which is always potentially disturbed by the inherent indeterminacy and ambiguity of the image. Furthermore, Shaw's argument risks essentialism as it tries to define the identity of "Ottoman photography" by relying on a highly restricted material, namely a series of photographs from the Hamidian gift albums. This reductionist approach, which significantly obscures the multilayered diversity of the Yıldız archive, conveys the misleading impression that the Hamidian state comfortably and securely instrumentalized the medium of photography in accord with its ideological intention to take advantage of the indexical, evidentiary status of the image. By disregarding the indeterminacy of the photographic image

[13] Shaw, "Ottoman Photography of the Late Nineteenth Century: An 'Innocent' Modernism?," 86.
[14] Ibid., 91.

and the active, interpretive role of the viewer, this perspective inevitably repeats the Hamidian state's fantasy of self-represention and thus falls short of articulating a political and ethical position from which the presence of the subject can be reclaimed.

Counteracting this reductionist perspective, this thesis aims to demonstrate how the controlling gaze of the Hamidian state was actually disturbed by various contradictions, ambiguities and gaps that undermined the official rhetoric of the photographs. By framing the historical context of my case studies -namely the Bank Incident and the failed assassination of Abdulhamid- as a period of collective trauma, I explore how judicial photography functioned as a fantasmatic intrument through which the Hamidian regime attempted to resolve its traumatic anxieties. Drawing on Fredric Jameson's theory of narrative as a symbolic act and the political unconscious, my discussion addresses the question of trauma primarily from the perspective of the sovereign, that is, the Hamidian state, and examines how formal contradictions in the narrative structure of the photographs reveal the very traces of the trauma repressed in the political unconscious.

However, it is equally important for me to articulate the latent meanings of traumatic affects communicated to the viewers by the photographed subjects or the photographer performing within the space of the photographic event. Therefore, I complement my narrative-based analysis with detailed, textual close-readings in order to explore the ambiguities of identification in the photographs. I argue that both photographic projects tried to identify the viewer with the seemingly masterful gaze of the camera in an effort to suture them into a fantasmatic state narrative. However, these fantasmatic identifications, I contend, never operated seamlessly. In certain instances, they were disrupted by symptomatic ambiguities and gaps that attested to

the failure of the masterful gaze, and these moments of failure significantly foregrounded the traumatic experience of the subject.

To articulate this failure of mastery and the concomitant moment of encounter with the presence of the subject, I mobilize the notion of the Real gaze in Lacanian psychoanalysis. This key concept allows me to reflect on simultaneously the fantasmatic dimensions of the photographs and the lived experiences of the subjects under state domination. As I will discuss in detail in the second chapter, the Real gaze that I refer to here is not the look of the viewer or the disciplinary gaze of the camera. Rather, it is an unsettling, spectral gaze that inscribes the traumatic point at which the viewer's identification with the illusionary authority of the camera fails. The Real gaze belongs to no one; and as such, it functions as a stain that distorts "the seeming neutrality of the field of the visible"[15]. This failure creates a sense of anxiety in the viewer as it leads to a disorienting self-scrutiny, compelling them to question their epistemological assumptions about the self-evident aspects of the photographic image. Therefore, when the Real gaze emerges in the material surface of the photographs, disrupting the viewer's safe distance to the image, this produces an effect of ambiguity and poses the viewer a question that has to be interpreted as a symptom.

Our encounter with the gaze as such takes us to the counter-forensic dimension of the photographs. That's why this thesis formulates its key methodology as "disclosing the gaze". When the emergence of the Real gaze within the photographic frame is properly articulated and interpreted as a symptom, I contend that this interpretation can effectively disclose the trauma of the subject violated by the symbolic act of the state apparatus. But this disclosure should not be aligned with

[15] McGowan, *The Real Gaze: Film Theory After Lacan*, 28.

a politics of victimization or a celebration of passivity. On the contrary, what I hope to show is that the Real gaze also significantly allows us to recognize the subject's agency and resistance despite the fact that this is not exactly an experience that can be fully owned and registered by the subject's own consciousness.[16] If we pay attention to the affective dimension of the photographic image and interpret the structure of the trauma disclosed by the gaze, we can see that the subjects performing their roles within the frame do not only reveal their traumatized states but also their resistance to power. This knowledge allows us to construct alternative historical narratives that one cannot find access by means of written sources and documents in the official state archive. Therefore, it is crucial to locate the Real gaze as a material force within the photographic frame.

With this in mind, the thesis adopts a dual critical strategy in its counter-forensic analysis of the Hamidian judicial albums. While discussing how these photographic projects rigorously staged the state's fantasies of power by overshadowing and violating the presence of the subject, it also tries to punctuate the moments where the Real gaze upset these fantasies and rendered visible the subject's resistance in subtle ways.

In the second chapter, I offer a more detailed exposition of my theoretical and methodological framework. I begin by outlining the key concepts and practices of counter-forensics as developed by Eyal Weizman, and then I engage with the work of scholars such as Allan Sekula, Elizabeth Edwards and Ariella Azoulay, whose critical approaches to photography reflect the ethical and political concerns of counter-forensics. I demonstrate how this body of work can be brought into dialogue

[16] Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma*, 8.

with Lacanian psychoanalysis on the basis of three core concepts, namely trauma, symbolic act and the gaze. I argue that this synthetic approach combining counter-forensics with psychoanalysis allows us to simultaneously expose the fantasmatic impulse behind the seemingly objective, controlling gaze of the Hamidian state apparatus and uncover the subtle forms of resistance enacted by subjects who defy this gaze.

In the third chapter, in which I deal with the photographs from 1896, I raise the discussion of resistance from the position of the photographed subjects, that is, the wounded soldiers, policemen and civilians who took part in the project by exhibiting their injured bodies. By drawing attention to the formal contradictions in the posing of the sitters, I argue that these photographs did not simply aim to present the evidence for "Armenian terror". They at the same time anxiously took pains to stage a humanitarian fantasy in order to reclaim the desired self-image of the Ottoman state in the eyes of the Great Powers. In this fantasmatic theatrical stage constructed by the photographs, the sitters, I argue, were not only forced to submit passively to the disciplinary gaze of the state apparatus, but also had to perform their obedience and gratitude for the state. While the photographs tried to create an illusion of consent on the part of the sitters and aimed to offer the viewer a comfortable position of mastery and distance, however, this fiction collapsed in certain instances and the Real gaze came to the fore in its unsettling dimensions by simultaneously exposing the state violence and the resistance of the subject, which subtly manifested itself through some contingent details such as facial expressions and posture.

The last chapter approaches the question of resistance and agency from the position of the photographer, Athanassiades who was commissioned by the state to

take the photographs and compile the Izmir investigation album. As in the first chapter, I begin my discussion by interpreting the formal contradictions within the fantasmatic narrative of these photographs. I emphasize how the seemingly rational intention to document the places and buildings that the Armenian revolutionaries planned to attack was actually deeply intervowen with a desire to "contain" the anxieties resulting from the state's loss of monopoly over image production in an urban environment where the technology of photography was becoming increasingly affordable and accessible. By drawing attention to the repeated emphasis, in the official investigative reports, on the activities of Armenian militants who effectively used photography both to empower their political cause and disguise themselves from state surveillance, I try to demonstrate how the Ottoman state, intimidated by this loss of power, attempted to retrieve the "purloined gaze" by producing crime scene photographs that paradoxically staged the absence of the photographic index.

Reading this formal contradiction as the Hamidian regime's symptomatic effort to reassure itself of its power and stability, I shift my focus toward the aesthetic qualities of the photographs in the album. By underscoring the particular ways in which Athanassiades photographed the bombs, crime scenes and the portraits in the album, I argue that there is indeed a fundamental ambiguity regarding the photographer's point of identification. Whereas the structural logic of the album compelled him to evoke the authoritative, controlling gaze of the state, Athanassiades, I argue, identified more strongly with the subjective position of the Armenian revolutionaries than with that of the state. I show the uncanny traces of this conflicted identification by drawing attention to the emergence of the Real gaze in the highly fetishistic treatment of the bombs; the spectral presences of the onlookers who, as it were, "arrest" the photographer (that is, the viewer) by their

watchful eyes; and the formal portraits in the album which transgressed the conventions of judicial photography by blurring the line between the honorific and the repressive. Interpreting this ambiguity of identification as a potential signal of the photographer's repressed desire for political and social change, I propose that the entire album can be read as a civil critique of the Hamidian regime.

CHAPTER 2

TOWARD A PSYCHOANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR A COUNTER-FORENSIC READING OF PHOTOGRAPHY

2.1 State violence and counter-forensics

Forensics is an interdisciplinary practice intended to expose violence through the presentation of evidence, thereby serving to justice and truth. In the hands of the state, however, it often becomes a tool of oppression and denial. This paradox which lies at the heart of forensics manifests itself in various ways. Especially in conflict zones and border regions, states do not simply inflict violence on civilians and dissidents but also actively seek to erase the traces of that violence by destroying or manipulating the evidence. The absence of material evidence (dead bodies, satellite images, weapons etc) allows the state to deny its violence, which is often reinforced by a hegemonic rhetoric centred on the legitimacy of evidence. It is the state that decides what kind of evidence is legally admissible or not, and the testimonies of those directly affected by violence are often silenced and suppressed by official narratives purported to be unbiased and objective.

Counter-forensics aims to challenge this monopoly on information and evidence by turning the "state's own means against the violence it commits."[17] It is a civil practice that "aims to interrogate the built environment to uncover political violence undertaken by states."[18] As such, it focuses its efforts to construct counter-narratives for the sake of revealing historical truth and seeks to articulate public claims. This public dimension is crucial for counter-forensics because this is

[17] Weizman, *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability,* 64.
[18] Ibid.

precisely what is obscured in forensic activities run by state agencies. As Eyal Weizman, one of the major scholars working in the field, reminds us, *forensis* in Latin which originated from the word *forum* has lost its critical, public aspect in the modern context.[19] Whereas *forensis* referred to more than just the legal sphere in the ancient times "where the forum was a chaotic and multidimensional domain of economics, circulation, politics and judgment in which both people and things participated and were presented", this critical dimension was lost in the process and forensis has become "the art of the police", turning into "a set of techniques by which state agencies monitor, survey and govern their populations."[20] Counter-forensic practice, then, can be understood as a way of salvaging the public and political dimension of forensics, which has been obliterated by the state.

Although it would be wrong to divide the counter forensic practice into rigid categories and think of it in a compartmentalized fashion, it may, nonetheless, be helpful to identify two complementary modes in it for analytical purposes. On the one hand, counter-forensics is based on the production of new material evidence to expose state violence and raise public awareness regarding past and present violations of human rights. On the other hand, it questions the already existing evidence and practises of evidence-making in an effort to unmask the ideological character of the state's seemingly unbiased forensic authority.[21]

To understand the former operation, we can consider the work of Clyde Snow as a anthropologist who created a breakthrough in forensic science through his osteological analysis. In the mid-1980s, following the end of the "Dirty War" that took place in Argentina between 1976 and 1983, Snow traveled to this country to

[19] Weizman, *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability,* 65.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Weizman, *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth*, 11-12.

assist in the exhumation of the human remains from hidden mass graves. By examining the skeletal remains of the unnamed dead, he uncovered the violence of the junta regime which caused the "disappearance" of thousands of people and allowed the legal ground for punishment to be constituted.[22] In the aftermath of the Anfal Campaign carried out by Saddam Hussein's government, which led to mass atrocities in Iraqi Kurdistan, he once again used his expertise in forensics by examining the osteological evidence recovered from mass graves. Identifying the unnamed victims, he not only exposed genocidal state violence but also served to the collective mourning process for those who survived it.[23]

Today certain human rights organizations keep conducting such exhumations to present evidence for state crimes, but it should be noted that in recent decades the scope of counter-forensics has remarkably widened and diversified due to the advancement of digital technologies. The research collective "Forensic Architecture", founded by Eyal Weizman in 2010, is perhaps the best example that demonstrates the current state of counter-forensics. The collective, which consists of a host of scholars, scientists, architects and artists, aims to revalorize the rhetorical and imaginative dimension of forensis by benefiting from diverse visual and aural media in its endeavor to address the senses of the public. Relying on an aesthetic and affective sensibility, or what Weizman calls, "forensic aesthetics", the initiative employs advanced spatial techniques to document state violence, human rights violations and environmental destruction in cases where evidence of crime is missing or deliberately erased by the state (and, one should add, corporate businesses).

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[22] Weizman, *Forensic Architecture,* 78-79.

[23] Allan Sekula refers to Snow's work in Northern Iraq where he colloborated with the photographer Susan Meireles who documented the human remains excavated from the field and contributing to the collective mourning process through these documentary images. See his article "Photography and the limits of national identity," 28–33.

The investigative work presented by the FA experts who observe the armed conflicts in Gaza is particularly important for that matter. While Israeli officials denied the killing of two unarmed Palestinian teenagers on the Nakba Day of 2014 (May 15) for instance, visual images recovered from security cameras and the 3D crime scene reconstructions designed by FA experts proved that lethal weapons were indeed deliberately used by Israeli soldiers who targeted the civilians. Likewise, the FA embarked on a comprehensive investigation to document the infamous day known as "Black Friday" (August 1, 2014) when the planned 72-hour ceasefire was quickly cancelled out and turned into an intense Israeli military attack on the city of Rafah, which led to the massacre of hundreds of Palestinians and destruction of entire neighborhoods. To expose the gravity of the death toll, the FA experts reconstructed the timeline of the events that took place during that twenty-four hours and pieced together seven thousand photographs and video clips in order to counteract the official narrative of the Israeli state.[24]

2.2 Counter-forensics as a critical strategy of reading the evidence

These examples underscore some of the ways in which counter-forensics employs diverse media and technology to construct new evidence and present it to the public. But as I have suggested above, one can not reduce the practice of couter-forensics to the production of new evidence. At a more fundamental and conceptual level, counter-forensics can be understood as a critical strategy and method of reading the evidence and interpreting it from an ethical and political perspective that takes clear distance from the instrumental perspective of the state. Hence Weizman writes,

[24] Weizman, *Forensic Architecture*, 170

counter-forensics corresponds to an "inversion of the forensic gaze" which allows us to "detect and interrupt state violations".[25]

For Weizman, extending the lines of causality constitutes the core strategy of this inversion, which he demonstrates through the example of structural cracks in a building. When the building surveyors of the state examine cracks or other defects that lead to the collapse of a building, they trace these "material deformations only to the most proximate of physical causes, leaving out larger causal relations that could be found in politics and economics."[26] Counterforensics, however, reads the failure of the building as a "sensor" for the social and political environment. In other words, it shows us that the particular deformation of the building, that is, the form of the structural crack itself may be an indication of a "pathology" of the environment.[27]

The case of the collapse of Rana Plaza Factory in Bangladesh in 2013 clearly illustrates the significance of a counter-forensic inversion of the state's gaze. As Weizman notes, when the cracks appeared in the floors and walls of the building functioning as a sweatshop where thousands of workers were employed in poor conditions, the owners of the factory, pressed to make the shipment to Western countries on scheduled time, dismissed the warnings of the building surveyors and took the decision to continue the production instead of implementing the necessary safety measures. The next day the cracks expanded and the building collapsed, killing over 1127 workers and injuring more than 2500.[28] Weizman points out that the legal process dealing with the collapse only engaged with the construction quality of the building, addressing the weight of the industrial machinery that exceeds the

[25] Weizman, *Forensic Architecture,* 64.
[26] Ibid., 54.
[27] Ibid., 57.
[28] Ibid., 55.

capacity of the building and the illegal floors added later to the structure.[29] In other words, the architectural failure was analyzed in a manner wholly abstracted from systemic economic violence. The counter-forensic perspective interrupts the coherence of this narrative by reading the form and history of the structural crack as a sensor for violence. Besides emphasizing the architectural failure, it sees "a political failure to protect these workers"[30] and uncovers the ways in which the workers were ruthlessly exploited by the state and corporate groups. In this oppositional reading, the building becomes an evidence of violence to be read as a text.

Another example recounted by Weizman is the physical damage caused by archaeological excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem, which affected homes, public buildings, and streets in Silwan, a Palestinian neighborhood located next to the site. When cracks emerged in 2008 and continued to appear in the next years, Palestinian residents sent petitions and eventually brought the case to the Jerusalem District Court in an effort to end the excavations that had actually illegally begun. As the Court examined the cracks of the damaged buildings individually without connecting them to the external environment, it decided that the cracks were unrelated to the excavations and resulted from poor and illegal construction. By denying the violence of the excavation, as Weizman notes, the state authorized "the continuation of subterranean colonization" and expressed its desire to declare itself as the "true owner of the city."[31] From a counter-forensic perspective, however, it was obvious that the trajectory that the cracks followed, moving along paths of least

[29] Weizman, *Forensic Architecture*, 55.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid., 56.

resistance and the particular patterns of deformation in the buildings revealed the physical impact of the excavations.

In these two cases briefly discussed, counterforensics is effectively foregrounded as a method of reading the material evidence from a critical and ethical standpoint. Whereas the state uses the evidence in a way as to hold itself unaccountable for its violence, which indeed represents a pervert position, counter-forensics attempts to turn the same evidence as a historical document of violence to be read by the public. In doing so, it opens up a space for the defense of truth -a position aligned with the ethics of *parrhesia* which "demands the courage to speak the truth in spite of some danger"[32] and upholds this ethical position both in civil and juridical forums.

2.3 Counter-forensic analysis of photography

The critical approach encapsulated by the visual metaphor of inverting the state's forensic gaze has much to offer an historian or a critic working in the field of photography as it opens up a fertile ground to re-read the state's visual archive and undermine its display of power and authority. The conditions of possibility for such a counter-forensic reading, as Thomas Keenan argues, comes from "the ambiguous form of visual documents"[33]. While the state uses the medium of photography in its evidence-making procedures, it aims to minimize the rhetorical aspect of the image and thus restrict the interpretive activity of the viewer by reducing the photographic image to its indexical, evidentiary status. From this state perspective, the idea is to "render the image unequivocal and uniquely referential"[34] by turning it into a mechanical code that does not necessitate an interpretive act of reading. Such

[32] Weizman, *Forensic Architecture*, 36.
[33] Keenan, "Counter Forensic and Photography," 67.
[34] Ibid., 61.

certainty and transparency of the indexical image is illusory, however, because the rhetorical and performative dimension of the image can never be fully eliminated. No matter how much the state puts effort into fixing the meaning of the image presented as a forensic evidence, the indeterminacy of meaning is essential since "photography as such does not have an identity. Its status as a technology varies with the power relations which invest it,"[35] as John Tagg asserts. This means that photographic products are not unmediated copies of reality, as is often assumed in a mythical fashion, but rather "meaningful and legible only within the particular currencies they have"[36]. Precisely for the reason that the meaning of a photograph is determined by ideological discourses, power relations, and institutions, the image is open to interpretation. As Thomas Keenan points out, again citing Sekula's work: This "indeterminacy" of meaning does not hold in spite of the indexicality of the image but because of it: Because there is a trace, an imprint, there is the possibility of interpretation, the opportunity for meaning, fiction, and hence the "battleground of fictions." Around the image, a debate can begin—we decide what it says; it does not, it cannot. This is what the word evidence means: "everything beyond the imprinting of a trace, is up for grabs.[37]

While taking into account the fictionality of the forensic image, which allows us to explore the ambiguities and indeterminacies of the scene from a counter-forensic perspective, we should also consider the excess of inscriptive trace and surplus of information provided by the automatic operation of the camera, which indiscriminately reproduces the objects before the lens.[38] This excess of information,

[35] Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*, 63.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Keenan, "Counter Forensic and Photography, 66-67.
[38] Edwards, *Photographs and the Practice of History: A Short Primer*, 77.

which the producer or the viewer of the image can not fully control and process, destabilizes the intended meaning of the photograph by introducing a dangerous element of accidentality. Therefore, no matter how rigorously the state seeks to contain the boundaries of interpretation to serve its own agenda, this effort can never result in full success because certain details that stick out in the photograph, what Walter Benjamin calls "tiny sparks of contingency"[39], enable the viewer to question the coherence of the narrative constructed around the image.

