

WHAT IS OPPOSED TO I
A Struggle Towards Purity

by
A. DENİZ ÜSTER

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APPROVED BY:

Faculty. Selim Birsal
(Thesis Advisor)

Faculty. Can Candan

Faculty. Elif Ayiter

DATE OF APPROVAL:

ABSTRACT

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A. Deniz Üster

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Thesis Advisor: Selim Birsal

Keywords: Body, impurity, abject, transgression of boundaries.

The purpose of this thesis is to suggest a reading of my works, which I produced in two years, around the concepts of purity and impurity.

In this study, the role of “dirt” is examined in terms of social regulations and bodily disorder. While defining these conceptions, I considered the “transgression of boundaries” as my focal point. Related with this statement, the problematics of how dirt is interconnected with locality and blurs the borderlines; and in what way the body becomes responsible for that irregularity, were analyzed.

In this exhibition, the projects I produced assume the body as the primal source of impurity, and by implication, the term abject was evaluated from the point of psychoanalysis. In this way, it will be clearly seen that impurity, in all senses, attacks the totalizing and thus the discriminatory aspect of identity, system and order. By this means, most of my works challenge the constancy of the body's entirety.

Chapter 1 examines the theoretical substructure; Chapter 2, the artists with similar affinities. The conclusion analyses my works in terms of the theoretical framework, as set out in Chapter 1.

ÖZ

BENİN TERSİ

Temizliğe Karşı bir Mücadele

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Beden, murdarlık, abjekt, sınırların ihlali.

Bu tez, temizlik ve kirlilik kavramları etrafında şekillenen, son iki yılda ürettiğim işlerin bir okumasını amaçlamaktadır.

Bu çalışmada kirin rolü, toplumsal düzenlemeler ve bedensel düzensizlikler açısından incelenmiştir. Bu kavramları tanımlarken, “sınırların ihlali”ni odak nokta olarak ele aldım. Bu ifadeye göre, kirin içinde bulunduğu mekanla ilişkisi, sınırları muğlaklaştırması, ve bu düzensizlikten bedenin sorumlu tutulma sebepleri analiz edilmiştir.

Bu sergideki çalışmalarım, bedeni, kirliliğin ilksel kaynağı olarak ele almaktadır; dolayısıyla psikanalitik bakış açısıyla, “abjekt” kavramı incelenmiştir. Böylece, kirin her açıdan, bir kimliğin, sistemin ya da bir düzenin bütünleştirici, ve tam da bu sebeple ayırıcı özelliklerine bir saldırı olduğu açıkça görülmektedir. Bu suretle çalışmalarımın çoğu, bedensel bütünlüğün değişmezliğine bir meydan okuma halindedir.

Metnin ilk bölümünde, teorik altyapı incelenecektir. İkinci olarak, benzer eğilimlere sahip sanatçılar tartışılacaktır. Son olarak ise, ilk bölümde incelenen kavramsal çerçeveye etrafında çalışmalarım incelenecektir.

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WHAT IS OPPOSED TO I

A Struggle Towards Purity

CHAPTER 1

i) Dirt as disorder

Modernity, as 'culture' or 'civilization' relates to the concepts of order, purity, and beauty. Order, according to Bauman's statement "is defining and moreover enforcing a rule about how, when and where something is done in order to set people free from indecision and hesitance."¹ (8)ⁱ Beauty, purity, and order are thus powerful attributes which we cannot abandon without compunction. People have to compensate to gain such benefits. As Bauman states, there is nothing congenital in human nature about preserving cleanliness, searching for beauty, or obeying routine rules. People have to be constrained to revere harmony, purity and regularity.

Purity is an ideal to be created and preserved from real or imaginary abnormalities. Otherwise, there would be no distinction between purity and impurity; in this way the concept of purity would have no meaning:

Purity, is the vision of the things put in places *different* from those they would occupy if not prompted to move elsewhere, pushed, pulled or goaded; and it is a vision of *order* - that is, of a situation in which each thing is in its rightful place and nowhere else. There is no way of thinking about purity without having an image of 'order', without assigning to things their "rightful", "proper" places - which happen to be such places as they would not fill "naturally", of their own accord. (Bauman, 15)

Additionally, opposed to this condition, dirt and filth, the opposite of cleanliness, are

¹ Bauman, Zygmunt. *Postmodernlik ve Hoşnutsuzlukları*, Trans. İsmail Türemen. İstanbul, Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2000. Trans. of Postmodernity and its Discontents, New York, New York University Press, 1997.

ⁱ Translated by the author of this thesis.

things out of place. Namely, it is not their inner quality which makes them “unclean” but their locations. Thus, in one context, impure things can become clean just because they were put in another place, and vice versa. For example, shoes can be considered clean in front of the door, whereas they are absolutely dirty when placed on the pillow. Consequently, if uncleanliness is matter out of place, we should approach it by means of order. Order ensures everything put in their exact places.

However, there are things which never have a “right place” in any fragment of man-made order. Namely, these things are inappropriate everywhere the model of purity is valid. It is also inadequate to move these things to another place, because they control their own location. The problem with such objects is that they will cross boundaries whether invited or not. This kind of impurity and their transgression of boundaries are my main concerns in this project. In this way, I aim to define these transgressions in terms of identity, system and order by considering the social prohibitions and taboos.