A counter-forensic reading of the archive calls for such critical interrogation by drawing attention to the ambiguity of the visual document but it does so with the ethical and political motivation to foreground the human experience, directly affected, marginalized and obliterated by state violence. In other words, if images are "up for grabs", that is, open to interpretation due to their inherent ambiguity, counter-forensic analysis pays attention to these images to uncover "the polyphonic testimony of the oppressed and the exploited"[40]. It upholds this ethical stance with the objective to "help prevent the cancellation of their testimony by more authoritative and official texts."[41]

Sekula's early essay on Edward Steichen's aerial photography from the World War I is an important contribution that exemplifies the political motivations of counter-forensics in the field of photography. Discussing the ways in which reconnaissance photographs compiled by Steichen instrumentalized the indexical quality of the photographic image in "reducing the terrain into a set of coded topographic features" and "unambiguous signs" that cancel out the need for

[39] Benjamin, "Little History of Photography", 510.
[40] Keenan, "Counter Forensic and Photography," 67.
[41] Ibid., 72.

interpretation[42], Sekula emphasizes how the pictorial effects of these photographs allowed them to be promoted and appreciated as commodified, aesthetic objects in the art-marketing system. He challenges such aestheticized reading of the photographs by drawing attention to "the detailed presence of shattered towns, cratered and excavated no-man's-lands, and occasional human figures"[43], which can be seen within the frames of these photographs. These elements clearly disturb the "beautification" of the landscape abstracted from human experience of war, thereby introducing ambiguity into their meaning. Sekula underscores the unknowability that particularly derives from the human presence marked in the photographs in a spectral fashion. He writes: "The anonymity of combatants and civilians teeters on the edge of invisibility. A cratered landscape is littered with tiny upright figures, some grouped in trenches, some exposed on open ground. Only the most equivocal narrative can be constructed. Are they enemies? Is this a battle?"[44] Unable to find clear answers to such questions, the viewer of the image, Sekula argues, experiences some kind of a "cognitive dissonance" caused by the disturbing ambiguity of the image. "On the one hand, the aerial viewpoint contributes to an illusion of power and knowledge and; on the other hand, little can be known and whatever happened has happened."[45]

As demonstrated by Sekula, a counter-forensic reading of the photographic archive shifts the gaze away from the spectacle of power, and redirects it toward the traumatic realities of human presence obscured by state violence. However, it is important to note that this is not a celebration of a universal, defeatist humanism in

[42] Sekula, "The Instrumental Image: Steichen at War," 35.
[43] Sekula, "The Instrumental Image: Steichen at War," 45.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.

which the human subject is portrayed merely as a victim passively submitting to the state authority and its discursive regimes. Counter-forensics of photography certainly acknowledges the power imbalance but it also underscores the necessity to emphasize the agency of the subject. Elizabeth Edwards's method of close-reading the archival photographs, which she calls "critical forensics of detail" is a significant example of this approach. By focusing on inconspicuous details within the frame, Edwards tries to capture historical traces of lived experience which she understands through the notion of "presence". "What is present in the photograph", she asserts, "is the trace not merely of surface bodies, but of their own social being, their own perception of the event, of being there, their standpoint."[46] Locating this presence in "networks of relationships, experiences and world views condensed within the frame"[47], she draws attention to the ways in which anonymous subjects, often positioned as inferior and subservient to power, reclaim their agency in a performative fashion.

Edwards demonstrates such performance, for instance, in her reading of colonial photography from the late 19th century. Analyzing a series of photographs staging the cultural encounter between the Pacific islanders and British colonizers in Samoa, she discusses how these photographs, while seeming to evoke conventional colonial images, actually subvert the assumed hierarchies of power between the two sides. Referring to the spatial organization of the ceremonial group portraits from 1883 taken on a British boat, she underlines how the islanders self-consciously assert their own cultural cohesiveness and disrupt "the totality of the authoritative space"[48] implied by the British boat. The disruption inferred from the ambivalent theatricality

[46] Edwards, *Photographs and the Practice of History: A Short Primer*, 77.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Edwards, "Photography and the performance of history," 11.

of the photographs, which Edwards understands in relation to Kracauer's notion of "endlessness of the frame", opens up a space for alternative histories in which the presence and experience of the subject allows us to question the official narrative.[49]

Ariella Azoulay even more emphatically asserts the power of photography to generate potential histories and reclaim the agency of the subject. In her important book, *The Civil Contract of Photography,* Azoulay proposes a new ontological and political understanding of photography on the basis of the notion of citizenry and makes the argument that since its invention in the mid 19th century photography has constituted a contractual, civic space in which people oppressed by state violence can express their grievances and demands for justice addressed to a virtual, hypothetical community of citizens which can never be fully controlled by the sovereign. In contrast to critics who approach photography as an aesthetic medium that privileges the detached, comtemplative gaze, Azoulay argues that one should instead "watch photographs as a space of political relations" and pay attention to the gaze of the photographed subject who rehabilitates her citizenship through the very possibilities of the photographic situation.[50]

The sovereign power, Azoulay asserts, seeks to dominate the political life by dividing the governed into citizens and non-citizens and it reinforces this discriminatory gesture in the very reception of the photographic situation as well. What Azoulay calls the "identificatory gaze", which determines "this is X" or this is Y" is always at work here.[51] By imposing such identificatory gaze on the community, the sovereign performs "a two fold reification -for what is seen in the photograph and

[49] Ibid., 9-10.
[50] Azoulay, "Civil Contract of Photography," 20.
[51] Ibid., 306.

for its meaning"[52] But this reification, Azoulay argues, can never be fully achieved because of the heteregenous nature of the photographic situation, which is a complex encounter among multiple addressors, namely camera, photographer, photographed subject and the spectator"[53] For Azoulay, there is always "a gap between the stated aims and what has actually taken place in this encounter."[54] Therefore, neither one of the participants nor the sovereign have the capacity to determine its sole meaning. Even when the ruling power attempts to directly interfere in the photographic act in an effort to relinquish the civic field of vision, this gap in the field of the visible, Azoulay argues, can never be erased and continues to keep open the place from which one can affirm her citizenship.

This ontologically incomplete or unfinished character of the photographic event which consists of conflicting relations between different agents is precisely what allows the spectator to recognize the agency and resistance of the subject assumed to be submissive and powerless. Azoulay emphasizes the importance of activating a civil gaze in that respect. If the spectator assumes the responsibility to ethically witness and reconstruct the photographic event by taking into account its contested and contingent nature, "it becomes impossible to see photography simply as an intrument of brute force that ruthlessly operates on its victims."[55] Instead, the spectator comes to realise that "the photographed subjects also have the ability to use force the moment of photography and can undermine the explicit aims of the photographer."[56] Azoulay provides many examples to illustrate how the photographed subject can subtly communicate this force within the photographic

[52] Ibid., 307.
[53] Ibid., 23.
[54] Azoulay, "The Civil Contract of Photography," 133.
[55] Ibid., 172.
[56] Ibid., 172.

situation. Drawing on a series of figures both from the past and the present, such as Muybridge's naked female model who resisted her sexual exploitation in disguise of scientific experimentation; African-American slave women who subtly defied the disciplinary gaze; Palestinian "non-citizens" who actively document the violations of the Israeli state by directly addressing the camera, Azoulay effectively demonstrates how power fails to completely dominate and overshadow the civil gaze.

2.4 Trauma, symbolic act and the Real gaze

The counter-forensic perspectives represented by each of the scholars mentioned above offers a rigorous methodology for an archival study of photography. While I significantly benefit from this methodology in my analysis of the two judicial albums from the Hamidian period, I also find it necessary to synthesize it with the theoretical framework of psychoanalysis, because the complex photographic situations witnessed in these albums largely take place on a latent, unconscious plane. The link between the psychoanalytical discourse of trauma and photography allow us to make sense of these unconscious processes and reconstruct the ethical and political dimension of the photographic event. Therefore, trauma is a major concept that I incorporate into the theoretical framework of this thesis.

When we think of a traumatic image, we often tend to imagine a horrific sight occasioned by the evidentiary aspect of photography which, as it were, "proves" the existence of trauma. In this thesis, however, I approach the question of trauma and photography in a more abstract, structural manner. As scholars such as Ulrich Baer and Margaret Iversen point out, there is a structural similarity between the two.[57]

[57] See Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma,* and Iversen, *Photography, Trace, and Trauma*.

What makes a photographic image traumatic is not necessarily a terrifying, traumatic sight depicted in it but rather the photograph's capacity to mediate the psychic phenomenon of trauma itself, which is characterized by latency and belatedness (*Nachträglichkeit*). As Cathy Caruth argues, "the traumatic event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event"[58] The contingent and unintentional aspect of photography, which interrupts the continuity of time by freezing the moment, replicates this belated structure of trauma as it presents the viewer a sight of an encounter that escapes consciousness.

I contend that such understanding of psyhic trauma can be seen in both of the judicial albums I examine as my case studies. In the series of photographs taken after the Bank Incident, the question of trauma comes to the fore in the experiences of the wounded sitters posing to the camera. The traumatic dimension of their experience do not simply result from their wounded bodies -although that is crucial- but rather from the fact of being objectified against their consent in the fantasmatic stage of the state apparatus. As I will discuss in the third chapter, the sitters are not only forced to undermine their ideal narcissistic self-appearance by showing their wounds to the camera without full consent but also made to perform the conventional bodily language of bourgeois portraiture for the sake of the desired imperial image of the Hamidian regime. The photographic event, therefore, turns into a traumatic experience for the sitters.

In the case of the 1905 album, I approach the question of trauma from the perspective of the photographer Athanassiades who was commissioned by the state to revisit and take the photographs of each of the buildings and locations targeted by the

[58] Caruth,"Trauma and Experience: Introduction," 4-5.

Armenian militants in İzmir. The Hamidian police wanted to benefit from the skill and expertise of the photographer who ran a commercial studio in the city and expected him to compile a lavish album that documented the "Armenian crime" from an objective point of view. However, this objectivity, I argue, was remarkably upset by the anxiety incribed in the photographs themselves which reflected an ambiguity of identification with the surveillant gaze. As I discuss at length in the fourth chapter, this ambiguity signals an unsettling, traumatic experience on the part of Athanassiades whose repressed desire for violence, I claim, was awakened belatedly as he worked on the album. Because the photographer revisited each of the locales and spots walking along the roads walked by the Armenian militants, in a way repeating their itinerary, he also identified with their fantasmatic gaze, which led to his traumatic experience.

While I analyze how the psychic trauma of the subject becomes visible in the immediacy of the photographic event in both albums, I give equal importance to addressing the question of trauma from the perspective of the Hamidian state authority which made the decision to produce these judicial albums in the first place. Given the fact that both the Bank Incident in 1896 and the failed assassination attempt on the sultan in 1905 were climactic events that seriously disturbed the image of the Ottoman empire and drew significant attention in the international press, it becomes necessary to critically assess how the Hamidian regime employed the photographic medium as a means of managing the anxieties provoked by collective trauma.

I find the notion of political unconscious theorized by Fredric Jameson extremely relevant in that respect, because it provides us with a fertile ground to synthesize the psychoanalytical approach with the methodology of counter-forensics.

As I have discussed earlier, Weizman suggests that a counter-forensic analysis should always extend the lines of causality by looking at structural deformations and cracks in order to uncover the social and political conditions of the built environment that cause them. Although Weizman does not employ psychoanalytical notions in his forensic architectural practice, I suggest that his methodological emphasis on the importance of digging into layered structures of the political environment through the aid of the material evidence significantly accords with the structural logic of the "absent cause" which Jameson expressly follows in his dialectical and immanent criticism encapsulated in his concept of the "political unconscious". For both thinkers, the notion of the contradiction or the crack indicates something about the totality of the social and political order which can be felt only through its mediated effects.[59] Therefore, I contend that one can understand the critical strategy of counter-forensics through the lens of Jameson's psychoanalytical methodology.

What is particularly suggestive in Jameson's work for the purpose of my analysis is his notion of the narrative as a symbolic act. Drawing on Levi Strauss's structural analysis of the Caduveo facial art, Jameson understands literary and cultural narratives as symbolic acts "whereby real social contradictions, insurmountable in their own terms, find a purely formal resolution in the aesthetic realm"[60]. The Althusserian formulation that Jameson repeatedly employs in his work, that is, "the individual narrative form as an imaginary resolution of a real contradiction"[61] is an explicit reference to Lacan who emphasizes the traumatic order of the Real that radically disrupts the seemingly smooth operations of the Symbolic and the Imaginary as the domains of language and narcissistic images of the ego,

[59] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, 9.
[60] Ibid., 64.
[61] Ibid., 62.

respectively. As the order that resists any stable meaning given by the relatively safe grounds of the Symbolic and the Imaginary realms, the Real disturbs the subject's illusion of power and wholeness both on an individual and collective level. When Jameson formulates narrative as a socially symbolic act that attempts to resolve a "real contradiction", then, he refers to the ways in which the literary or aesthetic act tries to cover over the trauma of the Real which the members of the community cannot resolve in their social and political life.

The Real contradiction, which Jameson understands as class antagonism in the Marxist sense, always lies at the core of the Symbolic order in a repressed fashion and as such, its disturbing, traumatic effects can never be eliminated. However, literary and cultural narratives as "fantasy productions"[62] enable us a way of making a sense of this antagonism. Interpreting the formal contradictions of a narrative is crucial for that matter because this effectively gives us an insight into the political unconscious of the historical context within which the aesthetic work in question was produced. By examining the contradictions as symptomatic indications of a broader social and political problem, we can, thereby, get an idea about the ways in which the particular text at hand simultaneously contains and reveals that problem repressed in the political unconscious.

Jameson's notion of the symbolic act is particularly useful as it enables us to interpret the Hamidian state's fantasmatic deployment of photography as a response to the Real contradictions threatening the Empire. Foremost among these was the contradiction posed by the tension between the modernization efforts and the simultaneous rise of nationalist movements in the Empire. While the Ottoman state undertook a series of legal, bureaucratic and educational reforms with the purpose of

[62] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 64.

securing the loyalty of the non-muslim populations, these reforms actually made the effect of reinforcing nationalist tendencies and accelerated the fragmentation of the empire. Hanioğlu succinctly expresses this contradiction:

"Paradoxically, the very reforms designed to create a more coherent society unified by a common ideology, and a more centralized polity founded on universal, standardized laws, had the effect of exposing and deepening the fissures within the Ottoman state and society. Local resistance to the center's determined attempts to penetrate the periphery accentuated the fragmentation of identity throughout the empire. The unprecedented attempt to unify multiple religious, ethnic, and regional groups only served to strengthen their splintered identities in defiance of central policies"[63]

Although the origins of the Armenian Question can be partly understood against the background of the *Tanzimat* movement, in this particular case the contradictions related more with the Ottoman state's failure to implement reforms in the Eastern provinces. As Garabet Moumdjan points out, during the time of Abdulaziz several reforms indeed had already been undertaken by the Ottoman state to improve the conditions of the Armenians in the empire such as the granting of the internal constitution to the Armenian millet in 1865 and the election of the patriarch Megerditch Khrimian who was well informed about the difficult conditions in the eastern provinces and thus in a position to represent the voice of Armenians living there.[64] With the Congress of Berlin, which took place following the Turco-Russian War, however, the whole situation changed as the Article 61 of the Treaty of Berlin gave the right to the Great Powers to impose and monitor the reforms in the eastern

[63] Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 107.
[64] Moumdjian, "From Millet-i Sadika to Millet-i Asiya: Abdülhamid II and Armenians, 1878–1909," 304-305.

provinces. This article turned "the Armenian Question into an instrument that could be used by European states to intervene in the internal affairs of the Ottoman state"[65]. Also, it dramatically impacted the perception of Armenians as loyal subjects of the empire. Gradually, the Armenians of the eastern provinces came to be regarded by the muslims as an alien population potentially treachorus to the empire.

Abdulhamid had seen the Treaty of Berlin as a direct assault on the sovereignty of the state but nonetheless promised implementing the reforms as a strategy to protect itself from potential dangers that would come from the Great Powers. In reality, however, he was simply unwilling to put the reforms into work and rather focused his energies to centralize his power in the eastern provinces. Incorporating loyal Kurdish tribal chiefs into a state-sponsored military structure called the Hamidiyye Regiments was a major strategy he pursued in this regard. With this move, he tightened his control and surveillance over the remote provinces and tried to counteract the Armenian demands for reform all the while keeping up the appearance of having the intention to improve the conditions of the Armenians in the region.

The deceptive attitude on the issue of reform proved lethal because it produced an irresolvable, repetitive pattern of violence starting from the Sasun rebellion in 1894. Each time the local Armenian population reclaimed their demands for justice and showed resistance to plundering and exploitation, mostly done by Kurds, the Hamidian regime saw this resistance as "insurrection" and violently repressed it with armed forces. But these coercive methods aiming to incite fear in the local population only led to the exacerbation of the situation as they motivated

[65] Suny, *"They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else": A History of the Armenian Genocide*, 96.

more Armenians to join the revolutionary committees and serve to the armed struggle.

Furthermore, this vicious cycle of violence severely damaged the image of the Ottoman state in the eyes of the Great Powers. During the 1880s, European states had shown limited interest in the Armenian Question. However, beginning from the brutal suppression of the Sasun uprising in 1894, both the European and the American public as well as the diplomatic circles began to pay closer attention to the plight of the Armenians. Reports of massacres in the eastern provinces became a regular feature in the newspapers and illustrated journals.[66] Arguably, this was the real contradiction -in the Jamesonian sense- which the Hamidian regime constantly faced as a result of the Armenian massacres. While the state was trying to showcase itself as a modern ve civilized power on equal footing with the Great Powers, the news coverage about the massacres on the illustrated journals was nullifying this effort by reviving the image of the "barbarous, terrifying Turk", personified by Abdulhamid as "the bloody sultan".[67]

The problem here was not simply the negative public opinion or the frustration of the desired imperial image. The Hamidian regime was acutely aware of the potential risk of a humanitarian intervention that would rescue the Armenians and ultimately lead to the partition of the empire. This, after all, was the central objective of the revolutionary committees. By staging violent attacks in the urban centers, they were, much like the Balkan national movements before them, aiming to trigger a military intervention by the Great Powers.[68] In an effort to monitor and control these

[66] Balakian, *The Burning Tigris*: *The Armenian Genocide and America's Response*, 126-130.
[67] Gürpınar, "The Rise and Fall of Turcophilism in Nineteenth-Century British Discourses: Visions of the Turk, 'Young' and 'Old'," 363.
[68] Rodogno, *Against Massacre: Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire*, 1815-1914, 187.

groups, the Hamidian regime established a massive network of spies and techniques of surveillance. Yet, as the vicious cycle of violence escalated and spread beyond the state's capacity to contain it, the regime increasingly lost its moral legitimacy and came to be viewed as a despotic and backward power that survived at the mercy of the European states.

During this time of political upheaval and uncertainty, photography served as an instrumental tool for the Hamidian regime in resolving the contradictions posed by the vicious cycle of violence and loss of legitimacy. The Ottoman state benefited from photography, first and foremost, as a method of surveillance in its battle with the anarchists and the revolutionary committees who travelled between different territories under clandestine ways. Actively cooperating with the international police and intelligence agencies, the state sent and received photographic documents for the purpose of identifying, registering and classifying personal identity. Also, by imposing security practices for foreigners such as issuing passports where photography was employed, the state tried to monitor and restrict the mobility of potentially dangerous subjects deemed as *fesad*.[69]

Apart from these routine practices, however, the Hamidian regime also employed photography as a forensic tool of constructing narratives and arguments, which is precisely the reason why I propose to interpret the function of photography as a symbolic act. In the photographic series I examine in this thesis, one can clearly see how the traumatic event is framed in a fantasmatic narrative designed to vindicate the Ottoman side and assert its moral superiority over the Armenian revolutionaries. However, this narrative has no coherence; the symbolic act has the

[69] For a detailed discussion of these security practices, see Yılmaz, "Conspiracy, International Police Cooperation and the Fight against Anarchism in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1878–1908," 208-234.

capacity to transform the perception of reality by staging an act on the world, but ultimately this act is *symbolic,* leaving the external, material conditions unchanged.[70] For that reason, the traumatic effects of the event can never be fully eliminated through this fantasmatic construction. On the contrary, they return as formal contradictions and anomalies in the narrative.

Interpreting these formal contradictions is crucial for a counter-forensic analysis of state photography because it undermines the illusory confidence of the sovereign and brings to light the anxieties repressed in the political unconscious. But this critical examination must always be accompanied by attention to the symptomatic manifestations of the Real gaze. By looking at the ways in which the Real gaze intrudes in the photographic event, we can see how the ambiguities caused by this intrusion allow us to see the agency of those who take part in this event, that is, the photographed, the photographer and the viewer.

In order to better understand the implications of the Real gaze for our analysis, we should make a recourse to the fantasmatic relationship between the subject and the Other and the role of ideology in Lacanian psychoanalysis. What Lacan calls the gaze is not the gaze of the subject as is often assumed, but "a gaze that is imagined by the subject in the field of the Other."[71] For Lacan, the Other represents the position of authority and power in the symbolic order that marks the totality of the intersubjective field constituted by language and the law. More than desiring to see, the subject desires to be seen by the Other's gaze. As Lacan notes, this is a pure fantasy of the Cartesian subject who dreams of overcoming the trauma of castration by looking at himself through the gaze of an all-seeing, omnipotent

[70] Homer, *Fredric Jameson: Marxism, Hermeneutics, Postmodernism*, 43-44.
[71] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 84.

Other. This fantasy, however, is doomed to failure as the gaze always eludes the conscious subject; it can never be captured as self-knowledge because the subject can never ascertain the point from where he is being gazed at by the Other.[72] In other words, the desire of the Other is radically opaque; the subject can never know what this Other wants from him once and for all.

For that very reason, the encounter with the Other's gaze does not only mark an impossibility but also a traumatic experience that the subject takes pains to avoid. Rather than simply functioning as an object of desire, the gaze, Lacan asserts, is an object-cause of desire that drives the subject to a field of enjoyment beyond the pleasure principle. But since this cause giving rise to desire is irreversibly lost and thus cannot be (re-)found in the field of vision in any concrete, material form, it corresponds to a traumatic lacuna in the visual field. When the subject comes close to this "point of annihilation" where the gaze shows itself, a sense of alienation and anxiety begin to dominate and the subject encounters himself as a stain.[73] In short, the gaze has a paradoxical status. As an object of drive, it attracts the subject's desire by promising satisfaction (*jouissance)* but at the same time forces him to stay away from this encounter by threatening to disrupt his integrity.

As pointed out by Lacanian thinkers such as Slavoj Zizek, ideological fantasy comes into the picture here as the element that protects the subject from the trauma of castration, because by offering "an imaginary scenario that conceals the lack in the Other"[74], ideological fantasy provides the subject with a point of symbolic identification from which he can confer meaning on his acts and thoughts. Identifying with the gaze of a figure of authority (a father, a political leader, God

[72] Zizek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture*, 114.
[73] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 75.
[74] Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 123.

etc.) and the ego-ideal(s) represented by this figure, the subject can thus maintain "the frame through which he experiences the world as consistent and meaningful."[75] Moreover, this symbolic identification allows the subject to maintain his fascination with the gaze as a fantasy-object from a safe distance without transgressing the boundaries of the law imposed by the symbolic order. In other words, fantasy offers the subject a domesticated, "gentrified" version of enjoyment, protecting him from the traumatic lack and inconsistency of the Other.[76]

Having said this, we should underline the relevance of this discussion with photography because part of the allure of visual representations can be explained by their very ability to identify the viewer with the Other's gaze by concealing its traumatic dimension. Lacano-Althusserian film theorists such as Jean Pierre Oudart, Daniel Dayan and Stephen Heath, have much problematized this topic in the 1970s and 1980s by drawing on the strategies in which cinematic representations insert the viewer into the filmic text. By using the Lacanian notion of suture, which can be defined as the conjunction of the Imaginary and the Symbolic at the expense of the Real, these critics tried to understand how filmic texts manage to offer the spectator a coherent point of identification by erasing the potentially disruptive effects of the Real gaze.

In order to demonstrate the mechanisms of this ideological operation, suture theorists have particularly emphasized the significance of the shot-reverse shot, which functions to alleviate the anxiety of the off-screen space in a filmic discourse. According to their account, the image on the screen initially offers the viewer an illusionary sense of mastery and plenitude that recalls the infant's experience of the

[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.

mirror stage, which promises unity to the subject. But this sense of unity and mastery is interrupted as soon as the viewer becomes aware of the off-screen space and recognizes the castrating presence of the invisible Other, what Oudart calls the "Absent One". At this moment, the viewer comes to realize the radical alterity of the camera's gaze, which he cannot take under control. This anxiety, however, is eliminated in the reverse-shot structure, which functions to fill the empty field of the "Absent One" by transfering the gaze to the subjective point of view of a character in the film. Through this operation, the viewer can comfortably identify with the camera or the character by experiencing the Other's gaze as his own. Finding a coherent point of identification, the viewer is thus sutured into the filmic discourse and the threatening presence of the Other is concealed.[77]

According to Stephen Heath, the success of this ideological mechanism should not be only understood with reference to the shot-reverse shot formation, which is only one device of editing among others. He argues that lighting, composition and above all, identification with the cultural codes embedded into the narrative space of the film is equally effective in the suturing of the spectator into the filmic discourse.[78] By interpellating to the subject-position offered by the dramatic structure of the narrative space, the viewer learns to project his desire on the image and identifies with the ideological values communicated by visual signifiers.

Although one can not talk about a dynamic conception of off-screen space in photography, the theory of suture is nonetheless quite relevant to understand in what ways the Real gaze is domesticated in the photographic medium. As in filmic medium, the camera's non-human, automatic gaze in photography represents a

[77] My summary here largely relies on Daniel Dayan's account of the suture theory. See his article "The Tutor-Code of Classical Cinema," 22-31.
[78] Heath, "On Suture," 107-108.

radical point of otherness which always has the potential to evoke a traumatic sense of disruption, because the photographic frame, as I have suggested earlier with reference to Benjamin, always contains a certain element of contingency and a surplus of information which is impossible to be processed in its entirety. In a way, then, the camera's undifferentiated, non-human gaze always already evokes the presence of an "Absent One", which might be alienating for the viewer. As Victor Burgin points out, photography represses this alienating aspect by a number of devices that would fix "the tear in the subject's imaginary relationship with the visual field."[79] Directly referring to the suture theory, Burgin notes that the still image "has no reverse shot but it does have forms of identification, fetishistic fascination, multiplication/repetition and 'good composition', all of which exert suturing effects."[80] He also underlines the key suturing effect of the captions and other linguistic expressions that explain the meaning of the photographic image for the viewer."[81] Therefore, it should be noted that photographic medium can be effectively employed as an ideological instrument to offer fantasmatic identifications with the gaze.

Nonetheless, one should not ascribe too much power to this apparatus. Theorists of suture in film and photography offer us crucial insights into the ways in which visual texts identify the viewer with a fantasmatic gaze but they significantly neglect to emphasize the fragility of this identification process. As Todd McGowan points out, the suture theorists, as well as critics affliliated with the *Screen* journal, such as Laura Mulvey, mostly understood the Lacanian gaze within an imaginary and symbolic realm and thus failed to emphasize how the gaze in its Real dimension can

[79] Burgin, *Thinking Photography*, 191.
[80] Burgin, *Thinking Photography*, 191
[81] Ibid.

never be fully eliminated from the filmic text. By theorizing the gaze under the impact of an overdetermined, Foucauldian notion of the panopticon, these critics focused on the success of ideological fantasy to interpellate the subject instead of articulating the points at which fantasy loses its coherence and gives way to the Real in its alienating, traumatic dimension.[82]

My counter-forensic analysis of the Hamidian judicial albums takes this criticism offered by the revisionist Lacanian scholars seriously and tries to demonstrate how the subject-position offered by photographic works cen be radically disturbed by the Real gaze in certain moments. This emphasis on the failure of the Imaginary/Symbolic on the face of an uncontainable Real has an ethical and political significance because the latter is intimately linked with the question of freedom.[83] While ideological fantasy conceals the lack in the Other by turning it into a consistent and stable position of authority, the Real gaze disturbs this fantasy precisely by revealing the absence of a consistent Other as such. When the subject encounters this absence, that is, the irreducible lack in the Symbolic order, it comes to realize that the fantasmatic object he is seeking in the Other (the cause of his desire) materializes nothing but the void of its own desire.[84]

As Zizek notes, this recognition opens an ethical and political space of freedom because once the subject sees that the object cause of desire is irreducibly absent, it also accepts that the Other is incomplete, lacking the fantasy-object that would allow for the closure of desire and meaning.[85] Following Lacan, Zizek understands this separation from the Other as 'going through the fantasy', which

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[82] McGowan, "Looking for the Gaze: Lacanian Film Theory and Its Vicissitudes", 30. On the "Foucauldianization" of the Lacanian gaze, see also Copjec, "The Orthopsychic Subject: Film Theory and the Reception of Lacan," 53–71.
[83]Henry Krips, "The Politics of the Gaze: Foucault, Lacan and Žižek," 97.
[84] Zizek, *Sublime Object of Ideology*, 65.
[85] Ibid. 133.

marks the emancipatory process through which the subject takes responsibility for his own desire and disidentifies with the gaze of an all-seeing, non-lacking Other. But 'going through the fantasy' is accompanied by another, equally significant process which Zizek describes as "identification with the social symptom." Because the subject who goes through the ideological fantasy acknowledges the structural impossibility of a symbolic order without immanent antagonism, this experience, Zizek argues, brings forth the necessity of identifying with the social symptom, represented by migrants, refugees, or any ethnic groups who are oppressed by power and excluded from the symbolic order. Zizek asserts that when the subject separates from the Other's totalitarian gaze that sees these figures as the obstacle that "prevents society from achieving its full identity as a closed, homogeneous totality"[86], it comes to realize that the only proper ethical act is to identify with these 'symptomatic' figures who embody precisely the repressed truth of the society. Shifting the point of his identification from the sovereign to the social symptom, then, the subject can acknowledge the traumatic kernel of the Real that lies at the heart of the Symbolic but also comes to occupy a new subjective position where that trauma can be signified.

I contend that this ethical and political dimension of the Real closely resonates with Azoulay's civil gaze, which underscores the need to disrupt the identificatory gaze of the sovereign, which always discriminates and asserts control by assigning fixed identities (this is X and this is Y). Both Zizek and Azoulay emphasize the point that if the viewing subject separates from the hegemonic gaze of the sovereign and attends to the irreducible gaps and ambiguities in the field of vision, they become responsive to the presence of the oppressed individuals and their

[86] Zizek, *Sublime Object of Ideology,* 127.

power to communicate their grievances and reclaiming their agencies even in situations that are tightly controlled by the sovereign.

Since the Real gaze holds such ethical and political significance for a counter-forensic reading of photography, I place this concept at the center of the theoretical and methodological framework of my thesis. Examining the two judicial albums in a contrapuntal fashion, I demonstrate how the photographs evoke a fantasmatic, masterful gaze while simultaneously exposing its failure through the eruptions of the Real. By detecting the moments where the Real gaze disturbs the representational field, producing ambiguities of identification within the frame, I show how the subjects participating in the photographic event subtly resist the 'message' intended by the Hamidian state and foreground their spontaneous presences in the fantasmatic stage where they are forced to perform their passive roles. Ultimately, my analysis aims to challenge the prevailing assumption that the photography of the Hamidian era imposed a controlling gaze in an effort to reduce the image to the index and actually succeeded in its effort. I believe that this generalization causes us to overlook both the fragility of the controlling gaze and the agency of the subject. The next two chapters, therefore, will attempt to rectify this redundant interpretation by uncovering the effects of the Real gaze, which will allow us to see the agency of the subject in the photographic situation.

CHAPTER 3

VIOLENCE OF REPRESENTATION AND THE AMBIGUITY OF CONSENT

The Ottoman Bank Incident, which took place in the summer of 1896, was perhaps the key event that irreversibly damaged the image of the Hamidian regime in the eyes of the European public. On the 26th of August, a group of Armenian revolutionaries under the leadership of Armen Garo had attacked the Bank with bombs and weapons in an effort to provoke a humanitarian intervention by the European states and forcing the implementation of reforms which had long been neglected. What made the event particularly significant, however, was the mob violence that erupted after the ARF's attack. In the following three days, thousands of Armenian civilians were shot and stabbed to death on the streets and the police remained largely indifferent to this violent backlash.[87]

The news about the massacres in the capital was shocking for the European public. To be sure, this was not the first time that the press covered news about the violence on the Armenians. Since the Sasun Massacre in 1894, European press had been reporting on the armed conflicts between the Armenian revolutionaries and the Ottoman state in the eastern provinces of the empire, but this time newspapers directly informed the public by providing first-hand eyewitness accounts of European diplomats living in the capital, all of which confirmed the brutality of the organized mob and the complicity of the Hamidian state which did not take any significant action to protect the Armenians. The news coverage about the massacres had intensified the anti-Ottoman sentiment particularly in France and Britain where

[87] Edhem Eldem discusses these pogroms in detail. See his book chapter titled "26 Ağustos 1896 'Banka Vakası' ve 1896 'Ermeni Olayları'," 125-152.

Gladstone's 1876 pamphlet on the "Bulgarian Horrors" which had presented the Ottomans as "the great anti-human specimen of humanity"[88] had left a lasting impression. Harshly condemned by the European public, the Ottoman state was not only denounced as a barbarous and uncivilized state that is to be excluded from the family of nations, but was also seen as a morally decaying, corrupted regime that deserved a humanitarian intervention by the Great Powers which were charged with the duty to liberate Armenians from oppression.

In this atmosphere of international, political turmoil, in which even an armed intervention of the European states was a matter of possibility, "image management" occasioned by the photographic medium was crucial for the Ottoman state. In an attempt to justify and cover over the massacres that ensued after the Bank Incident, the state immediately embarked on a project to take the pictures of the bombs used by the Armenian revolutionaries and the photographs of the soldiers, policemen and civilians who were wounded during the Incident. In doing so, the Hamidian regime aimed to offer evidence for the "Armenian terror" and thus weaken the European public's sympathy for their political cause. It also tried to repair its self-image as a modern, civilized state which provides its subjects with effective health care.

A series of documents in the archive indicate that the state actively sought to publish the photographs of the bombs and the wounded in the European press. However, this was not a successful operation. The state managed to publish a picture that depicted the bombs kept by the Armenian revolutionaries in a German illustrated newspaper[89], but failed to circulate the photographs of the wounded in any European press. In his study on the photographs taken after the Bank Incident, Baek Kyong Jo

[88] Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, 13.
[89] Yavuz*, Osmanlı Devleti'nde Ermeni Terörü: 1896 Osmanlı Bankası Baskını,* 206.

argues that this lack of success partly resulted from the decision of the state. He suggests that because the officials were aware of the unstable meanings and multiple messages conveyed by the images of wounded bodies, they instead chose to focus their efforts on the bomb pictures which "needed little context as they were, by themselves, symbols of violence."[90] The fact that the Ottoman state still sought to publish the photographs of the wounded and the bombs in a relatively late period as February 1897 undermines the validity of this argument[91]. It seems more arguable that the Ottoman state wished to publish the photographs of the wounded along with the images of the bombs as propaganda material in the European press, but the negative public opinion proved these efforts futile.

Yet, the point that Kyong Jo makes about the instability of the photographic message is extremely important. He asserts that the "photographs of the wounded were dangerous, bearing the potential to disturb the official narrative."[92] Although he notes, with reference to Sharon Sliwinki's work, that photography "demands narrative but also resists that demand"[93], he does not provide a detailed analysis of such potential resistance in the photographs. In what follows, I want to emphasize this theme of resistance by offering a counter-forensic reading of the official narrative the state tried to produce through these photographs as well as examining the formal and contingent aspects of the image. The central argument that I am making is that this state-sponsored photographic propaganda tried to conceal the metaphorical, symbolic violence that it exerted both on the Armenian and the Muslim

[90] Jo, *Hamidian Damage Control: Occupation of the Ottoman Bank and Photographic Propaganda*, 44.
[91] BOA. A.MKT.MHM.748-23.
[92] Jo, *Hamidian Damage Control: Occupation of the Ottoman Bank and Photographic Propaganda,* 41.
[93] Ibid.

subjects, but nonetheless this repressed violence came to surface in the form of ambiguities and gaps that disturbed the coherence of the image in certain instances.

3.1 The absent Armenians and potential perpetrators staged as victims

The symbolic violence that I am referring to here stems, first and foremost, from the exclusion of Armenians from the political community represented by the wounded patients in the series. Although thousands of Armenian civilians were massacred and wounded during the pogroms in the aftermath of the Ottoman Bank Incident, the photographic propaganda sponsored by the state turned a blind eye to these Armenians by sympathizing only with the Muslim side. Serving to a manicheist narrative of innocent Muslims versus Armenian traitors, the photographs deliberately ignored the presence of wounded civilians from the Armenian community who received treatment in various hospitals of the city and instead tried to multiply the number of wounded civilians from the Muslim community.