First of all, I will begin with the role of dirt in social order; then I will define the transgression of boundaries depending on the accounts of impurity. Later on, after touching on Sartre's notion of 'slimy'ⁱⁱ in consideration of its relation with impurity and infraction of borderlines, I will move on to the phenomenon of the body as the fundamental source of impurity. Thereafter, I will scrutinize the concept of 'abjection'ⁱⁱⁱ thoroughly, depending on the body as the origin of impurity which always drains and bleeds. Finally I will examine the concept of 'cyborg'^{iv} which is a new understanding of corporeality, in terms of abjection.

Before all else, for Douglas, cleanliness, or the obsession of struggle with impurity, is the global characteristic of humanity. In respect to the work of Mary Douglas, dirt is primarily irregularity. Nothing is considered as absolute dirt, inasmuch as it depends on the one who decides whether it is dirty or not. Moreover, abating dirt is not a negatory action but a positive effort to organize the environment. Douglas contends that:

In chasing dirt, in papering, decorating, tidying, we are not governed by anxiety to escape disease, but are positively re-ordering our environment, making it conform to an idea. There is nothing fearful or unreasoning in our

ⁱⁱ I am using the term 'slimy' in respect of Sartre's conception. According to him: “Sliminess is the agony of water,” he writes- this flaccid ooze may have some of the qualities of a solid- “a dawning triumph of the solid over the liquid.” (Sartre in Krauss, 92)

ⁱⁱⁱ This term originated in the works of Julia Kristeva. The word “abjection” literally means, the state of cast off which exists between the concept of a subject and an object.

^{iv} The term cyborg has been amongst us since at least 1983 when Donna Haraway wrote an early version of “The Cyborg Manifesto”. This cyborg of the 20th century was an hybrid of technology and humanity.

dirt-avoidance: it is a creative movement, an attempt to relate form to function, to make unity of experience. . . .To conclude.... uncleanliness or dirt is that which must not be included if a pattern is to be maintained. ² (2-43)

According to Douglas, purity models and systems that have to be preserved, change from culture to culture in time. However, all cultures have a purity model and a specific ideal system to be preserved from irregularities. According to this consideration, both sweeping the floor and externalizing the aliens thus have the same approach to preserve the order. Such is the concept of “Great Confinement” as illustrated in the name of Foucault's text. According to him, the fear of the plague gave rise to disciplinary mechanisms and by this way, an entire group of techniques and institutions for observing and reorganizing the abnormal occurred. Foucault specifies the distinction between normal and abnormal in this way:

The constant division between the normal and the abnormal, to which every individual is subjected, brings us back to our own time... All the mechanisms of power which, even today, are disposed around the abnormal individual, to brand him and to alter him, are composed of those two forms from which they distantly derive. ³ (Foucault, 199)

Consequently, each order has its own disorders; by this way, each model of purity has its own dirt that needs to be swept away. But in a durable, lasting order in which change is prohibited, even cleaning and sweeping are parts of order. They belong to the daily routine, and thus tend to be monotonously repeated, in a thoroughly habitualized fashion that renders reflection redundant.

While talking about order, the concept of “boundary” is very crucial. A contaminated person is, for example, always on the wrong side of this imaginary line. In this state, he transgresses some line, which should not be crossed, and this displacement brings in danger for someone. When we draw discriminating borders and thus separate the objects by this way; everything that blurs these boundaries and disarranges the parts, disrupts our work. This ability or disability to transgress renders these individuals as ‘aliens’. Nevertheless, these aliens that blur boundaries deploy ambiguity, where certainty and clarity should be dominant. Thereupon, the construction of order, becomes a corrosive struggle with the

² Douglas, Mary. *An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, Purity and Danger, Routledge, London, 1970.

³ Foucault, Michel. “Panopticism.” Discipline and Punish. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1979. Trans. of Surveiller et Punir, Paris, Gallimard, 1975.

aliens. Mary Douglas, in her work Purity and Danger, defines the phenomenon called dirt and filth as which has to be cleaned up, because it signifies abnormality and ambiguity that has to be held outside if there is a system is to continue.

Purity, on the contrary, is the enemy of change, ambiguity and rapprochement. However, if most of us, had had a stable, solid form, we would have felt safer. The reason is 'solid's ability to literally signify the opposite of indecision and indistinct state. A solid form is exactly immutable. Above all, the fact of the human body is its definite permeability; the inside of the body flows to the outer part.

At this very moment in our discussion of solidity, we can mention Sartre's notion of "*le visqueux*", namely, -"the slimy"- which can be assumed as a good referent for instability and ambiguity of a form. According to Sartre, the slimy is submissive, or it seems so. It is a condition of matter that he analyses as neither liquid nor solid.

If something I hold is solid, I can unleash it whenever I want; its stillness symbolizes my absolute power.... In slimy, the situation turns upside down ; then I am jeopardized...I want the slimy to go, but it sticks to me, it pulls me and it sucks me... I am not the master anymore... The slime is like a liquid seen in a nightmare, where all its properties come to life and set me upon... (Sartre in Bauman, 41, 42)^v

The slimy is like a cross-section in a process of change which is unstable but does not flow. It is soft, yielding and compressible. However, these features and its stickiness are a trap. It attacks the boundary between myself and it. As Sartre stated, to touch stickiness is to risk diluting oneself into sliminess; this condition namely brings the threat of being dissolved within it. Consequently, the slimy symbolizes the loss of freedom, or the fear of losing parts of the self.

ii) Dirt as bodily disorder

In terms of these concepts that we have mentioned above, the body is the essential source of impurity. All bodily emissions, even blood or pus from a wound, cause uncleanliness. According to Douglas:

Even more direct is the symbolism worked upon the human body. The body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious. The body is a complex structure. The functions of its different parts and their relation afford a

^v Translated by the author of this thesis

source of symbols for other complex structures. We cannot possibly interpret rituals concerning excreta, breast milk, saliva and the rest unless we are prepared to see in the body a symbol of society, and to see the powers and dangers credited to social structure reproduced in small on the human body. (Douglas, 116)

Consequently, the body is naturally dirty; all the pores produce dirt. “Under the skin the body is an over-heated factory/ and outside/ the invalid shines/ glows/ from every burst pore.”⁴(Deleuze-Guattari,3) Additionally, the “flesh” as Merleau-Ponty explores, is definitely not a determinable or an impermeable border between the self and the world.(or we can say the self and the other) “As a physical membrane that sheds and reconstitutes itself continually the flesh is never always the same material but always a contour in process; the flesh exists provisionally both as permeable, shifting physical perimeter.”⁵ (Ponty in Jones, 206-207) Namely, the flesh is an envelope, a limit between inside and outside; but mostly the site of their joining, both metaphorically and materially. It is also, the self's reversibility, its capacity to fold in on itself, a dual orientation inward and outward.

Nonetheless, dirt passes beyond the categorical boundaries and does not approve the difference between, 'me' and 'not me'. According to Fiske, “when dirt threatens the body category... it threatens the individual category, at the same time. Doubtlessly, all the bodily functions and physical pleasures must be disciplined with the accusation of 'dirty’”.⁶ (Fiske, 124)^{vi} Whereas dirt disrupts all the categories upon which social control is based, and by this action, both simultaneously blocks and threatens this control. More generally, anything out of control is a potential threat; in order to take the control, moral, legal and aesthetic powers are needed.

⁴ Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix. “The Desiring Machines” in Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press, 1992.

⁵ Jones, Amelia. *1990s Bodies in/as art*. Dispersed Subjects and the Demise of the Individual London, New York, Routledge, 1999.

⁶ Fiske, John. *Popüler Kültürü Anlamak*, Trans. Süleyman İrvan. Ankara, Bilim ve Sanat Yayınları, 1999. Trans. of Understanding Popular Culture. New York, Unwin Hyman, 1989.

^{vi} Translated by the author of this thesis.

iii) Abjection as disorder

Moreover, if we want to scrutinize the relation between body and impurity, we cannot ignore the concept of “abject” which constitutes the base of my works. Although it is really difficult to define the term precisely, I would like to begin with what it is not.

The concept of 'abject' which we describe as 'radically excluded' is neither an object nor a subject. It has solely the quality of “being opposed to subject-I” from characteristics of the object. As Elizabeth Grosz stated:

... an object is an object only insofar as it can be moved away from me, and ultimately disappear from my field of vision. Its presence is such that it entails a possible absence. Now the permanence of my body is entirely different in kind... Its permanence is not the permanence in the world, but a permanence from my point of view... Insofar as it sees or touches the world, my body can therefore be neither seen nor touched.⁷ (Grosz, 87)

According to Julia Kristeva, in her book called Powers of Horror, the abject refers to the human reaction which shows itself as horror, vomit or etc., to a threatened breakdown in meaning caused by the loss of the distinction between subject and object or between self and other. It is,

a something that I do not recognize as a thing. A weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant, and which crushes me. On the edge of nonexistence and hallucination, of a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me. There, abject and abjection are my safeguards. The primers of my culture.⁸ (Kristeva, 14)

The primary example for what causes such a reaction is the corpse, as it always reminds us of our own materiality. Kristeva states in her book that, “corpses show me what I permanently trust aside in order to live. These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death.” (3) When we face with death, we occur at the boundaries of our status as a living being. Body fluids, dirt and excrement are thrown away from our bodies in order to make us live. If my body means

⁷ Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism, Theories of Representation and Difference, Lived Bodies: Phenomenology and the Flesh*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1994.

⁸ Kristeva, Julia. *Korkunun Güçleri: İğrençlik Üzerine Deneme*, Trans. Nilgün Tütal. İstanbul, Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2004. Trans. of *Pouvoirs de l'horreur*, Paris, Seuil, 1980.

the side of the border that I did not die, the corpse, which is the most disgusting waste, is a boundary that encloses everything. By this way, the boundary transforms into an object. “I am not throwing out anymore, I am the one who is thrown out.” (Kristeva, 16)

The most crucial point about abjection is that what makes something loathsome is not a disease or impurity, but what disturbs a system, identity or order. The abject does not respect to borders, rules, or positions. It is something in between and ambiguous, such as Sartre's notion of the slimy. “The abjection-as-intermediary is ... a matter of both uncrossable boundaries and undifferentiable substances, which is to say a subject position that seems to cancel the very subject it is operating to locate, and an object relation from which the definability of the object disappears.”⁹ (Kristeva in Krauss, 92) By this way, Kristeva's notion of abjection is directly coherent with Sartre's characterization of slimy.