Approaching this ideological state narrative from a counter-forensic perspective, I suggest that the photographs themselves attested to this symbolic violence in symptomatic ways. Among the sixty photographs in the series, there is interestingly one photograph that shows an Armenian civilian, named Andon, a *çırak* in a grocery store in Taksim, depicted in figure 1. While each of the photographs in the series invariably represents the sitters in a hospital ward setting, this Armenian young man and the Greek resident standing next to him sit on a bench outside possibly in the yard of a hospital. Although the caption of the photograph informs us about their bodily injuries, which were supposed to be visible to the viewer, the picture itself does not show us these injuries. Instead, we see two figures whose bodies are fully covered by their patient gowns and looking away from the camera

with blank expressions on their faces. As such, the photograph evokes a sense of uneasiness in the viewer which is also reinforced by the bodily gesture of the young man. The position of his hands tied on his lap communicates culpability and shame before the authoritative gaze of the camera that represents the law. Rather than being presented as a legitimate subject like the other wounded patients receiving care in the hospital ward, he is framed like a suspect or a criminal thrown outside the community, inhabiting "a zone of indistinction" where the legal and political form of his existence is undermined.[94]



Figure 1. Andon on the right, sitting on the bench like a suspect- İÜMK 779-71/47

[94] I use this expression with reference to Agamben who makes a distinction between 'bare life' (*zoe)* common to all living beings and the political life of a citizen who is part of the community (*bios).* See Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*.

While the photograph series from 1896 silently attest to the exclusion of the Armenian subjects from the Ottoman political community, they at the same time allow us to see how some potential perpetrators of violence taking part in the pogroms might have been staged as victims of Armenian terror. We discern such possibility when we close-read several photographs in the series in light of the official reports written by Mazhar Bey, who was in charge of getting the testimonies of patients receiving treatment in five different hospitals. Importantly, whereas the official reports indicate the date on which the patient was wounded as well as how and where the event took place, the caption of the photographs omit the information on the date, which is important because it serves to conceal the potential perpetrator status of some civilians who were involved in the pogroms.

The case of a day laborer named Halid living in Kandilli is worthy of mention in that regard. In his testimony given in the official report, this 25 year old man states that he spent some time as usual until 1:00 AM in the coffee house nearby the quay on the evening of August 27 (that is, a day after the Bank Incident) and as he was walking back home, someone just appeared and uttered some "ugly words to him which he feels ashamed of repeating", and finally stabbed him in his thigh and abdomen. He says he is hopeless about his current medical condition (*canımdan ümidim yoktur)* and ends his testimony, saying "I know the person who injured me by his voice. It belongs to Ohan who works as a porter in the dock".[95] The patient here presents himself as fully passive and victimized by the violent attack of the Armenian porter, but we have good reasons to suspect about the truthfulness of this testimony.

As has been demonstrated by recent studies, the massacres that took place in the following days of the Bank Incident had an important class dimension. As Sinan

[95] Kütüklü, *Ermenilerin İstanbul Ayaklanmaları*, 229.

Dinçer notes, the chaos that reigned in the immediate aftermath of the Bank Invasion was indeed an event that especially migrant Muslim workers from the lower class considered an opportunity to improve their economic positions by eliminating Armenian workers with higher prospects of income.[96] Due to this class antagonism, Armenian workers were violently attacked by the mobs in various parts of the city, and the state had remained largely indifferent to these attacks for the Armenian workers were seen as potentially dangerous subjects collaborating with the revolutionaries.[97]

This account allows us to evaluate Halid's testimony in a different light. Importantly, he presents the person who stabbed him first as an anonymous passerby but then immediately acknowledges his acquaintance with him by telling his name and occupation. This in turn casts doubt on the truthfulness of his testimony, revealing that he was possibly injured in a group fight rather than passively being the target of a violent act committed by an Armenian worker for no reason.

[96] Dinçer, "The Armenian massacre in Istanbul (1896)," 40-41.
[97] Dinçer, "The Armenian massacre in Istanbul (1896)," 39.



Figure 2. Halid on the right- İÜMK 779/71-057

A careful examination of the photograph in figure 2 further makes us question the authenticity of the atrocity that the man was supposedly subjected to. Whereas the caption accords with the testimony noting that he was injured in his thighs and abdomen, the photograph shows that he is hurt by his left arm only.

We observe a similar discrepancy in another photograph which shows a certain Şakir bin Ali and Mehmed bin Latif, who were wounded in the rumble that ensued after the Incident. A baker working in Galata, Mehmed states that he was wounded in the Thursday Bazaar around the fountain of Laleli on Saturday, that is, 3 days after the Ottoman Bank Incident.[98] But he does not give any further detail about the event. Likewise, Şakir, a worker in a hamam in Kagıthane, is evasive in his testimony. He simply states that "I went to a music hall (*gazino)* in Silahtaraga on

[98] *Ermenilerin İstanbul Ayaklanmaları*, 240.

Thursday and after a while there was a sudden uproar inside. Armenians attacked Muslims for no reason (*sebebsiz yere hücum ettiler)* and stabbed me in my both hands".[99] As can be seen in figure 3, the photograph showing these two men together within the same frame neither accords with their testimonies nor the caption. While they are supposed to be injured by their hands, one observes that only their legs are bandaged. This incoherence casts doubt on the authenticity of these photographs as well as making us question the victim status of these men within the ideological narrative constructed by the state. It indicates that while turning a blind eye to Armenians that were wounded and killed during the pogroms, the state might have strived to increase the number of the wounded on the Muslim side by "allowing" possible perpetrators of the violent events pass as victims.



Figure 3. Şakir on the left and Mehmet Latif in the middle posing to the camera as potential perpetrators- İÜMK 779/71-032

[99] *Ibid.* 239

In these cases, it is possible to assume a certain collaboration or silent agreement between the state and the photographed subjects, but I suggest that this was not the case for all sitters who performed in the series. Indeed, my contention is that giving consent to being photographed proved problematic for most sitters, who felt objectified by the invasive gaze of the camera. I will discuss how this symbolic violence of objectification manifested itself and exposed the ambiguity of consent in several photographs in the series. Before moving on to that discussion, however, I would like to make a brief recourse to the ethical debates that emerged within the pictorial humanitarianism of the late 19th century period, as I contend that the ideological and aesthetic structure of these photographs must be analyzed against the historical backdrop of humanitarian discourses.

3.2 The paradox of atrocity photography and humanitarian sensibility

As has been pointed by numerous scholars, atrocity photography is shaped by an ethical paradox that arises from the tension between the desire to explicitly expose the atrocity and the danger of re-victimizing the photographed subject whose dignity and agency have already been violated. Paul Lowe concisely summarizes this paradox: The more degrading or acute the trauma, the more the potential subject might be seen to be re-victimised by the act of representation and the less able they might be to give active consent to such an act. However, from the point of view of bearing witness, and the social and moral good that witnessing might entail, the more violent that trauma becomes, the more valuable and important it becomes that the trauma is witnessed.[100]

[100] Lowe, "The Forensic Turn: Bearing Witness and the Thingness of the Photograph," 212.

This continual dilemma of atrocity photography had first come to fore in the late 19th century, a period when new forms of humanitarianism that actively used photography in their political campaigns and reform efforts flourished in a transnational context. Aiming to bring an end to poverty, hunger and injustice caused by oppressive political regimes, humanitarians in this period rigorously relied on the developing aesthetic of realism occasioned by the photographic medium.[101] By circulating the images of atrocity through the illustrated newspapers and magic lantern slides, they hoped to promote a rationalized form of compassion for those in need of aid in various parts of the world.[102] Significantly, however, these humanitarians at the same time realized that they were themselves implicated in the violence they exposed to the public.

The debates and controversies that emerged starting from the 1890s and onwards were particularly important in that regard. At a time when affordable Kodak cameras and the invention of halftone technology allowed for the direct and accurate transcription of images in popular periodicals, the compassionate humanitarian sensibility could easily give way to the sensationalist imagery of "yellow journalism".[103] Such sensationalism had sparked controversy in the US among evangelical editors who worked in various missionary magazines documenting humanitarian crises in distant lands. While some of these editors were arguing that visual images were indispensible in stirring sympathy and motivating viewers to action, others were insisting that graphic portrayals of people in constant agony would only serve to promote pity and disgust for these distant strangers.[104] For the

[101] Twomey, "Framing Atrocity: Photography and Humanitarianism," 257.
[102] Ibid., 257.
[103] For detailed discussion of this issue, see Curtis "Picturing Pain: Evangelicals and the Politics of Pictorial Humanitarianism in an Imperial Age," 22-46.
[104] Curtis, 29.

latter, the act of visually representing the atrocity could only cultivate a sense of superiority and difference in the viewer instead of emphasizing the idea of a common humanity.[105]

Likewise, graphic representation of atrocity had posed a moral problem for the humanitarians who took photographs of indigeneous people physically violated by the oppressive colonial regime of king Leopold in Congo.[106] As Kevin Grant points out, these humanitarians desired to produce photographic evidence for the brutal punishments that the local people underwent such as rape and amputation, but they were also careful about not transgressing "the bounds of propriety" as they thought this would make them complicit in the violence they show and narrate, risking their moral authority in the public eye.[107]

I suggest that such humanitarian concerns about over-exposing the body played a role both in the investigation process and the production of the photographs. Mazhar Bey's written report on the wounded patients receiving care at the Gureba-i Müslimin Hospital offers a revealing testament to this humanitarian sensibility. After condemning the Armenian revolutionaries who, according to him, "have proven the whole world their bloodthirstiness which is inherent in their nature"[108], he describes the condition of the wounded in the hospital, stating:

The scene (*manzara)* presented by the hospitals is extremely tragic (*hazin*). The fact that foreign correspondents, who came to witness these sorrowful scenes, shed tears in the name of humanity (*insaniyet namına*) is evidence that Armenian militants possess sentiments that disgrace the very notion of humanity. Since a full

[105] Ibid., 42-43.
[106] See Grant "Limits of Exposure: Atrocity Photographs in the Congo Reform Campaign," 64-88.
[107] Grant, "Limits of Exposure: Atrocity Photographs in the Congo Reform Campaign," 64.
[108] *İstanbul'da Ermeni Ayaklanmaları*, 232.

and clear description of the devastating condition of the wounded can only cause sorrow, the details have been avoided. In this matter, the command and the decree belong to the authority in charge.[109]

This brief excerpt is significant in that it demonstrates how an Ottoman bureaucrat self-consciously employs the discourse of humanity in his indictment of violence. More revealing, however, is his use of the word "scene" when referring to the conditions of the patients. He addresses his sight of the wounded at the hospital as an encounter with a traumatic image, a disturbing photograph that he avoids describing in explicit detail. His avoidance "of full and clear description of the scenes" points to a humanitarian sensibility in that he feels implicated by the scenes of atrocity he witnessed. He fears that he may violate the dignity of the wounded if he narrates their bodily suffering in full detail.

Similarly, the photographs in the series reflect this humanitarian sensibility about the limits of exposure. Perhaps the most important indication of this is the photographer's choice to avoid showing any amputated limbs. Although some of the patients had leg amputations, which could have easily been exploited for sensationalist purposes, we observe that the photographer opted to conceal these injuries and avoided taking advantage of their "shock value". The photograph shown in figure 4 is a good example of this attitude. The caption notes that the patient's left kneecap was shattered to pieces by a bomb thrown from the Bank and resulted in the amputation of his leg. Looking at the image, however, we see that the lower part of the patient's body is carefully concealed by a blanket. Likewise, the photograph of a soldier hit by bomb shrapnel while walking with his battalion in front of the Galatasaray High School does not expose the wounded body. Whereas the caption

[109] Ibid.

notes that the bomb completely disfigured the patient's first and second toes of his left foot and injured his right elbow, the photograph itself shows the patient's body fully covered as can be seen in figure 5.

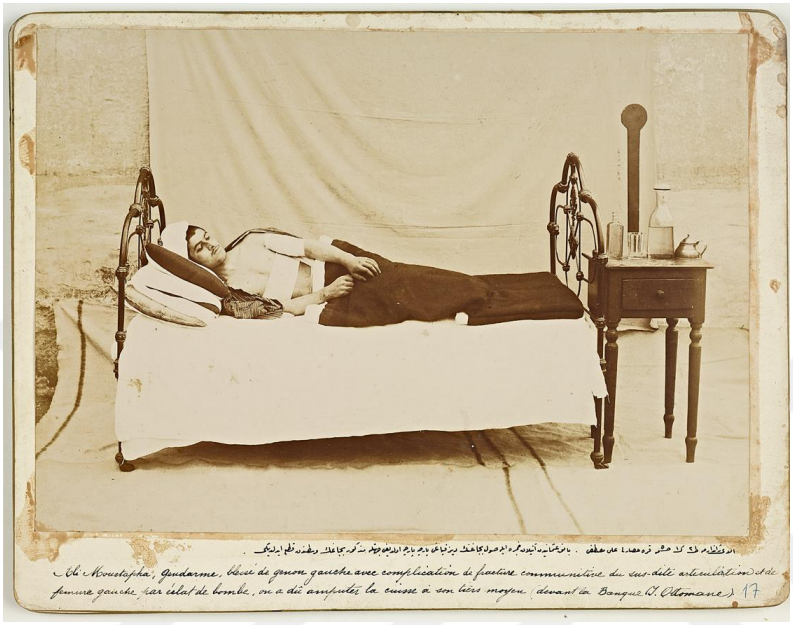

Figure 4. A patient whose lower body is neatly covered by a blanket- İÜMK 779/71-017

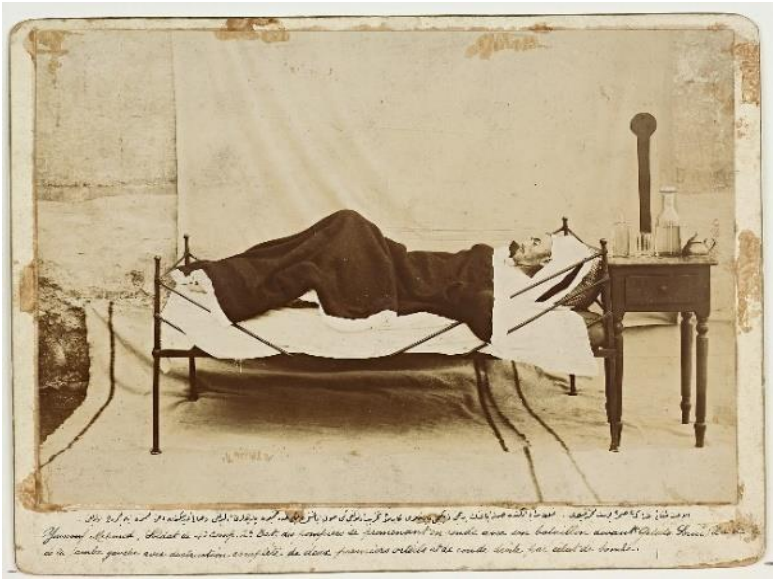

Figure 5. The fully covered body of a severely wounded soldier- İÜMK 779/71-001

3.3 Taming the subject and the domestication of the gaze

These examples indicate that the photographer was careful not to overstep the limits of exposure and showed some effort to counteract the potential risk of violating their dignity. Yet, this does not mean that the sitters were willing to perform to the camera. On the contrary, I claim, they were deeply disturbed by the objectifying gaze of the camera directed at them. As Susan Sontag perceptively points out, there is something inherently aggressive and murderous about the camera's gaze: "To photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed."[110] This objectification and possession particularly comes to fore in photographs of atrocity taken during times of war when subjects lose their "rights to self determination as to the use of one's own image"[111]. As this condition violates the interests and feelings of the victims, amounting to what Mieke Bal aptly terms a "theft of their subjectivity", the question of consent becomes problematic for those performing to the camera.[112] I suggest that the photographs from 1896 were marked by a problem of consent as such. Some of the patients taking part in the series might have willingly posed to the camera, but I contend that for many sitters, the question of consent proved problematic as they felt disturbed by the apparatus that effectively undermined their agency.

We can approach this objectification and possession as a problematic of the gaze. The subject of atrocity photography always carries in itself a potential danger of directly evoking the Real gaze that resists meaning. When viewers witness the image of a body in pain and suffering, they might be intensely moved by this

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[110] Sontag, *On Photography,* 14.
[111] Frank Möller, "Associates in Crime and Guilt, "*25.*
[112] Bal, cited in Möller, 25.

encounter because the traumatic effect of the Real gaze may destabilize the symbolic coordinates that guarantee meaning. Seen in this light, it becomes clear that the photographs of the wounded in the series take pains to minimize the unsettling effect of the Real gaze by taming the photographed subjects within the fantasmatic frame of a power discourse.

We can observe this taming of the subject more clearly when we compare the photographs from 1896 with the "Russian atrocities" series compiled by the studio photographer Pascal Sébah in 1877. As Martina Baleva points out, the latter allows much room for sympathy with the photographed subjects whose pain and suffering were staged in imaginative compositions that referenced a number of iconographic Christian scenes.[113] However, it should be noted that they do not necessarily avoid invoking the unsettling effect of the Real gaze. On the contrary, one can observe that Sébah emphasizes an intimate visual encounter with the sitters to the point of disturbing the viewer's safe distance from the image. The photographs taken after the Bank Incident, however, precisely try to maintain that distance by allowing the viewer a certain sense of mastery and isolation from the scene depicted. In short, they domesticate the gaze.

The staging of the wounded bodies in the mise-en-scène of a hospital setting is crucial to this domestication. The photographer could have taken the pictures of the wounded people in the actual, immediate environment that they received treatment. Instead, he opted to take the pictures of the sitters from the same frontal angle and distance as if he worked in a studio. Therefore, it can be said that even if the photographs were taken inside a real hospital, they actually evoked a fictive,

[113] Baleva, "The Empire Strikes Back: Image Battles and Image Frontlines during the Russo–Turkish War of 1877–1878," 273–294.

studio effect in the mind of the viewer, and this was a conscious choice on the part of the photographer. This way, the photographed subjects could be effectively tamed and inserted into the fantasmatic mise-en-scène of the state's discourse of power. Their facial expressions, gestures and postures could be better controlled and, more importantly, the visibility of their bodies could be ensured by the camera.

The sitters were objectified in three different ways in this fantasmatic stage. A number of photographs presented the patients as objects of a scientific, forensic gaze which allowed the viewer to examine the bodies from a detached, medical perspective. Aiming to showcase the state's command of scientific knowledge, these photographs almost completely cancelled out the subjectivity of the sitters and directed the viewer's attention to the wounded body. As can be clearly observed in figure 6, the sitters in this mode of representation were not much different from lifeless mannequins whose bodies were exhibited to the forensic eye.