Kristeva's understanding of the "abject" provides a helpful term to contrast to Lacan's "object of desire" or the “*objet petit a*.” Whereas *objet petit a*, “is an expression of the lack inherent in human beings, whose incompleteness and early helplessness produce a quest for fulfillment beyond the satisfaction of biological needs”¹⁰ the abject is “radically excluded” and as Kristeva explains, “draws me toward the place where meaning collapses.” (Kristeva, 14)

Furthermore, the abject is always something that both pulls and pushes. It fascinates and disgusts at the same time. The abject is something rejected, like food, a corpse, or excrement. These objects of exclusion, or abjects disturb because they dissolve proper boundaries between ourselves and others, between inside and outside, between life and death. In this way, disgusting, is undoubtedly a boundary as described above but first of all an ambiguity. Actually, there is a duality: while on one side this aversion constitutes a boundary; dissolves it on the other side and that is the contradiction of the abject. Even if the abject sets the subject apart from the situation that threatens him, it does not do this act in an obvious way. Kristeva claims that:

I experience abjection only if an Other has settled in place and instead of what will be “me”. Not at all an other with whom I identify and incorporate, but an Other who precedes and possesses me, and through such possession causes me to be. A possession previous to my advent: a being-there of the symbolic that a father might or might not embody. Significance is indeed inherent in the human body. (Kristeva, 24)

⁹ Krauss, Rosalind. “‘Inform’ without Conclusion” in *October*, Vol 78, Autumn, The MIT Press, 1996.

¹⁰ <<http://www.apsa.org/japa/531/Kirshner-post-p.83-102.pdf>>. Accessed on 12 June 2007.

The inside of the body tries to compensate for this decline of the boundary between inside and outside. The fragile, protective skin is like as if it cannot ensure the entirety of self and pure. Consequently, urine, blood, sperm, and leakage, benefit from reassurance for the subject who has the deficiency of self and purity. The act of loathing these leakages from inside suddenly transforms into the only object of sexual desire. At that time, the abject exchanges with the Other, even when pleasuring him. That pleasure is the only one which the borderline self owns and accordingly transforms the abject into the thing that supersedes the other.

Moreover, abjection is related with “throwing away” which occurs before primal repression. Kristeva associates this process with the birth phenomenon. Actually, the word “abjection” means “throw-out” word by word.

While in Latin, 'abicio' means throwing away from self and despising, 'abiectus' means unworthy, low and rascally; in French, 'abjection' means loathsomeness and throw-out. However, 'zelil' in Turkish means contemptible and worthless; accordingly it does not precisely include the act of 'throwing away. (Sayın, 197)

Latince “abicio” atmak, kendinden fırlatmak anlamına gelirken, “abiectus” aşağılık, düşük, alçak; Fransızca “abjection” ise atık, iğrençlik, zul anlamına gelir. Türkçe zillet ise hakirlik, horluk, alçaklık ifade ederken ,zelil... istenmeyen ve aşağı görülen şeyleri kendinden fırlatıp atma eylemini tamı tamına içermemektedir.¹¹ (Sayın, 197)

In summary, the abject is the thing thrown-out just before it assumes any characteristics of an object. The abject has to be thrown away, for the subject to approach her identity before the distinction between conscious and subconscious, subject and object completed.

Basically, in the abjection process, the child throws the body of its mother away, such as the mother naturally does at the birth moment; and then the child assumes all that reminds of its mother as the abject. Namely, a double birth occurs. That is why, we inevitably perceive all that reminds of the mother such as the fluids, blood and milk, as abject. Thus, as Mulvey stated, “Although both sexes are subject to abjection, it is women who can explore and analyze the phenomenon with greater equanimity, as it is the female body that has come, not exclusively but predominantly to represent the shudder aroused by liquidity and decay.” (Mulvey in Krauss, 98) In this way, when this interpretive structure

¹¹ Sayın, Zeynep. “Doğu’da ve Batı’da Bedenin Temsilinde Haysiyet ve Zillet”, İstanbul, Defter, #39, Spring, 2000.

of abjection makes us lift the veil in order to get free of the fetish system, we come across with another one, beneath the first veil: “the wound as woman.” (Krauss, 98) The wound on which mostly the abject art is constructed on thematizes the marginalized, the wounded as a base which is feminine by nature. Depending on the consideration of “wound as woman”, menstrual blood which is completely dedicated to woman, and the most polluting object connected to the body, threatens the relations between genders in a social entirety, whereas it threatens in terms of sexual difference by way of internalizing the identities of the genders.

According to Kristeva, we can examine the polluting objects related with the holes on the body in two groups: excremental and menstrual objects. The excremental ones represent the threat that comes from outside of the identity; namely it is 'me' who is threatened by 'not me', whereas menstrual blood represents the threat from inside identity. The vital element blood, refers to femaleness, reproductivity and fertility. Thus, blood metamorphoses into a junction where death and life meet and becomes a convenient place for abjection.

As we obviously gather, abjection is exclusively related with the human body. Only the human body is both despicable and dignified. On one hand, the body is the most exalted and dignified thing; on the other hand is abject because of its diseased, mortal and organic characteristics. Actually abjection is related to the mortality and dissipation of the organic matter. Consequently, the body is dignified unless it is possible to discriminate its inside and outside as well as if it does not constitute the dents and buckles which threaten the perfection of the outside of the surface. However, abjection is the moment when the inside and outside become permeable; it is the sensation, which is impossible to abide and remove its unwanted closeness.

In terms of Kant's, the most crucial subject of art is the outer surface of human being. Therefore, anatomy should be kept away from aesthetics, because it is really inconvenient to look underneath the skin in the arts. The female body should be converted into something that has no inside, such as in Greek sculptures. According to this consideration, internal organs, which are at enmity with classical aesthetics and body politics, should be prohibited from the fine arts because the condition that threatens the dignity of the body is the loss of corporeal entirety. The perfect instances of Greek art, for example, never offer us a wrinkled or folded skin, unlike ours. Wrinkles, folds, wounds, bruises and joints are 'shames' which interfere with the body's uninterrupted entirety and damage its dignity and the beauty of its surface. Namely, what makes the body deprived of its dignity is not only the holes and leaks which refer to the inside, but also the unevenness on the surface. Due to

this, dignity is granted to the body's smooth outer space, to its perfection and youth; whereas the abject is related with the mortality hidden in the depths and has the possibility to flow outside at any moment. The reason why the blisters or wounds on the surface are disgusting is, their ability to express an inner decay.

On the other hand, in this century, the human body has been gradually transforming into a corporeality, whose face is much less wrinkled and whose hair is much more lately whitened. Especially in the 80's and 90's, the body gained perfection, depending on the market economy of 20th century. In those years, whether it is woman or man, their stylized beauty appeared with the perfect body prosthesis which refers to transcendency rather than corporeality. Their bodies no more sweat or wrinkle or even grow bristles. At that point, in my opinion, masculinity is inoculated with femininity. We can even talk about a one, common gender. In this universe there is no place for flaccid breasts or fatty tummies. They would have always remind us our own corporeality, mortality, and abjection by signifying internal organs.

iv) Cyborg as a form of abjection

Furthermore, we can speak of another corporeality called “cyborg”¹² at that point because of its link to the notion of abjection in a different perspective, into which the human body is transformed.

The cyborg is a human body augmented by technology. It is also an abject which transgresses the boundaries between human and machine. The cyborg appears in myth absolutely in which the boundary between human and animal is transgressed. It is a condensed outlook of both imagination and material reality.

A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction....By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics. ...The tradition of reproduction of the self from the reflections of the other - the relation between organism and machine has been a border war. (Haraway, 149, 150)

¹² Haraway, Donna . "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, New York, Routledge, 1991.

According to Lacan's 'Mirror Stage' theory, the individual's identity is found when as a boy, he first recognizes his own reflection in a mirror; thus beginning the Freudian process whereby he identifies with the father and rejects the mother, by reducing her to the realm of "Other". What is called the "pre-Oedipal" is the stage before the subject's separation from the mother, where the subject's identity is inseparable from that of the mother, and the child stands in for the mother's missing phallus. In terms of this definition, the cyborg defies the pre-odipal story of identity's origin. Most crucially, the cyborg attempts to challenge the construction of woman as male other.

For Haraway, the Oedipal processes outlined by Freud and Lacan as constructing identity are at the base of the theories that subject women and cultural "others" under the disguise of difference. Haraway's cyborg works as "redefining" difference. The cyborg, challenges the oedipal process as mentioned, and while doing this process, it also denies the manner in which gender and identity are constructed; consequently, it challenges the 'Otherness'. The cyborg is therefore, an inappropriate other, and moreover a fractured identity. It is a convenient site of numerous dualities and differences.

Related with this statement, the body is no longer an effective limit of the subject's position. In these circumstances, I cannot place myself centered in my rational subjectivity, or limit with a defined ego; however I am disrupted and dispersed in the means of subjectivity. The body, which we acknowledge as a whole, afraid of its fragmentation and which we define as abject, is a disrupted phenomenon. Gender and identity are the concrete instances for this disruption. "The subject is...multiplied by databases, dispersed by computer messaging and conferencing, decontextualized and reidentified by TV ads, dissolved and materialized continuously in the electronic transmission of symbols." (Jones, 203)

Accordingly, the human body is in an unstable condition at a time when new technology improves at an inconceivable speed. We want the efficiency and fluency of machinery but also fear its power to assimilate us. However, technology has already changed the way we live, and even the physical constitution of our bodies bears little resemblance to our ancestors. Actually, these differences may be enough to consider ourselves that we can no longer be human in the way that people a thousand years ago were human; we have even begun to re-define ourselves as biological machines.

Additionally, although we try to sacrifice our corporeal bodies in favor of virtual ones, science fiction robots force us to fear our own humanity. Donna Haraway's cyborg must not be confused with the literal robot; it is totally different from the general assumptions about the cyborgs which are usually seen in movie films. It is simply a

metaphor for the posthuman embracing the abject as Haraway describes. Moreover, the cyborg deconstructs the desire to eliminate the body and preserve the subject. Namely, the fantasy of a bodiless subject which the modernist Cartesian comprehension required, is replaced with the “posthuman body” and the “dispersed subject” of the postmodern world. Actually, the cyborg is not about perfecting or immortalizing the human race. The cyborg is, instead, a metaphor for the posthuman who can adopt abjection and mediate boundaries rather than inflexibly constructing them according to a system of dualisms.

If we again look to the concept of abjection, we see that it is the theory, accepted as the fact that we are individual subjects who are related to objects and other subjects as “Other” than the self. We usually have the tendency to make strict differentiations, such as discriminating male and female, subject and object, nature and culture, ...etc. This mentality supports a structure where a prevailing force takes power over an “other”; and in this way, the marginalized “othered” groups of people occur.