Figure 6. Wounded patients exhibited as forensic objects- İÜMK 779/71-021

Another mode of representing the sitters was to stage them as victims in need of compassion and care. Some photographs (figure 7 and 8) tried to bring the viewer closer to the subjectivity of the sitters by underlining their vulnerability. The idea was to appeal to the viewer's humanitarian sentiment by inviting them to feel a rational form of compassion for the subjects in pain and suffering. This way, the photographs victimized the sitters and tried to evoke a positive emotional response in the viewer. Significantly, this strategy based on victimization was counterbalanced by another mode of representation, which depicted the patients as reclining figures looking into the camera with apathetic expressions. These photographs, which showed the sitters in quite a relaxed mood lying on the bed, served to complement the humanitarian imaginary by reassuring the viewer that the wounded were receiving proper medical care from the state.



Figure 7. A victim directly looking at the camera- İÜMK 779/71-008



Figure 8. A young victim in need of compassion- İÜMK 779/71-012

Drawing attention to the incongruous forms of posing the sitters in his study of the photographs, Kyong Jo rightly argues that the images of these patients who were "photographically anesthetized" served to eliminate the risk of delivering a wrong message to the viewer.[114] While the photographs had to prove the victim status of Muslim side to the Western powers, he suggests, they were also supposed to "visually express the message that the Ottoman Empire was successfully addressing the human damage and reestablishing public order"[115]. While I agree with Jo's contention, I suggest that there was another function of this particular mode of staging the patients, namely creating an illusion of consent on the part of the sitters. By making them pose as reclining figures receiving effective health care from the

[114] Jo, *Hamidian Damage Control: Occupation of the Ottoman Bank and Photographic Propaganda*, 39.
[115] Ibid., 36.

state, the photographer tried to conceal the violence of their objectification and created the impression that the sitters posed to the camera with their full consent.

The staging of these "willing" subjects also served to underline the political, paternalistic bond between the sitters and the Hamidian regime.[116] One of the photographs in the series depicting a soldier named Derviş Agha explicitly draws our attention to this alleged bond between the subject and the state. In figure 9, we see the man exhibiting his bandaged body as he remains in reclined position on the bed. The caption of the photograph notes that he was injured in 14 different parts of his body and that he recovered his health thanks to the aid of the Sultan.[117] Although one observes that the sitter is frowning in the picture, which may be an indication of his discontent about being photographed, the caption and the sitter's reclining pose manage to hide this potential discontent by staging him as an ideal subject of the state -and the sultan- willingly posing to the camera.

[116] For a detailed discussion of this paternal bond, see Özbek, "Philanthropic Activity, Ottoman Patriotism and the Hamidian Regime, 1876-1909," 59-81.
[117] The full caption of the photograph written in Ottoman Turkish is in the following: "Vakanın 4. günü Voyvoda karakolunda Vitalis Hanı'ndan atılan humbara ve kurşun ile vücudunun muhtelif mahallerinin cüz'i ve külli 14 mahallinden mecruh olub bi mennihi'l-kerim" Saye-i Muvaffakıyetvaye-i Cenab-ı Padişahide edilen tedavi-i cerrahi semeresiyle kesb-i afiyet eylemiştir"



Figure 9. Dervish Agha lies on the bed, frowning - İÜMK 779/71-005

3.4 Invisible faces and the eruption of the Real gaze

I suggest that if this illusion of consent could be maintained in the series, this was largely thanks to the visibility of the face. Although the personhood of the sitters was hijacked by the fantasmatic staging of the photographs, the visibility of the face concealed that violence and provided the viewer with a safe space of identification, in which they could comfortably engage with the sitters. To put it another words, the visibility of the face functioned here as a signifier of the sitter's consent, and at the same time it assigned the viewer a symbolic and imaginary position from which they could comfortably make sense of the image without being threatened by the emergence of the Real gaze.[118]

[118] Zevnik, "The politics of the face: the scopic regime and the (un)masking of the political subject," 129.

Significantly, such a comfortable position of identification was disrupted in several instances where the face was completely removed from sight. In these cases, the traumatic excess of the Real gaze acutely surfaced and unsettled the viewer by foregrounding the ambiguity of consent. In figure 10, for example, we encounter the eruption of the gaze which undermines the viewer's safe distance from the image. The photograph shows a man named Halil bin İbrahim, a boatman in Defterdar, who was "injured in his iliac region near the anus as he was passing by Hasköy." As the sitter has turned his back with his face completely removed from sight, it is not possible for the viewer to find a stable point of identification. The complete elimination of the face evokes the traumatic effect of the gaze and disturbs the viewer's empathetic identification since it suspends the personhood of the sitter, turning him into a merely bodily material stripped of interiority. Moreover, the emergence of the gaze as such destabilizes the authority of the camera by disclosing the obscene underside of its seemingly neutral and "lawful" character. While the French caption attempts to convey an impression of clinical detachment by using medical terms ("iliac region near the anus") to describe the man's injury, the visual image precisely disavows that neutrality by transgressing the limits of bodily exposure. As we look at the image more closely, it becomes difficult to believe that the photograph was taken with the sitter's full consent. The figure seems overwhelmed by the shame of being rendered an object under the "sadistic" gaze of the camera.



Figure 10. The eruption of the Real gaze and the failure of identification - İÜMK 779/71-028

This violent dimension of the photographs can also be observed in the awkward compositions (figure 11 and 12) where “bodies without faces” were placed side by side with sitters whose faces were turned to the camera. It is difficult to say why the photographer arranged such compositions. After all, he could photograph the sitters individually as in other pictures in the series. One possible interpretation is that he wanted to eliminate sentimentality. By posing the sitters side by side in directly contrasting ways, the photographer intended to identify the viewer with a scientific, forensic gaze that would allow them to examine the bodies as material evidence untainted by subjective emotions. With this “positivist” approach, the photographer aimed to expressly eliminate the difference between a visible face and an invisible one, reducing both to the same register of scientific examination.

Again, however, this particular way of posing the subjects, I suggest, accentuated the invasive character of these photographs. In figure 11, for instance, this becomes evident when one pays attention to the sitter on the left whose face is visible to the viewer. Taking into consideration the repetitive structure of the compositions, we can assume that the young man was supposed to look directly into the camera but instead he averts his gaze from it. His blank expression suggests a sense of shame, yet this does not significantly disturb the viewer's ability to identify with the image as both sitters somehow accord with each other through their passivity. The viewer, therefore, can bypass their subjectivities and identify with the cold, forensic gaze of the camera.



Figure 11. The sitter averting his gaze from the camera- İÜMK 779/71-052

In figure 12, however, such relatively safe identification with the camera is not possible. Although the scene is visually arranged in almost exactly the same way, the direct encounter with the look of the sitter on the left functions as the Real gaze that cuts through the field of vision with disturbing excess. The sitter's confrontational look, which signals his discontent with his objectification before the camera disrupts the viewer's passive engagement with the image and evokes a sense of anxiety. This rupture draws our attention to the immediate and contingent nature of the photographic event, reminding us of the repressed violence in the staging of the scene.

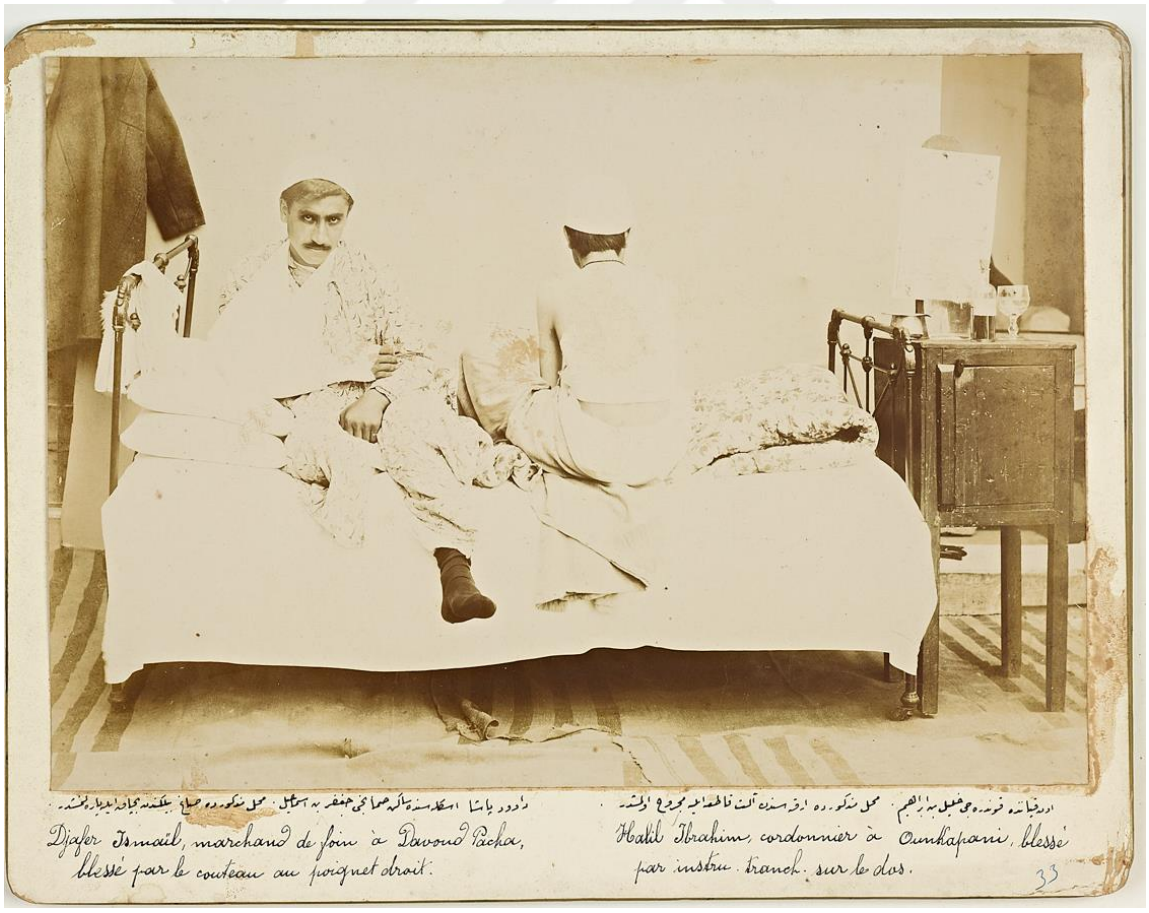

Figure 12. The sitter casting a confrontational look at the camera- İÜMK 777/71-033

3.5 Ambiguities of defiance

The dimension of the Real gaze more explicitly comes to fore in a number of photographs where the sitters cast defiant looks into the camera. At first glance, the viewer might interpret these defiant expressions as clear signs of anger or protest addressed to the perpetrators (Armenian militants) or the European public who sympathized with them. If we pay attention to the ambiguities of the image, however, it becomes possible to interpret these defiant expressions as a sign of resistance against the camera's disciplinary gaze.

One observes such ambiguity in the photograph (figure 13) in which a cafe owner Mehmed Reşad stares directly into the camera with an aggressive, almost threatening expression. From the way he shows his injured left arm to the camera, which is slightly exaggerated in gesture, the viewer might initially assume that he is willingly complying with the photographer's directions in staging the scene. However, the relaxed mood of the other sitter on the right, who simply poses to the camera with neutral expression, makes us question this assumption. One thinks that the defiant expression of the sitter on the left might be unintended on the part of the photographer. The discord between the caption and the visual image is crucial in this respect. Whereas the caption only notes the man's injury in his left leg, one can easily notice the absence of his right leg, which indicates that it was amputated before the Bank Incident. Significantly, the sitter has put his right hand on this missing leg, a gesture that emphasizes the direct contrast with his remaining left leg which is sharply visible to the viewer.



Figure 13. Mehmed Reşad on the left and his threatening presence - İÜMK 779/71-056

I contend that the photographer consciously posed the sitter in this way because he wanted to emphasize his vulnerability. This intent becomes evident when we evaluate the composition of the photograph in comparison with the similar ones. Whereas the photographer chose to show these patients as they sit on the bed, exhibiting only one of their legs, that is, the one wounded during the Bank Incident, he posed the patient with the missing leg as he stood on his left foot, and thus underlined his victim status. In other words, what I am suggesting is that the photographer subtly exploited the physical disability of a patient who had lost his limb prior to the Bank Incident to enhance the propagandistic value of the photograph. This interpretation radically changes the meaning of the photograph. The

sitter's defiant look becomes a cipher of his resistance against the disciplinary apparatus that undermines his agency and dignity.

We encounter a similar ambiguity in figure 14, which shows three non-Muslim subjects. At first glance, one may think there is nothing suspicious about this photograph. The female sitter on the left, named Marie Panayot, shows her injured hand to the camera with a sad expression on her face, while the male sitter on the right has slightly turned his torso aside to render visible his injured shoulder. Clearly, both sitters obeyed the photographer's directions to stage the scene. However, the man named Anastas who stands in the middle of them slightly disturbs the coherence of the scene, because although he frowns to the camera, he does not display any parts of his body. In fact, from the gesture of his hands and his guarded posture, one gets the impression that he expressly tries to conceal his body with the overcoat provided by the hospital/studio. Given that each of the sitters posing to the camera was supposed to exhibit their wounds either openly or with bandages, Anastas's defiant pose takes on a radically different meaning. Rather than addressed to the perpetrator, his frown may be read as a refusal to perform the passive role of the victim assigned by the state.



Figure 14. Anastas in the middle, refusing to show his wounds - İÜMK 779/71-019

One can sense this refusal of passivity also in the photograph shown in figure 15 where we see two soldiers sitting on the bed side by side. Significantly, both sitters aggressively pose to the camera and reclaim their subjectivities through their facial expressions and postures. Comparing this photograph to the others among the series, it becomes evident that the sitters were actually supposed to passively submit to the camera showing their wounds as forensic objects or reclining figures. The sitters precisely refuse this passive position imposed on them. Here, I want to draw attention particularly to the sitter on the right. While he shows the wound on his right leg, thus complying with the photographer's staging of the scene, he tries to eliminate any sense of weakness or vulnerability from his self-image. He consciously dignifies his pose by sitting upright and casting an assertive, proud look at the

camera. In doing so, he tries to turn the repressive aspect of the scene into an honorific one.



Figure 15. The two soldiers' refusal of passivity - İÜMK 779/71-023

Although it would be wrong to propose an over-generalizing argument that would apply to all photographs in the series, these particular examples reveal that some of the sitters posing to the camera were aware of the symbolic violence they went through and as such, they performed subtle acts of resistance to show their discontent. While the state-sponsored photographic propaganda rigorously tried to exploit the sitters by objectifying them in various ways, some of these subjects self-consciously tried to reclaim their agency and dignity.

Assigning this awareness to the subjects should not be considered as ahistorical or voluntarist reading, because questions of consent, ownership and the

circulation of images were actually beginning to emerge in legal context at the time of the production of this photographic series. The famous article, published in the US in 1890 "The Right to Privacy", for example, had called attention to "the right to be let alone' and emphasized the need for a legal solution for "the unauthorized circulation of portraits of private persons" and the publication of "instantaneous photographs" in newspapers without their consent.[119] The authors of the article were demanding that the existing laws be used "to protect the privacy of the individual from invasion either by the too enterprising press, the photographer, or the possessor of any other modern device for recording or reproducing scenes or sounds"[120].

To what extent these legal and ethical debates regarding consent took place in the Ottoman Empire is a question that warrants a study in its own right. But it seems safe to argue that the 1890s marked a period in which photographic images had become part of everyday life for the ordinary Ottoman subjects who could take photographs out in the streets thanks to the affordable lightweight cameras introduced by Kodak in the late 1880s. As Ahmet Ersoy has discussed in detail, thanks to the proliferation of weekly illustrated journals like *Servet-i Fünun* and *Malumat* in this period, ordinary people were able to establish an affective and personal bond with photographic images. Sharing a common experience of reading and seeing, these people were not "merely passive recipients of imperial ideology" but rather active participants in the interactive space of these journals.[121] They were contributing to the illustrated press by submitting poems reflecting on their affective

[119] Warren and Brandeis, "The Right to Privacy,"195.
[120] Ibid., 206.
[121] Ersoy, "Ottomans and the Kodak Galaxy: Archiving Everyday Life and Historical Space in Ottoman Illustrated Journals," 341.

encounters with their own photographs, or by contributing essays centered on a particular image provided by the editors.[122]

In this emerging visual culture, where ordinary people increasingly had the chance to establish a private and affective relationship with representations of the world as well as with their own images in affordable, commodified forms (portrait photographs, postcards, journals etc.) it was not easy for the photographer to make the patients unquestioningly submit to the camera. Certainly, some of the sitters passively complied with the staging of the scene and performed their role before the apparatus. But as I have tried to demonstrate, there were also those who resisted in subtle yet perceptible ways by expressing their lack of consent to being photographed.

3.6 The colonial underside of Hamidian paternalism

Before concluding, we should perhaps raise the following question: Was this resistance only a reaction to the act of being photographed or did it have some deeper political meaning? In response to this question, I would claim that the resistance of the subjects actually conveys some deeper significance that goes beyond the immediacy of the photographic event. To grasp this latent political meaning, we should more closely examine the paternalist subtext of the photographs. As I have already mentioned, the overall visual structure of the series emphasized the political bond between the patients and the benevolent sultan. Although there were differences in the posing of the patients, behind all these representations loomed the spectral

[122] Ersoy, "Ottomans and the Kodak Galaxy: Archiving Everyday Life and Historical Space in Ottoman Illustrated Journals," 330-331.

figure of the sultan who “rescued” these wounded patients by providing effective humanitarian aid.

I suggest that this seemingly innocent paternalism was indeed shot through with class-based colonial violence in its repressed underside. This violence can be discerned when one pays attention to the difference in the attitude the photographer showed toward the French officer of the Ottoman bank, Monsieur Jacques. While all the sitters taking part in a total of 60 photographs are invariably pictured with the same head coverings and gowns supplied by the hospital, Monsieur Jacques stands out as the only individual who poses to the camera wearing his personal attire, as is seen in figure 16. Dressed in his elegant suit and polished leather shoes, he does not belong to the class of ordinary patients in the collection. Significantly, the photographer underscores the privileged, bourgeois position of the French citizen by making him pose from the side profile. As such, this honorific portrait is diametrically opposed to the other photographs where two or three sitters are pictured together from a frontal angle.



Figure 16. The “civilized” Monsieur Jacques, dressed in his elegant suit - İÜMK 779/71-49

This stark contrast can best be observed when the picture of Monsieur Jacques is juxtaposed with the photograph depicting three soldiers dressed in identical overcoats (figure 17). Interestingly, the photographer takes the photograph on the same spot, as is evident from the pattern of the carpet on the floor. However, the visual treatment of the sitters is radically different. Whereas the photographer carefully frames Monsieur Jacques, meticulously arranging his distance to the camera in a way as to hide the sight of the dirty and deformed floor, he does not have such aesthetic considerations when photographing the soldiers. Moreover, the ideological rhetoric of the image is completely different in the two cases. While there is a sense of refined and “civilized” individuality in the portrait of Monsieur Jacques,

the visual treatment of the soldiers communicates an oppressive sense of anonymity and obedience as the three sitters are represented as submitting to the disciplinary gaze of the camera and displaying their bandaged wounds in a passive manner.