The body/self, which is dispersed, particularized, multiple, and for that reason called “intersubjective”, has a great potential for women and the other “others”, who are debauched from the extent of “individual”. Julia Kristeva, conceives abjection as one part of intersubjectivity. The “I”, according to her, “is not the homogeneous “I” of a simple subject with a single identity. The “I” is heterogeneous, involving the abject, the fascinated part of the self, and the internal Other who comes from outside, as a predecessor and a possessor, an Other who imposes signs, symbols and rules to inspire loathing.” (Kristeva, 23)

Nevertheless, the question of where the dispersed subject exists comes to mind. As mentioned, ancient Greek art reflected the desire to realize a perfect, whole, ideal human self; whereas postmodern art deconstructs the essential Self. At that point, Abject art replaces the object of desire with an admired “undesirable” object. These bad objects fill a lack left by the good objects, (Perhaps the main good object -the mother's breast- which is the first transitional object appears in and belongs to infancy and is generally relinquished when infancy changes into childhood.) Namely, we can clearly say that Fetishism, is a common aspect of abject art.

On the other hand, the more we interact with machines, the more we envy their freedom from the demands of a weak, diseased human body. The desire for a bodiless self, is a move toward purity, namely the opposite of the abject. It supports the patriarchal, and discriminating mind, by entailing only the subject and eliminating the marginalized ones who are not white, thin, heterosexual, financially secured, Christian and male, by constraining them to virtually become what is already considered normal and ideal.

However, we should not confuse this idea with Haraway's concept of "cyborg". What is important in cyborg is that the body exists as a site for incorporation and abjection. In her "Cyborg Manifesto", Haraway, stands up for the pleasure taken from the confusion of the boundaries. Namely, according to her, the cyborg myth is about the transgressed boundaries which parallels with the abject.

In conclusion, after considering the role of impurity in social order and then scrutinizing bodily uncleanness and abjection which is immensely related with it; we obviously see that impurity at all points, assaults the totalizing and homogenizing attitudes of identity, system, and order. In this way, in terms of these concepts related with the limits of the body and subjectivity, I aim to confront and transgress the social prohibitions, taboos, personal obsessions and phobias, by challenging the stability of our bodily gestalts, in my works.

CHAPTER 2

Case study;

artists with similar concerns, the way they deal with the problems

This chapter will focus on two artists, who reflect the notion of changing identity, in opposition to the older modernist notion of the subject as fixed individual, with dealing the concept of body as abject, in different artistic languages. Both Cindy Sherman and Bob Flanagan, turn the body inside out, and enact the tenacious corporeality of the individual while refusing any conception of this corporeality as fixed in its materiality. Both have a critical attitude towards the accepted, and constant rules and facts.

First of all, I will examine Cindy Sherman and her works in which she plays on the inside-outside binary of the woman's being, and discover the ways she deals with the problem. Then I will go through the ordeal body performances of Bob Flanagan, and scrutinize his manner in turning his body inside out by performing brutal acts via his body.

i) Cindy Sherman and her turn to the grotesque

Cindy Sherman deals with horror of maternity in her works in which she presents the maternal body made strange, even repulsive, and in repression. As usually similar in horror movies, “horror” means, in Cindy Sherman's works, first and foremost, the fear from maternity. Here, such images evoke the body turned inside out; in this way the subject is literally abjected and thrown out. On the other side, they also signify the outside turned in. At that point, some images pass beyond the abject which usually depends on substances and meanings. In her works, the form dissolves because of the fundamental distinction between figure and ground, self and other.

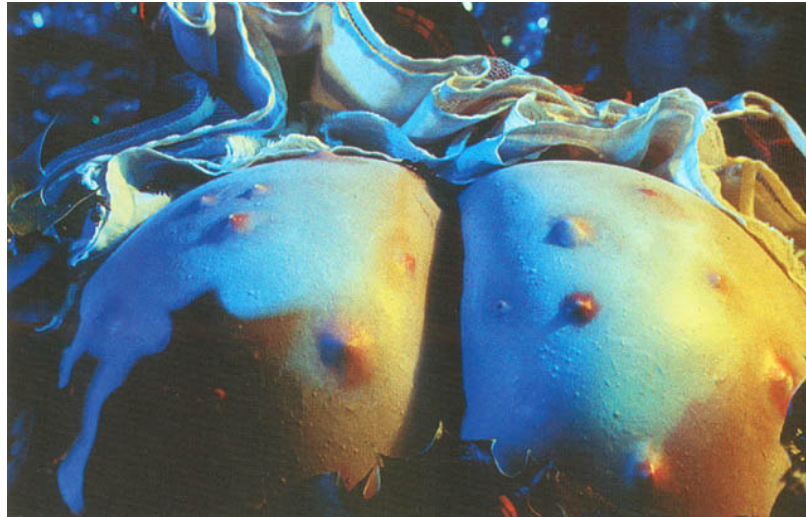


Figure 1. Cindy Sherman, *Untitled # 177*, 1987.