Figure 17. "Docile" soldiers, submitting to the camera's disciplinary gaze - İÜMK 779/71-026

Considering the close ideological links between the formation of imperial humanitarianism and colonialism[123], we can say that the staging of these infantile, "docile bodies", juxtaposed with the "civilized" image of Monsieur Jacques, produces the alienating effect of the Real gaze since it effectively reveals the repressed colonial violence underlying the state's fantasmatic humanitarian narrative. It shows us the disturbing fact that the Hamidian regime tried to construct its self-

[123] See Barnett's *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism,* particularly the chapter titled "Saving Slaves, Sinners, Savages, and Societies", 57-75.

image as a powerful and benevolent state by way of perceiving and representing its own citizens as if they were colonial subjects devoid of agency and rationality. Such paternalistic rhetoric, I propose, was not something incidental but central to the humanitarian narrative, which was designed to impress the colonial gaze of the European states. Much like the Great Powers, which claimed to discipline and civilize their colonies by delivering humanitarian aid, the Hamidian regime aimed to demonstrate its capacity for taking care of its subjects whom it viewed through a colonial lens.

Coming back to the question of resistance, I would suggest that the sitters who resisted the invasive gaze of the camera were aware of the hidden colonial violence they were subjected to. After all, the sitters shared a collective experience of posing for and being directed by the photographer in the same studios. Therefore, they were acutely aware of the hierarchical order implied by the different treatment of Monsieur Jacques. In fact, it is even arguable that this was the real source of anxiety in the political unconscious of these photographs. Since the sitters sensed the abject position imposed on them by a state apparatus that hijacked their images for the purpose of propaganda that implicitly represented them as colonial subjects, it is likely that they felt even more distressed and dispossessed for being photographed. Although the photographer took some measures to erase the traces of this symbolic violence by deliberately emphasizing the "obedience" of the subjects, the ambiguity of consent, nonetheless, surfaced in the form of an excess that distorted the coherence of the image as well as with the effect of the sitters who deliberately upset the scene by reclaiming their agency and dignity.

To conclude, while this state-sponsored visual propaganda aimed to make the viewers witness the atrocities committed by the Armenian revolutionaries, it

unintentionally exposed an oppressive state violence which was exerted both on the Armenian subjects, who were completely excluded from the political community, and on the “legitimate” subjects of the empire whose images were exploited for the sake of satisfying the state’s humanitarian fantasy.

CHAPTER 4

THE PURLOINED GAZE AND THE AMBIGUITY OF IDENTIFICATION

4.1 The structure of the album

In the first chapter, I have tried to demonstrate how the Real gaze disclosed the repressed violence exerted on the photographed subjects who were objectified as obedient subjects of the Hamidian regime. By focusing on the instances where the ambiguity of consent came to fore through the disruptions of the Real gaze, I argued that the state apparatus was unable to fully erase the traces of the symbolic violence from the fantasmatic surface of the photographs. In this chapter, I switch my focus from the photographed subjects to the photographer and provide a counter-forensic analysis of the İzmir album compiled during the investigations conducted after the failed assassination of Abdulhamid. Examining the entire album as an attempt to retrieve a fantasmatic, symbolic gaze "purloined" by the Armenian revolutionaries, I demonstrate how the photographer Athanassiades underwent a conflicted mode of identification, vacillating between the narcissistic, surveillant gaze of the state apparatus and the traumatic, Real gaze of the Armenian revolutionaries who planned the attacks.

The making of the İzmir album was directly related with the investigations that started with the failed assassination attempt against the Sultan Abdulhamid. After the bomb attack, which took place at Yıldız Mosque on 21 July 1905, police forces in Istanbul had embarked on a rigorous investigation in order to detect the identities of the criminals, soon finding out that the attack was done by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF). The investigation had revealed that the Armenian committee members were planning to attack several important sites and buildings in

İzmir as well. Hence, the police had initiated a separate investigation process in the city under the supervision of the Governor of Aydın, Kamil Pasha. Informed that the committee members in Paris were paying a high sum of money to a man named Dikran Nalbantyan who was running a butcher shop in Kordon, the police arrested several members of ARF in İzmir and managed to capture all the explosives hidden by the committee in various spots in the city,

In both investigations executed in Istanbul and İzmir, the photographic medium served an important forensic role for the state. The photographs of the arrested suspects involved in the assassination attempt were taken and reproduced in the official report[124] written in Istanbul along with the photographs of explosives found in Krocker Hotel and various other places. This report was also translated in abridged form into French with the title "l'attentat commis dans la journée du 21 juillet à l'issue de la cérémonie du Sélamlik: Résumé."[125] The photographic material was used even more abundantly by the investigative commission in İzmir.[126] Two photograph albums were produced and supplemented to the official investigation report. One of the albums consisted of cartes-de-visite photographs of 39 arrestees and 5 fugitives involved in the plot.[127] The other one contained 26 photographs documenting the monuments and buildings that the ARF planned to attack along with pictures of the bombs and the portraits of the high bureaucrats in charge of the

[124] Both the original report and its modern Turkish version have been published in book format. See Dalgalı, *Sultan'a Suikast: Sultan II. Abdülhamid'e Sunulan Bomba Hadisesi Fezlekesi*.
[125] Alloul et al., *To Kill a Sultan: A Transnational History of the Attempt on Abdülhamid II (1905)*, 26.
[126] A modern Turkish version of the report was published in the 1980s. See Mutluçağ, *İzmir Ermeni İhtilal Komitesi ve Terör.*
[127] See the photograph album "Ermeni Komitacılar hakkında İzmir'de Yapılan Tahkikat" (İÜMK-NEKYA 90640)

investigation.[128] Both albums were compiled by the Ottoman Greek photographer N.S. Athanassiades who ran a commercial studio located on the Rue de Franque.[129]

Why were these forensic albums commissioned to a studio photographer like Athanassiades? Unfortunately, none of the resources I could find about photography studios in Ottoman İzmir provide detailed biographical information about the photographer. This absence is likely a consequence of the Great Fire of Smyrna in 1922 which caused the destruction of the visual archives preserved in the studios.[130] Yet, several visual sources offer us some important details about the photographer's career and his work. A postcard dated July 1907 (figure 18), which I came across on an auction website, for instance, indicates that Athanassiades had another photography studio in Candia, Crete. This shows us that he had an extensive commercial network. Also, the portrait photographs issued from his studio in İzmir inform us that he worked with some wealthy clientele such as the Abbott Family.[131]

[128] "Ermeni Komitacılar hakkında İzmir'de Yapılan Tahkikat" (İÜMK- NEKYA 90641)
[129] Although only the second album bears Athanassiades's name, it is evident that he also took and compiled the photographs of the arrestees in the first album. All the prints share identical mat dimensions (41 × 30 cm), and the albums feature the same leather binding design. Moreover, the portraits of the arrestees differ markedly from conventional police mugshots. With their professional lighting and vignette effect, they appear to have been produced by a studio photographer. All these suggest that Athanassiades played a major role in the making of both albums even if he was not their sole author.
[130] See Korkmaz et. al. "The mapping of photographer's studio in Izmir 1900-1950: From Frank Street to Kemeraltı," 134-146.
[131] Some of these photographs can be accessed from the following link https://www.levantineheritage.com/abbottk.htm



Figure 18. The postcard sent from Athanassiades's studio in Candia to Istanbul (1907)

However, it is important to note that Athanassiades was not simply a commercial photographer who worked in the studio. The visual material I found in the online archive of German Archeological Institute[132] indicates that Athanassiades had already established some professional affliation with the state as a commissioned photographer before the preparation of the İzmir album. When the son of the German King, Wilhem II, visited Miletus to see the archeological excavations, for instance, Athanassiades was tasked with taking the pictures of this official visit. Therefore, one possible answer as to why Athanassiades was hired for this state-sponsored project might have to do with the fact that he already had some connections with the state officials. Also, one should not forget the fact that the state likely needed the expertise and skills of a professional photographer. After all, even though photography was

[132] See the online archive https://arachne.dainst.org/

already being used as a tool of identifying the criminals and recording fingerprints by the police departments in major Ottoman cities by the year 1905, there were no cadres trained in photography at the time.[133] Therefore, it is understandable that the state wanted to work with a local professional photographer like Athanassiades.

Furthermore, we should note that the bomb attack against the sultan and the terrorist plots revealed in its aftermath constituted a major news event abroad. The Ottomans collaborated with multiple states to identify the criminals and get further information about the conspiracies; and this entire process of collaboration and investigation was being widely covered in the European press[134]. Given the fact that there was a considerable degree of permeability between the archival and commercial spheres regarding the production and circulation of the photographic material,[135] we can assume that the state officials in İzmir could not risk working with a lay photographer under these circumstances. Even if the photographs were to be taken solely for the state records, they could have reached the reading public both in the Ottoman domains and abroad.

Professionalism and efficacy were key messages that the İzmir album aimed to convey to the viewer. The first pages opened with the portraits of the four high officials leading the investigative commission, namely Kazım Pasha, the Court Inspector Galip Bey, Mirliva Said Pasha and Aydın Gendarmerie Commander Hayreddin Bey. The portrait photographs of these high officials were followed by five photographs documenting the explosives caught by the police, each of which was accompanied by captions informing the viewer about their types and the places

[133] Akbabaöz, "Eşkâle Dayalı Kimliklendirmeden Kriminal Kimliklendirmeye: Osmanlı İç Güvenliğinde Biyometrik Unsurlar," 413.
[134] See Smaele, "Covering the Ottoman Empire: Orientalism and the Mass Media" in *To Kill a Sultan,* 193-224.
[135] Ersoy and Türker, "The Hamidian Visual Archive (1876-1908): A User's Manual," 341.

where they were caught. These photographs of bombs and dynamites derived their persuasive power directly from their indexical aspect and thus functioned as the "undeniable" documents of the crime. The third group of photographs in the album, however, foregrounded a different mode of forensic aesthetic. These were views of the buildings and sites that the ARF planned to explode in the city. Like a detective trying to reconstruct the acts of a criminal network, Athanassiades had visited all the spots targeted by the committee and taken, one by one, the photographs of these places including the Government House in Konak, the train station in Basmane, Credit Lyonnais Bank, passport and customs offices along the harbour, and the railways bridges of the İzmir-Aydın line. The caption for each photograph emphasized the name of the building with invariable reference to the committee's attack plan. What the viewer saw, however, was the everyday view of a street or an ordinary sight of a building. In other words, the photographic index functioned as an empty pointer in these pictures, evoking the imaginative and the surreal. To use the succinct formulation offered by Zahid Chaudary in the Indian context, what these outdoor photographs did was to "capture absence indexically."[136] Rather than showing us the event, they invited the viewer to imagine the event.

4.2 Retrieving the master's purloined gaze

Why did the officials feel the need to produce such photographs wherein the index failed to work? What was the logic behind photographing those crime scenes lacking the evidence of crime? Perhaps part of the answer to this question lies in the fact that the turn of the century was a time when the crime scene as a distinct analytical space

[136] Chaudhury, "Death and the Rhetoric of Photography: X Marks the Spot," 39.

was not yet systematically defined and established.[137] Hence, we can assume that forensic photography was not yet understood as a tool of detection but rather perceived in a practical way. Athanassiades was probably asked to take these "crime scene" photographs simply to provide with the sultan and the judicial officers some visual aid about the spots and buildings mentioned in the written investigation reports. Yet, this answer does not sufficiently explain why 17 photographs out of a total of 26 reiterated the logic of presence-as-absence by forcing us to follow the traces of criminal events *that did not take place*. If we remind ourselves that the written official investigation reports took pains to emphasize the value of empirical evidence foregrounding the scientific, forensic gaze of doctors, chemists and toxicologists, this imaginative, "fictional" impulse of the album was something symptomatic.

Although the explicit intention behind the photographs collected in the İzmir album was to present evidence for the criminal acts of the Armenian committee, the real, unconscious motivation, I suggest, was to offer "reassurance" in the sense discussed by Elizabeth Edwards. Questioning the commonplace that photograph albums collected by the British Colonial Office effectively reinforced colonial governance and colonial knowledge, Edwards points out that these albums were actually indicative of hesitations and uncertainties of the colonial regime. Rather than functioning as "instruments of assertive colonial action", they served to "fill the political and emotional fissures created by the colonial endeavor"[138]Similarly, I argue that the İzmir album had a reassuring function against the political and emotional

[137] Burney, "Dust and the Early Twentieth Century Forensic Imagination," 31-59.
[138] Edwards, "Photographic Uncertainties: Between Evidence and Reassurance," 184.

fissures that the Ottoman state experienced at the time of the bomb incident and the terrorist conspiracies revealed in its aftermath.

From a psychoanalytical perspective, the major fissure that the İzmir album had to repair was the symbolic efficacy of the gaze. As Lacanian thinkers point out, subjects of the symbolic order address themselves to the fantasmatic authority of a paternal gaze (the Big Other) which guarantees the ground of consistent meaning for them. When a trauma occurs, however, the symbolic efficacy of this gaze, or what Lacan calls the gaze of the Big Other, collapses. I suggest that the "bomb incident" was precisely such a traumatic event that witnessed the collapse of the fantasmatic gaze. Despite all the intelligence agents and police forces employed by the palace, the Armenian anarchists managed to hide for months, produced their weapon called the "Infernal Machine" and succeeded to realize their plan right in the center of the capital city. To be sure, the sultan was not murdered, but this failed event itself exposed the fragility of the Hamidian state which had based its legitimacy on security and social order[139]. To put it in other words, this incident revealed the "castration" of the sultan, rendering his symbolic gaze impotent for his subjects.

The disruption of the gaze was further exacerbated during the investigation process because the Ottoman state witnessed how the Armenian revolutionaries used photography as an intrument of resistance and disguise. A reader of the official criminal reports can take notice of this issue in between-the-lines. During the investigations both in Istanbul and İzmir, the police had given much importance to the photograph as a forensic object. They used them to identify the suspects involved in the committee network as well as conducting cross-examinations based on them. A

[139] On the centrality of these notions for the Hamidian state, see Yılmaz, *Serseri, Anarşist ve Fesadın Peşinde: II. Abdülhamid Dönemi Güvenlik Politikaları Ekseninde Mürur Tezkereleri, Pasaportlar ve Otel Kayıtları*, 78-83.

group photograph that the İzmir police captured in carpenter Antranik's atelier, for instance, allowed the police to arrest a certain Serkis who confessed the identities of each of the five people shown in that picture. That man named Serkis had also informed the police about the story of the photograph, stating that it was taken on their way back from a festive event (*panayır)* in Manisa and that each person in the group received two copies of the same photograph.[140] Later on when the police searched Serkis's house, they found other group photographs hidden in a bag, which they used as an instrument for cross-examination. While the investigation reports narrated such instances where the photograph was used as evidence to detect the criminals, they also subtly revealed how the members of the Armenian committee used these same photographs to enhance the solidarity among themselves and their nationalist cause.

This "insurgent" use of the photograph legibly came to the fore, for instance, when a certain Arakel, the doorkeeper of the Austrian Hospital, confessed that some explosives, documents and photograph albums showing the pictures of Armenian kings were kept inside the building. In his statement, Arakel informed the police that the explosives were given to him by Chris Fenerdjian, while the documents and the photographs belonged to a restaurant owner named Haci Nişan who was given the mission by the Committee to take care of the photographs. Arakel noted that these photographs and documents functioned like a testimonium (*şahadetname*) for the committee members.[141]

Such political valorization of the photograph must have been worrisome for the state. But the real disturbing issue was to see that the committee members used

[140] *Izmir Ermeni İhtilal Komitesi ve Terör*, 77.
[141] Dalgalı, *Sultan'a Suikast,* 199.

the professional practice of photography as a way of concealing their identities and attack plans. Quite interestingly, both reports from Istanbul and İzmir revealed that some of the committee members were professionally engaged in photography. In Istanbul, the police found out that in late 1903, the ARF members opened a shop in Voyvoda Han selling camera equipment before they decided on the assassination of Abdulhamid. [142]The original idea was to dig a hole inside the store and attack the Ottoman Bank using this tunnel; but after a while they deterred from this idea and began to work on their assassination plan.[143]When Karagözof, the owner of the shop, left for Russia for a certain period of time, he had given his position to Chris Fenerdjian (alias Silvio Ricci or Cris), who was responsible to make the technical arrangements on the explosives. Significantly, Fenerdjian had bought the necessary electrical paraphernalia from another store that sold equipment for photography in Beyoğlu Tünel Pasajı[144], and the official report could not help underlining the point that he contributed to the terrorist attacks by using his skills in the profession of photography (*fotografçılık ve elektrik sanatlarındaki mahareti ciheyitle*).[145]

The associations established between terrorism and the profession of photography were not as explicit in the İzmir report as in the one written in Istanbul, but there was a very curious detail given by one of the committee members examined by the police. When a certain Agop, the son of Takfur Gazarosyan, was asked to provide information about Antranik, the leader of the ARF's İzmir network, he had stated that Antranik is "a guy aged 25-28 who wore a moustache and worked for a while at Athanassiades's studio on Rue de Franque" (*bıyıklı olup bir müddet Frenk*

[142] Dalgalı, *Sultan'a Suikast,* 169-171.
[143] Ibid., 169
[144] Ibid., 167.
[145] Ibid., 241.

Mahallesi'nde Atanasyadi'nin yanında fotografçılık ettiğini)[146] Unfortunately, neither the statements of the other suspects nor the conclusions of the police report provides us with any further information on the relationship between Antranik and Athanassiades, but it is certainly a curious issue tempting us to ask many sorts of questions. What was the relationship between these two men in the first place? Was Antranik really employed by Athanassiades? If so, did Athanassiades have any active involvement with the committee in İzmir? I did not come across any reference to this issue in the resources and documents I searched, but I assume the information that Antranik worked with Athanassiades cannot be a work of imagination given the fact that Agop had given very specific information about the photographer's name and his address. We might ask then: could it be possible that Athanassiades was a secret agent of the committee? That also does not seem plausible because if Athanassiades had been involved in any way in the committee network, the investigation report would have definitely included his statement as a suspect. Besides, the state would not have hired him in the making of the photograph album. The best assumption we can provide in this case is that Athanassiades did in fact employ Antranik in his studio for a while but without the knowledge that this young man was one of the ARF members.

Obviously, this story demands some further research, but it still shows us something important, namely the fact that at the turn of the century photography became an instrument of resistance and disguise for the Armenian anarchists, and this significantly upset the state's hegemony over the medium. When photography came to the Ottoman lands in the mid-19th century, the privilege of using the camera and thus producing photographic images was in the monopoly of the state. It was the

[146] *Izmir Ermeni İhtilal Komitesi ve Terör*, 49.

non-Muslims who ran the industry of commercial photography in Istanbul and elsewhere, but most of them were working for the state. As a sponsor of these studio photographers, Abdulhamid was highly interested in exhibiting the empire's modern infrastructure (railways, watchtowers, bridges etc.) through the photographic medium[147]**.** But photography was also an instrument of surveillance and social control at his hands. Even though the sultan himself rarely travelled, thousands of photographic images constantly travelled to him.[148]

With reference to Pinney's conceptual pair, we can say that photography was a "cure" in this situation; it concealed the fragility of the Ottoman state and maintained the paternal fantasy of the master's gaze. By the turn of the twentieth century, however, things significantly changed; the "control of technology of photography and its evidentiary protocols had now slipped from the hand of the state."[149] As the official investigation reports in İstanbul and İzmir had to acknowledge with anxiety, photography became an instrument of resistance and disguise for the insurgents, that is, a "poison" that weakened the state. To return to my earlier point about the gaze, I would argue that the traumatic process following the bombing event did not only reveal that the master's phallic gaze was missing, but also it was "stolen" by the anarchists. The İzmir album was, thus, intended as an instrument of reassurance against the anxieties and fears caused by this "purloined gaze". As in Poe's story, where we see that the letter envelope bestowed power to the holder regardless of its content[150], the album aimed to reinstate the master's gaze as a pure phallic signifier.

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[147] See Çelik, "Photographing Mundane Modernity," 154-205.
[148] Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid,* 221.
[149] Pinney, "The Prosthetic Eye: Photography as Cure and Poison," 539.
[150] I am referring to Lacan's reading of Poe's story here. See Lacan, "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'" 6-48.

4.3 The Real gaze and the failure of coherent identification

This line of psychoanalytical thinking allows us to better understand the logic behind the visual composition of the album. While the portrait photographs of the four statesmen that were put on the first pages of the album reinstated the surveillant gaze of the Sultan, the "crime scene" photographs directed that gaze to an active detective work for the re-construction of the terrorist plots. And, needless to say, the photographs of the bombs and dynamites captured from the terrorists functioned as concrete evidence that testified to the efficacy and success of this gaze. Overall, the album was designed in such a way as to provide a scopic solution to the trauma of castration.

However, this solution did not smoothly work. While the İzmir album was supposed to offer the viewer a coherent point of identification by reinstating the master's symbolic gaze, some photographs in the series subtly disrupted this coherence by evoking the Real gaze that subjected the viewer to a disturbing sense of self-scrutiny. The photographs in the Izmir album vacillated between these two gazes in an incoherent fashion. While they strived to identify the viewer with the symbolic gaze, they at the same time exposed the Real gaze, significantly disrupting the intended meaning of the album.

One can see this vacillation both in the photographs of the bombs and the outdoor snapshots taken by the photographer. Beginning with the first group, I would like to draw attention to the visual treatment of bombs and dynamites captured from the Armenian revolutionaries. As can be seen in figure 19 and 20, the repetitive pattern of the bombs communicates to the viewer an excessive sense of danger, but importantly this danger is contained not only by the boundaries of the frame but also

by the contours of the pyramidal platform on which the bombs were exhibited. Thus, we should point out that these photographs were supposed to have a pleasurable, soothing effect on the viewer.

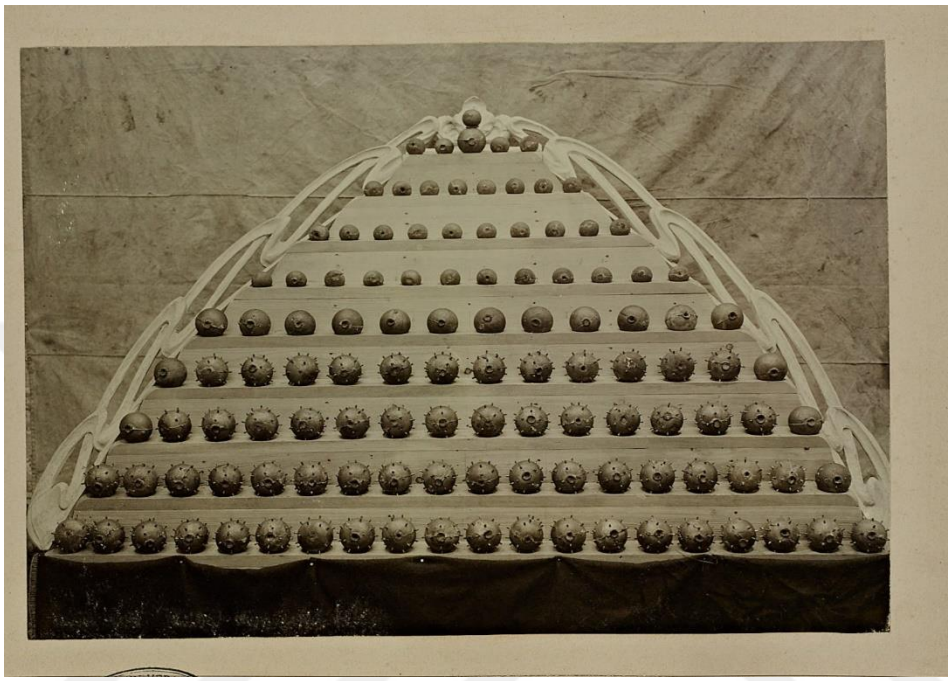

Figure 19. The pleasurable effect of bombs contained within the frame- İÜMK 90641/4

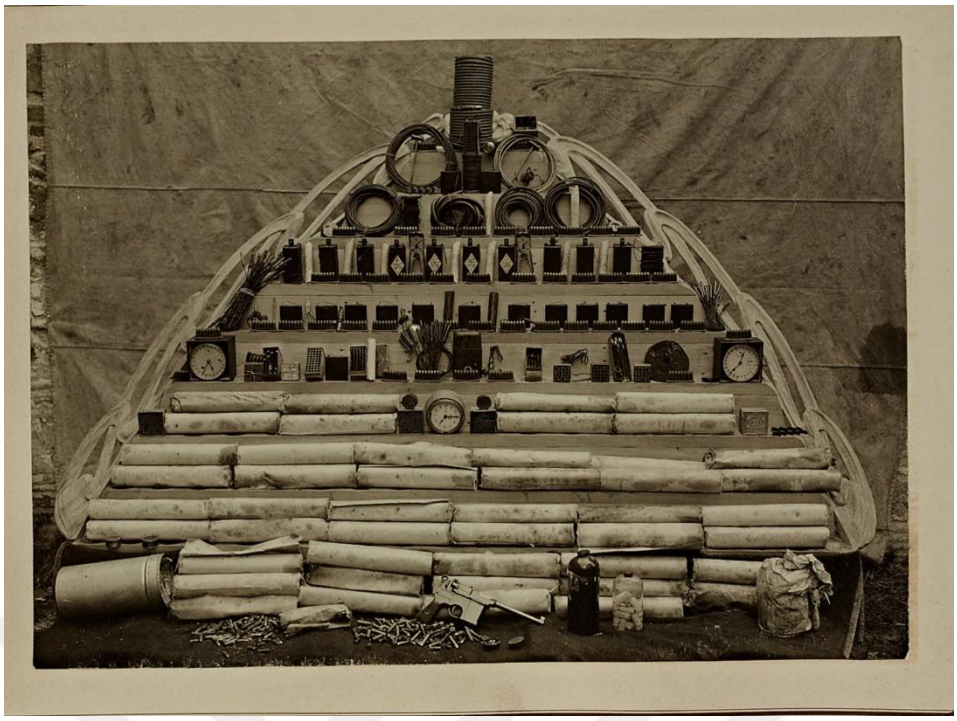

Figure 20. Bombs and weapons contained by the state's controlling gaze - İÜMK 90641/6

In the photograph where the two bombs were presented to the viewer in close-up (figure 21), however, this controlling gaze slightly turns into an amorphous one. As the viewer scrutinizes the image, a disturbing sense of the Real intrudes upon the field of vision because the photograph does not allow the viewer to have enough distance to objectively examine the image. On the one hand, the bombs look very realistic as Athanassiades emphasized their tactile quality. The viewer, therefore, can get a strong haptical sense of the texture. However, since the background is all-white and almost undifferentiated, the flatness of the image evokes a surreal world, where the viewer, as in a Magritte painting, encounters his own gaze in its inconsistency.

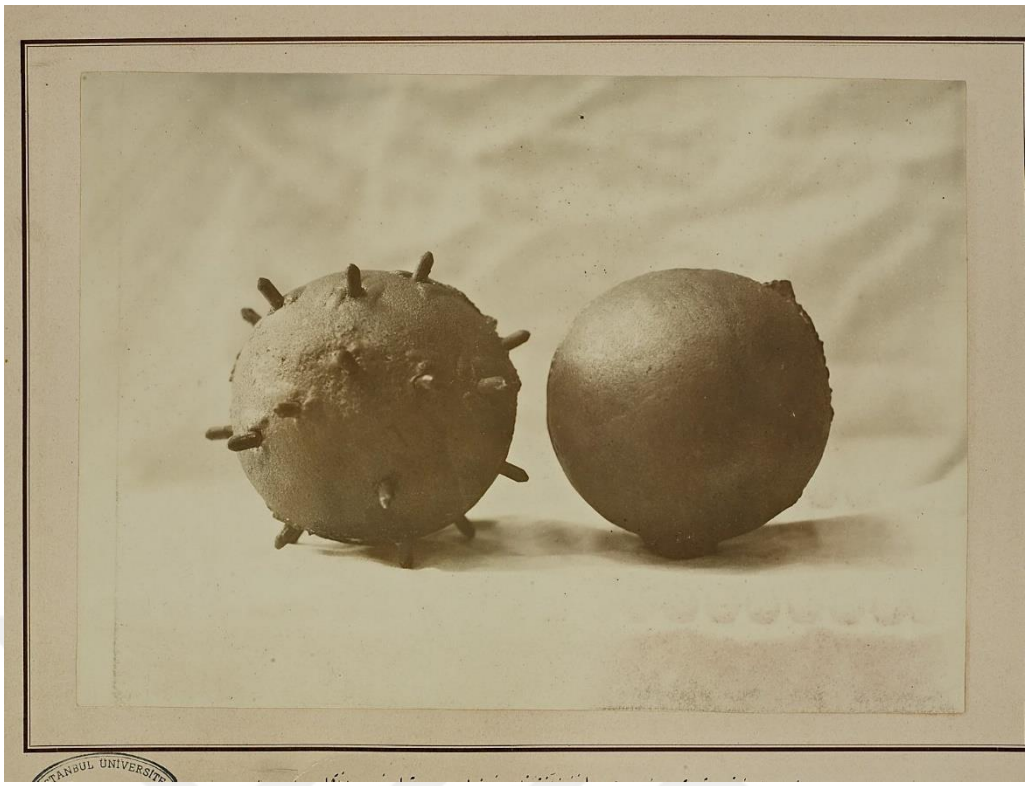

Figure 21. Fetishistic treatment of bombs, undermining the viewer's safe distance from the image- İÜMK 90641/3

What does this image show us? I would suggest it effectively reveals that the bombs play the role of a fetish for the Ottoman state trying to come to terms with the "purloined gaze". It discloses the libidinal structure of the album which tried to retrieve the gaze by exhibiting the bombs as fantasmatic objects of terror within the controlled boundaries of the photographic frame. The close-up photograph subtly exposes this fetishistic operation precisely by eliminating the viewer's safe distance from the object.

In his article on fetishism, Freud draws attention to the conflicted mode of fetishism by remarking that the fetish, as a substitute for the missing penis, both undermines and enacts castration.[151] For that very reason, he notes, the fetishist both

[151] Freud, "Fetishism," 99.

shows affection and hostility toward his fetish object.[152] The photographs of the bombs, I suggest, reflect such a conflicted mode of affection and hostility. On the explicit, public level, the album represents the bombs as enemy objects. But, on an unconscious level, it sexualizes them as objects of fascination and envy. Significantly, the round shape of the bombs evokes the image of sexual part-objects such as testicles or breasts. It is perhaps not purely incidental that both the caption of the photographs and the forensic documents added to the investigative report often used the word "*memeli*" to decribe the type of the bombs.[153]

Similarly, the outdoor photographs that Athanassiades took of the buildings and sites point to a disturbing enjoyment that looms behind the seemingly neutral, objective attitude of the İzmir album. By identifying the viewer with the disembodied gaze of the camera, these photographs construct a fantasmatic frame within which the traumatic fissure of the gaze could be resolved. The gap between the image and the caption plays a crucial role in the staging of this fantasy. While the captions invariably impose the violence of the bomb explosion by forcing the viewer to look at the "crime scenes", imagining what could happen if the terrorist acts were successful, the visual aspect of the photographs demonstrates the "absence" of this violence. Such negation of the photographic index, I argue, served to provide affective satisfaction to the viewer because one could look at these photographs with a safe distance imagining the terrorist acts precisely with the comforting knowledge that they did not take place.

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[152] Ibid.

[153] See, for instance, the forensic examination of the bombs on 26 September 1905. The chemist who wrote the examination report overemphasized the bodily metaphor: "Teslim kılınan mebhus humbaralar on iki aded olup üç adedi on altı memeli büyük kıt'ada ve iki adedi kezalik on altı memeli olmak üzere küçük kıt'ada olup kezalik üç adedi büyük dört adedi küçük kıt'ada olmak üzere on dört memelidir." See the full version of the report in Dalgalı, *Sultan'a Suikast,* 225-227.

There was something peculiarly narcissistic about this "all is well" effect conveyed by the album. Photographing the buildings and sites targeted by the Armenian committee was an opportunity for the Hamidian regime to polish the image of İzmir as a European city with modern infrastructure. The reproduction of several photographs taken by Guillaume Berggren was important in this respect. In the early 1880s, the Swedish photographer had compiled an album consisting of 31 photographs showcasing the railway bridges, tunnels and viaducts along the İzmir-Aydın and İzmir-Kasaba lines.[154] As I have found out during my research in the Yıldız archive, Athanassiades reproduced four of these photographs in his own album, incorporating them with slight edge cropping (see figure 22 and 23).

[154] For a more detailed discussion of this Berggren album, see Saygı and Genç,"İzmir-Kasaba Demiryolu," 191-254.



Figure 22. The original photograph by Guillaume Berggren- İÜMK 90497/22



Figure 23. The recycled version of Berggren's photograph in Athanassiades's album- İÜMK 90641-16

Why did the photographer choose to reproduce these already existing photographs in his album? Part of the answer is that this was a practical, time-saving solution for Athanassiades. So, instead of taking the time to travel to the locations where he could photograph the railway bridges, he preferred using the Berggren photographs. While that's one possibility, we should not overlook the symbolic value of the Berggren's railway photographs. Published in the illustrated newspapers of the period, which often celebrated "striking achievements of modern technology"[155] in the Ottoman empire, these photographs had played a significant role in reinforcing the desired, imperial image promoted by the Hamidian regime. It is, therefore, highly likely that their incorporation into the İzmir album was not merely Athanassiades's choice, but rather an instruction from state officials motivated by a desire to reassert the masterful, sovereign gaze. After all, the allure of the Hamidian visual archive partly relied on its capacity to recycle and recirculate photographs as memorable images in the service of promoting imperial grandeur and stability.

Again, however, we should underline how the viewer's identification with this masterful gaze was radically disturbed in certain photographs within the album. While the railway scenes and the tranquil seascape views of public buildings infused with a carte postal aesthetic (see figure 24) offered the viewer a stable point of identification aligned with the disembodied, sovereign gaze of the camera, this comfortable identification was disrupted by the more spontaneous, street-level snapshots that foregrounded the contingent and uncontrollable aspects of the photographic event. This contingency particularly came to the fore through the gazes of ordinary people on the streets. While Athanassiades explicitly emphasized the

[155] Eldem, "Powerful Images- The Dissemination and Impact of Photography in the Ottoman Empire, 1870–1914," 135.

voyeuristic gaze of the camera by positioning the viewer as an “unseen watcher” secretly surveying the “crime scene”, the blurry images of people looking back at the viewer subverted the alleged power of this gaze.



Figure 24. A tranquil view of the customs building - İÜMK 90641/23

Such a subversion can be seen, for instance, in the photograph of the train station in Punta, shown in figure 25. The caption of the photograph draws attention to the Armenian committee’s failed plan to dynamite the station building, but interestingly the visual composition itself allows far more space than necessary for a neutral, documentary view of the building. The eccentric positioning of the viewer with respect to the building is rife with a sense of secrecy. Yet, this mise-en-scéne of voyeurism is more anxiety-provoking than pleasurable, because upon a closer look, the viewer can easily notice the looks of the dark silhouettes standing in front of the building. Strangely, these people are not posing to the camera. Rather, it seems that

they turned their attention to the photographer at the moment they realized that they were being surveyed by his camera. This contingent encounter, therefore, disrupts the "unseen" position of the viewer, subverting the roles between the object and the subject.



Figure 25. Dark silhouettes disrupting the viewer's voyeuristic gaze - İÜMK 90641/10

Similarly, the photograph of the watchtower in figure 26 significantly disturbs the voyeuristic fantasy of seeing without being seen. What the picture immediately offers the viewer's eye is the watchtower which, as the caption indicates, was to be bombed by the Committee. But the viewer of the photograph cannot help but notice the presence of a bunch of people who are directly looking at the camera from the depths of the visual field. The spectral gaze of these motionless figures within the strangely gothic atmosphere of the photograph creates an unsettling effect on the

viewer precisely because it is impossible to know from what position these ghostly figures are looking into the camera. Staging an encounter with the Real gaze distorting the visual field, the photograph reduces the viewer to a stain, a blind spot where the point of identification is radically blurred and the sense of objectivity disintegrated.



Figure 26. The photograph of the watchtower targeted by the Committee- İÜMK 90641/11

As mentioned earlier, the Real gaze inscribes the point at which the symbolic identification fails and excess of enjoyment comes to the open. Although this traumatic void seems to lack any sense, it poses a question to the viewer and as such it should be interpreted. That is why Zizek often reminds us of the political and ethical necessity of "looking awry". By identifying with the blot that distorts our perceptual field, we can get an insight about the unconscious desires and thoughts evoked by the photographic image. With this methodological point in mind, we can

interpret what kind of unconscious thought is expressed by those scenes wherein the viewer feels strongly implicated by the hollow gazes of the other.



Figure 27. Ghostly figures implicating the viewer (digitally enlarged version)

Looking at the enlarged version of the watchtower photograph in figure 27, we can have a better insight into the unconscious thought communicated by the photograph. Those spectral figures looking at the camera create a sense of disturbance and anxiety precisely for the reason they align the viewer with the position of a culprit. While our eyes move across the imaginary crime scene, scrutinizing the watchtower that the Armenian terrorists were planning to bomb, we identify with the seemingly neutral, objective gaze of the symbolic law. But when we encounter the inquisitive gaze of these onlookers, we find ourselves in the position of an intruder or a culprit caught in the middle of a terrorist act. To put it in a

straightforward way, we begin to look at the crime scene through the eyes of a criminal.

This slippage between the Symbolic and the Real partly results from the ambivalence of the voyeuristic drive. As I have discussed earlier, Athanassiades assumes the sovereign gaze of the sultan as the locus of his symbolic identification and stages the "crime scenes" to his voyeuristic gaze. But the ambivalences inherent in the structure of voyeurism, namely its fate of turning into its opposite and its conflicted emotional attitude toward the object vacillating between love and hate[156] makes him secretly desire the hated object, which is nothing but the gaze of the Armenian anarchists in this case. While the photographer positions his camera on the side of the law, he enjoys imagining himself as an Armenian anarchist caught by the civilians at the moment of his violent act. Thus, the sublime and the ridiculous overlap in the İzmir album. But this is perhaps not very surprising. There is a strange affinity, after all, between the "roving eye of the sultan"[157], to use Wendy Shaw's expression, secretly collecting information through the photographic medium, and the spying eye of the Armenian anarchists who disguised their true identities behind the normalcy and prestige of running photography stores.

4.4 The question of positionality and intention

So far, I have not addressed the question of intention and rather focused my discussion on unconscious structures such as voyeurism and fetishism in my attempt to demonstrate the ambiguity of identification in the album. However, it would be wrong to see this ambiguity as simply incidental. On the contrary, I contend that the

[156] Freud, "Drives and Their Fates," 20-21.
[157] Shaw, *Possessors and Possessed: Museums, Archaeology, and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire,* 143.

political unconscious of the İzmir album is thoroughly symptomatic of its own historical time, which makes it inevitable for us to take into account the agency of the photographer.

In order to better understand this agency, we should remember that at the time of the making of the Izmir album, there was a fascination with bombs and the anarchist revolutionary violence, a sentiment that was collectively shared by the Young Turks who held the belief that revolutionary violence could redeem the subjects of the empire from the oppressions of the Hamidian regime.[158] It is significant that when the bomb incident occurred, the party organ of the CUP in exile, *Şura-yı Ümmet*, had "expressed support and sympathy for the unidentified perpetrator"[159], stating that:

There is no doubt that the bomb thrown at the Friday ceremony was aimed at putting an end to the blood spilled, the massacres committed and the tears shed in the fatherland, even if its form is outside the boundries of the law. Whoever it was that threw the bomb has acted selflessly in order to end the period of Hamidian murder.[160]

It was Tevfik Fikret, however, who most emblematically glorified the "bomb incident". His famous poem titled 'An Instant of Delay' (*Bir Lahza-i Te'ehhür*) expressed his frustration about the failure of the assassination attempt against the sultan, on the one hand, and his intense fascination for the terror evoked by the bomb on the other. I would like to draw attention here to the two quatrains below excerpted from the poem. Fikret wrote:

> O noble explosion, o vengeful smoke,
> Who, what, are you? What, who, caused this strike?
> A thousand prying eyes behind you, while you lay hidden,
> Like an invisible hand, dispensing salvation

[158] Altıntaş, "The Ottoman War on Anarchism and Revolutionary Violence" in *To Kill a Sultan*, 121.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Quoted in Altıntaş, 121.

Your voice has the strength of the thundering anger
That puts feelings of justice and freedom in motion.
Under your impact the compelling feet of tyrants tremble,
And the proudest crown of majesty sways as you approach.[161]

Significantly, the poet personified the bomb as if it had an agency of its own. He described its destructive power by referring to its bodily part-objects such as voice and hand, which overall gave an eerie quality to the poem. Interestingly, Athanassiades, too, exhibited the bombs as if they were libidinal part-objects detached from the enemy's body. The oneiric, close-up images of the bombs possibly reflected his repressed desire for revolutionary violence in a self-censored fashion.

There was also good reason for the photographer to unconsciously identify with the Armenian revolutionaries because at the time of the making of the album, the Greek Ottoman subjects living in the major cities like Smyrna and Constantinople were under the surveillance of the Hamidian regime, which increasingly saw them as suspects.[162] The 1897 war with the Greek Kingdom, which led to the autonomy of Crete, was a significant event in this regard. When the war had broken out, many youths from the Ottoman Greek community had severed their ties with the empire and took the decision to join the Greek army in the war against the Ottomans. When Crete had been granted autonomy under the suzerainty of the Ottoman state in the aftermath of the war, many Greek subjects living in Anatolia had chosen to permanently settle there, giving support for the island's union with the Greek nation.[163] It is difficult to say exactly how Athanassiades as a Greek Ottoman

[161] See the full translation of the poem in Edhem Eldem's in *To Kill a Sultan,* 265-266.
[162] Erol, "Surveillance, urban governance and legitimacy in late Ottoman Istanbul: spying on music and entertainment during the Hamidian regime (1876–1909)," 720.
[163] Georgelin, *Smyrna'nın Sonu: İzmir'de Kozmopolizmden Milliyetçiliğe*, 214-215.

photographer politically positioned himself during this period of conflict but the fact that he operated a studio in Candia at a time when the island was close to being annexed by the Greek Kingdom may be an indication of his discontent with the Hamidian regime.

Furthermore, the photograph in figure 28 gives us a clue about the positionality of the photographer. Originally published in the French weekly newspaper *I'Illustration* in August 1908 and then circulated as a postcard, the photograph depicts the celebrations of the Armenians after the proclamation of the Constitution. The joyous scene, which was captioned with a long note that emphasized the co-existence of different religious communities and the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, was likely commissioned by the newspaper, and as such it was most probably a commercial endeavor for Athanassiades. Nonetheless, the photograph gives the viewer a sense that he strongly sympathized with the Armenians celebrating the Constitution on the streets of Smyrna. As a non-Muslim subject, whose community underwent political pressure by the state, he possibly felt pleased with the dissolution of the autocratic regime and embraced the revolutionary spirit of the Constitution shared by diverse religious and ethnic communities in Smyrna.



Figure 28. Celebration by the Armenians in honor of the Ottoman Constitution. (August 22, 1908)

Having said this, I contend that some of the photographs in the İzmir album already offer us some important clues about Athanassiades's positionality in relation to the Hamidian regime. The photograph of the railway workers at the Basmane train station, shown in figure 29, is particularly significant in this regard. It is the only picture in the album in which the photographer allowed people to pose to the camera in a deliberately arranged composition. Curiously, however, the caption does not acknowledge the presence of the railway workers; instead, it refers only to the building, which had been targeted by the Armenian committee.[164] This omission

[164] The full caption of the photograph is the following: "Ermeni komitesince dinamit vaz' ve is'ali suretiyle berhava edilmesi mukarrer olan kasaba demiryolunun İzmir İstasyonu"

raises important questions about why Athanassiades chose to take this group portrait and include it in the album.



Figure 29. The group portrait of the railway workers in the Basmane Station- İÜMK 90641/14

Reading it alongside the official investigative report, it seems safe to argue that the photograph served to reassure the sultan about the loyalty of the railway workers. This need for reassurance probably arose when the investigation in İzmir revealed that one of the employees of the Basmane station, named Istepan Aleksanyan, was directly working for the ARF.[165] He was arrested, and the explosives buried under the railway bridges along the İzmir-Aydın line were seized

[165] *Izmir Ermeni İhtilal Komitesi ve Terör*, 49.

by the police. Nonetheless, suspicions likely persisted. Amid this paranoia, it is plausible that the railway workers wanted to deliberately pose to the camera as a way of affirming their allegiance to the sultan.

While this is a reasonable interpretation, it does not fully explain why Athanassiades did not produce similar group portraits elsewhere in the album. After all, conspiracies and suspicions were not only limited to railway workers. The Armenian committee members had rent apartments and shops in various neighborhoods to camouflage their activities, and they were in contact with numerous ordinary people who were unaware of the plot. While photographing these locations, Athanassiades did not stage any compositions where people posed to the camera. Moreover, the Committee members had regularly received money through their account in the Credit Lyonnais Bank. Athanassides photographed both the external façade of the bank building and the vault where the money was stored, yet he did not stage a group portrait of the bank officers. So why did he choose to do so in the case of the railway workers?

I argue that the photograph reflects a subtle dissidence on the part of the photographer, as it draws attention to a significantly oppressed group whose grievances were not heard by the Hamidian government. As Donald Quataert discusses in detail, by the 1890s, labor unrest had begun to emerge among the railway workers, who received drastically low salaries compared to the European officers and managers employed by the railway companies. Most of the railway workers had to work under poor and precarious conditions. For example, they were not paid when weather conditions prevented them from working, and they were dismissed outright in cases of illness or workplace accidents.[166] As Quataert notes,

[166] Donald Quataert, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Avrupa İktisadi Yayılımı ve Direniş* (1881-1908), 135.

such exploitative treatment that the workers were subjected to once led to a strike in 1904.[167] Although these protests did not evolve into widespread popular movements during the Hamidian period, as they would in the immediate aftermath of the Constitution in 1908, they, nonetheless, indicate that railway workers were actively seeking to make their voices heard.

When this broader context of exploitation and poor working conditions is considered, the group portrait of the railway workers assumes a different, more politically charged meaning. Instead of passively expressing their allegiance to the Sultan, the workers, one can argue, deliver their grievances to a regime that had long ignored their rights and demands. Their solemn expressions and upright posture suggest that they subtly challenge the authority of the camera's controlling gaze positioned at a slightly elevated angle above them. In this alternative, "civil" interpretation of the photograph, Athanassiades's political position significantly shifts, because rather than simply serving as an agent of the Hamidian state, he emerges as a photographer who uses his camera as an instrument of social reflection. By staging a photographic encounter in which the workers are granted the right to speak back to power, he opens a space for identification with the civil gaze.

4.5 Transgressing the conventions of portraiture

Athanassiades further extends this latent, political critique through his portrait photographs in the albums. When we compare the photographs of the Armenian arrestees and those of the Ottoman bureaucrats in the album, we come to realize that Athanassiades significantly transgressed the visual conventions of portraiture by refusing to neatly separate the honorific portrait from the repressive one. A close

[167] Ibid., 136.

examination shows us that he applied the same techniques and the same dignifying visual effects while photographing the Armenian committee members and the Ottoman officials.

In police photography, one basic visual code serves to underline the criminal status of the photographed subject, namely, the frontality of the pose. Athanassiades was clearly aware of the significance of this code. Whereas he positioned the arrested Armenians to face the camera directly, thus underlining their detainee status (figure 30), he photographed the formally dressed high officials from aside to highlight their authority and prestige (figure 31).

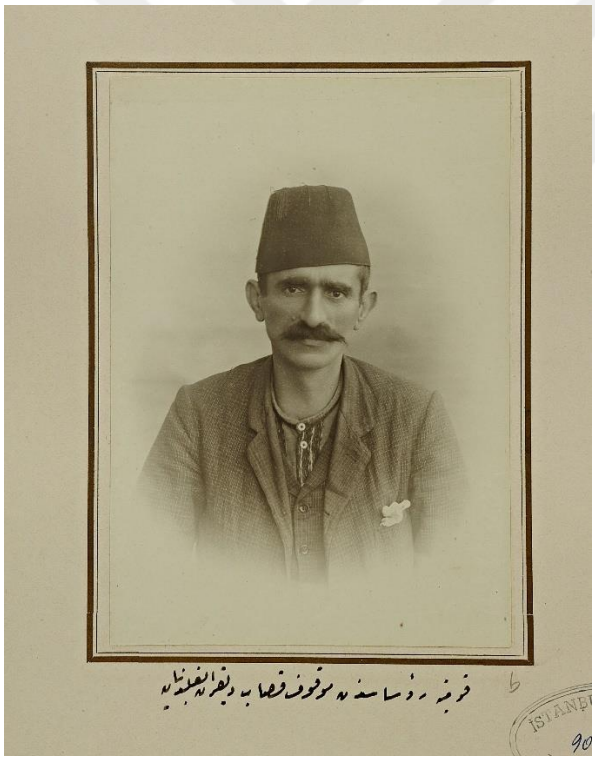

Figure 30. One of the arrestees, Dikran, whose criminal status is emphasized by an eye-level, frontal pose- İÜMK 90640/4B



Figure 31. The honorific portrait of Mirliva Said Pasha, emphasizing his authority as a high-ranking bureaucrat - İÜMK 90641/2B

A careful examination, however, reveals that the photographer transgressed this convention in certain instances. As can be seen in figure 32, when Athanassiades photographed one of the leading members of the committee, Varabet Ohannes, for example, he allowed his sitter to turn his look a little aside toward the edge of the frame, thus undermining his status as a criminal.



Figure 32. The dignified portrait of the arrestee, Varabet Ohannes- İÜMK 90640/3D

Likewise, he gave an explicitly dignified look to one of the arrestees from the educated class, a teacher named Moşah. As seen in figure 33, it is striking that Moşah appears unusually well-groomed for a detainee. Despite a hint of anxiety in his expression, his tie, jacket and fez are meticulously arranged, which clearly indicates that he was given the time to prepare himself for the pose. This detail is significant as it effectively demonstrates that Athanassiades allowed Moşah a 'civil' space in which to reclaim his dignity and legal status as a 'citizen' despite having already been stripped of that status by the state.



Figure 33. Moşah's well-groomed appearance contrasting with his status as an arrestee – İÜMK 90640/11C

Interestingly, Athanassiades took a contrasting approach while producing the cabinet portrait of Kamil Pasha, who represented the highest level of the hierarchy among the bureaucrats photographed in the album. While Athanassiades emphasized the authority and prestige of each of the state officials in the album by photographing them slightly turned aside as in the portrait of his son Mirliva Said Pasha, he posed Kamil Pasha fully frontally which resulted in an awkward honorary portrait. As can be seen in figure 34, the cropping of the image below the waist creates an unsettling effect on the viewer, as it downplays the pasha's presence, quite literally minimizing his symbolic authority within the frame. Whether this cabinet portrait was really taken by Athanassiades cannot be affirmed. Nonetheless, even if another photographer took it, it is still revealing that Athanassiades chose to edit and

incorporate that particular portrait into the album. Considering that he had access to the state's visual archive, he could have easily picked another portrait of the pasha.



Figure 34. The awkward frontal pose of Kamil Pasha, subtly undermining his authority – İÜMK 90641/1

These aesthetic decisions and choices discussed above suggest that Athanassiades might have intended to offer a critique of the Hamidian state in a latent and self-censored manner. As I have tried to show in my analysis, however, this critique should not be simply regarded as the product of conscious intention. It also significantly emerges through the spontaneous, unconscious elements that originate from the very immediacy of the photographic event. The photographer's fetishistic sexualization of the bombs or his subtle identification with the gaze of the Armenians, for instance, are precisely such unconscious, traumatic desires that

cannot be fully owned and registered by the photographer himself. Regardless of whether they stem from conscious or unconscious motivations, these photographs effectively resist and disturb the official rhetoric of the album. By foregrounding the ambiguous and uncontrollable aspects of the image and by drawing the viewer into the affective "drama" unfolding within the frame, Athanassiades reclaims the agency of all participants in the photographic encounter, his own, that of his subjects and that of the viewer. Ultimately, he rejects his passive role as a state-commissioned agent and turns his camera into the instrument of a counter-forensic, civil critique.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION: WORKING THROUGH THE HAMIDIAN ARCHIVE

In *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida rejects any possibility of unity or homogeneity in the constitution of an archive and instead links the entire concept to Freud's notion of the repetition compulsion. Drawing on the ambivalence of the word *mal* in French, which simultaneously denotes sickness and evil, Derrida argues that the law and logic of the archive is determined by a desire to find an origin and establish a coherent identity through the accumulation and ordering of documents. Yet, this passion for the archive, Derrida argues, always brings forth the question of radical evil[168] because, in order to conceal its internal contradictions and heterogeneities, the archive must enact violence. It must repress its self-difference in an effort to protect itself as the One. Paradoxically, however, this very act of repression subjects the archive to further violence in a repetitive fashion. As Derrida writes,

"The One makes itself violence. It violates and does violence to itself but it also institutes itself as violence. It becomes what it is, the very violence that it does to itself. Self-determination as violence."[169]

For Derrida, this archival violence constantly repeating itself as a death drive leaves its traumatic effects and traces in the archive itself. As in the structure of Freudian repression, what is excluded or forgotten is never completely gone; it returns in the archive as an "unknowable weight that imprints itself"[170]. Significantly, Derrida notes that this weight should not be simply understood as a "negative

[168] Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, 20.
[169] Ibid., 78.
[170] Ibid., 30.

charge" as it also implies "an opening on the future."[171] Here, the idea of working through, which Freud understands in opposition to repetition and acting-out,[172] becomes crucial because by acknowledging this 'unknowable weight' and working through its traumatic traces in the archive, whether visual or textual, we can begin to grasp the intrinsic relationship between the symbolic violence of the archive and the ongoing forms of state violence. Such recognition can save us from acting out the state violence that is constantly repeated yet denied and thus can reconfigure how we relate to the world ethically and politically.

This thesis ultimately aimed to contribute to such a process of working through by drawing attention to the still ongoing, unresolved violence of the Hamidian photographic archive. Thus, examining two specific judicial albums as my case studies, I tried to demonstrate how the subjects participating in the production of these photographs were exposed to a symbolic form of violence by the state apparatus. In the case of the Bank Incident and the massacres that followed, I problematized this violence from the position of the wounded sitters whose bodies were reified against their consent in the service of humanitarian fantasy, which was indeed closely linked with colonial ideology. I also emphasized how both the photographic album and the investigative report worked to silence and repress the traumatic reality of Armenian civilians wounded or killed during the pogroms. As for the 1905 album, I addressed the question of violence from the position of Athanassiades, whose professional skill as a studio photographer was exploited by the state. I emphasized how the photographer was forced to identify with the

[171] Ibid., 30.
[172] Freud, S. (1914). "Remembering, repeating and working-through," 145–156.

sovereign's fantasmatic, controlling gaze at the expense of undermining the evidentiary status of the photographic image.

While I described these processes of reification and symbolic violence in the albums, I expressly avoided creating a misleading impression regarding the Hamidian state's capacity to control the photographic image. As I have explained in detail in the introduction and the second chapter, what motivated me to write this thesis in the first place was to challenge such hypothetical assumptions about the power and success of the controlling gaze. To this end, I underlined the vitality of a synthetic, theoretical framework in which psychoanalysis and counter-forensics can be productively combined. Building this framework on the basis of three concepts, namely trauma, symbolic act and, most importantly, the Real gaze, I tried to demonstrate how the seemingly masterful, controlling gaze operative in the judicial albums was, indeed, significantly disrupted by the ambiguities of the photographic situation.

Exploring these ambiguities with recourse to the Lacanian Real gaze, I aimed to show how the viewer's external, fantasmatic relationship with the photographic encounter was radically disturbed in certain moments in which the coherent point of identification collapsed. While analyzing these moments of failure, I also tried to understand the lived experiences of the subjects acting as agents within the frame. Rather than simply positioning them as victims of state violence or oppression, I aimed to recognize them as traumatized individuals, who, nonetheless, retain the capacity to reclaim their agency through subtle acts of resistance.

As Dominick LaCapra rightly warns, there is always a danger of transference in such psychoanalytical readings where historians run the risk of projecting their

own desires and concerns over the subjects they study.[173] While formulating my arguments about the experiences of the subjects from the position of a secondary witness, I constantly remained (or at least tried to remain) aware of such dangers of transference. Rather than establishing an empathetic or compassionate relationship with the photographer or the photographed subjects within the confines of a humanist discourse, I sought to maintain what LaCapra calls "empathetic unsettlement"[174] and engaged in a process of working through the trauma without seeking closure or full dialectical synthesis. That said, it is up to the reader to decide how successfully this has been achieved in the thesis.

[173] LaCapra, *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory*, 76-78.
[174] LaCapra, *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory,* 65

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