In Sherman, the surface of the body, seems to be dissolving in order to reveal a monstrous otherness, by turning the inside out. She plays with the “inside/outside topography of the woman's being in which nothing can be imagined behind the cosmetic façade but a monstrous otherness, the wounded interior that results from the blow of a phantasmatic castration.” (Krauss, 93) Consequently, cosmetics is designed to conceal these bodily fluids, or abjects; namely an inner decaying is disguised. In Sherman's works, women identify themselves with both applauding cosmetics and committing the physical indicators of their own femininity. “The images of decaying food and vomit raise the specter of the anorexic girl, who tragically acts out the fashion fetish of the female as an eviscerated, cosmetic and artificial construction designed to ward off the 'otherness' hidden in the interior.”¹³ (Mulvey, 146)

Later on, the figure completely disappears from the scene, in Sherman's works. She unveils the last component, the cosmetics, and causes a direct confrontation with the wound. This last phase of her called “Disgust” pictures. According to Mulvey, in these works nothing is left other than disgust of decaying food, vomit, slime, menstrual blood, and hair, which constitute the base materials of abjection.

Sherman, in her 1992 works, decides to work on compositions which are entirely full of violence and sexuality. In this serial, she breaks the body into pieces by collocating a mass of body parts. She intersects the pure categories such as sex, gender and age by banding the pieces together which belongs to different bodies. In this way, she terrifies and

¹³ Mulvey, Laura. “A Phantasmagoria of the Female Body: The world of Cindy Sherman”, *New Left Review*, no: 188 (July/august), 1991.

confuses without behaving ridiculous.



Figure 2. Cindy Sherman, *Untitled # 250*, 1992.

The concepts of “monstrous feminine” and “grotesque feminine ” in Sherman's works, inosculate with the notion of “carnavalesque”. According to this theory, the ugly grotesque body is both semiologically and politically antitethical to the hegemonic disciplines, or patriarchal order in this context. If beauty is a metaphor to explain something is socially predominant, ugliness metaphorically signifies dependants' disobedience and experience. A grotesque body is a phenomenon that both has to be suppressed and yet is impossible to restrain. If it is necessary to make a link between carnivalesque and grotesque, the carnivalesque is the moment of a blow-out of a grotesque body. “Everything dreadful becomes grotesque.”¹⁴ (Bakhtin, 110) ^{vii}

¹⁴ Bakhtin, Mikhail., *Karnavaldan Romana* , Trans. Can Soydemir. Ed. Sibel Irzık. Istanbul, Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2001.

^{vii} Translated by the author of this thesis.

ii) Bob Flanagan as a posthuman

The concept of abject is, perhaps, most strikingly represented in performance art, where human bodies are physicalized in the act of abjection. From my point of view, Bob Flanagan, who suffered from cystic fibrosis his entire life, would be the best instance for that subject matter. He treats his body as meat, and by the way he externalizes his pain and reflects it onto audience via sado-masochistic acts. In this way, he confuses the boundaries between interior and exterior, which differentiate the “body” from the “self” within the dualistic logic of Cartesian thought.

According Cartesianism, the subject is pure interiority, and thus the body, which is accepted as simply a container can be transcended through thought. This is what modernist comprehension approves. However, Flanagan's acts inosculate with a revised Cartesian understanding in one point. Upon this thought, “pain cannot be shared, except by being eroticized in a sado-masochistic relationship...Inflicting a real envelope of suffering on oneself can be an attempt to restore the skin's containing function.” (Jones, 230) The body transforms its status from subjecthood into a real object. Moreover, if pain cannot be shared according to Cartesianism, its effects can be projected onto others, namely the audience. In this way, they become the site of suffering.

Therefore, it is possible to say that Flanagan is an excellent model for what a posthuman body can be. Transferring his pain to the audience while at the same time distancing himself from himself (and then the audience from him because they have already identified with him through shared suffering) is an effective instance for abjection resulting in dispersal of the subject.



Figure 3. Bob Flanagan, *The Pain Journal*, 1987

As discussed above, Bob Flanagan suffered from an illness and later died because of it. Illness, is a fact which materializes the body, forcing the subject to be excessively aware of his or her body in pain. Therefore, it is possible to say that illness forces the subject to perceive her or his existence not only through a relation with an other, but also a relation with the tortured self. By this way the tortured self; the diseased, wounded, abjected body, transforms into an “other”. Moreover, Flanagan substantiates that he still exists and is alive, by sacrificing and reconstructing his shattered body.

When Flanagan chops his own flesh, in performances such as “You Always Hurt the One You Love” in which he nailed his penis to a stool in a S/M club in 1991, his masochistic attitudes construct him as both being subject and the object of violence. By this way, he allies subjectivity with objectivity for both himself and audience. In this way, all the identities intertwine and get lost.

Nevertheless, Flanagan performs “the body as flesh of the world, the body as meat, the body as coconstitutive of the self”. “The body is not surface representation to be performed with or against the rain of some core identity nor as pure immanence that can be transcended through thought or virtual technologies, but rather complex enactment of the mortal, and ultimately corruptible and finite, self.” (Jones, 235)

Of course, there are people who would prefer to retain their absolute subject-hood and

eliminate the body instead, namely the opposite. I think Stelarc is a good instance for that comprehension. For him, the body is not a subject, but an object. He does not see the body as a site for the psyche or the social, but rather as a structure to be monitored and modified. According to Stelarc:

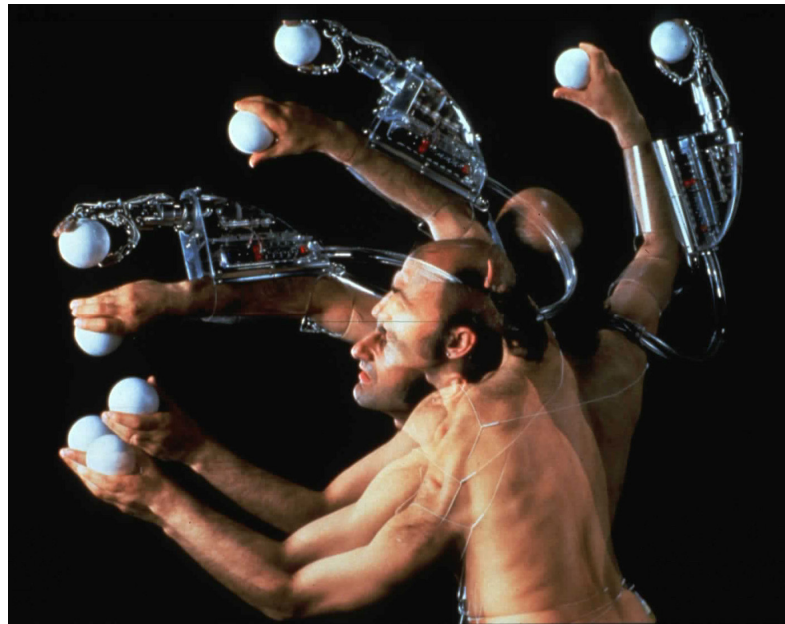


Figure 4. Stelarc, *Third Hand*, 1981.

The body is traumatised to split from the realm of subjectivity and consider the necessity of reexamining and possibly redesigning its very structure. Altering the architecture of the body results in adjusting and extending its awareness of the world. As an object, the body can be amplified and accelerated, attaining planetary escape velocity. It becomes a post-evolutionary projectile, departing and diversifying in form and function.¹⁵

The fact that our bodies need to eat, sleep, and excrete in the way of our lives, where we imagine ourselves pure, clean, and immortal via the machine. The problem is that elimination of the body does not break down any of the false dichotomies inherent in the dualistic mind. Even without bodies, we would find ways of discriminating among each other. (Chatrooms and msn are the best examples for that experience I guess, although the internet has the potential to be a world where bodies do not matter) In fact, it commits to an environment in which interactions are with the white, middle-class and physically normal, other than sick and handicapped. As a result, we can assume that the desire for a bodiless self, is an endeavor to reach purity, which is the opposite of object.

¹⁵ Stelarc, <<http://www.stelarc.va.com.au/stelarc1.html>>. Accessed on 20 June 2007.

CHAPTER 3

As an artist, I believe that process is the most crucial element in a work; therefore I always try to emphasize 'how' a work is created, rather than 'what' is created, in each projects. In this way, every work transforms into a performance. Because of my painting background, I was canalized to be attentive to the “conclusion/product” rather than the process. However, by encountering the 3rd dimension in my graduate degree, I realized that I can devote my energies to the process even in paintings and drawings. Thus; I began to use, all the mediums without externalizing painting and drawing.

i) *Sabundolabi* / Soapriggerator

In this work, I tried to emphasize our alienation from our bodies, even more so to the inside of them. The tendency of assuming the body's internal composition as a sterile matter, reinforces this alienation. Purification is the defense we use to remove ourselves from our physicality and estranges “us from us”. The lower half of our body can be compared to the sewer system under the city, full of intestinal activity. This is a fact that we conveniently forget in our ordinary lives.

This work has involved a kind of turning the body inside out and outside in, questioning how the subject's exteriority is psychically constructed and conversely how the surface of the body constructs a physical interior for it. In other words, I have attempted to problematize the opposition between the inside and the outside by looking at the inside of the body from the point of view of the outside.



Figure 5. *Soapriggerator*, 2006.

First of all, I used soap for the internal organs, which I had firstly made from clay, then taken from their moulds. By this way, I aimed one-to-one correspondence with the state of “sterileness”. Later on, I entrenched the soap internal organs into plastic bags. Afterwards I put sulphuric acid into them and sealed the plastic bags as laboratory samples. In this way, organs dissolved and decomposed in the acid. Consequently these remainders lost their soap attributes and their identities. They have turned into a dark purple color, different than natural, pure white. Water, rather than sulphuric acid, would not be able to achieve that transformation.

Whereupon, besides the effort to protect the laboratory samples with lead seals, I emplaced the plastic bags into a refrigerator, in order to exaggerate the act of “preserving”. However, all these precautions were inadequate for the internal organs not to dissolve. In this process the participant, or the viewer stays alone with the fact that nothing exists beyond the reality of the body.

Moreover, as well as not having any distance with this fact, the participant witnesses that the human body can decay or putrefy as a meat bought from a butcher, or have its

color changed, and by this way the participant confuses the distinction between inside and outside, and right and left. The inside of the body is diverted into outside, and thus this body has no dignity. Consequently, the fact that threatens the dignity of the body image is the loss of its entirety.



Figure 6. Detail from *Soaprigerator*, 2006

While, causing the internal organs decompose, I recorded the entire transformation process. Although it took six hours for me to shoot with the camera, I compressed the display to five minutes in order to make the process visible and obtainable for the participant.

Thereafter, I disposed the residuals to the shelves of a metal construction which I refer to a 'transparent' refrigerator. In this way, I aimed to move literally from inside to outside and made that boundary indistinct. Furthermore, the emplacement of the organs is almost parallel with the alignment of the human body. There is a challenge with “beauty” which is a consolidative power.

I attached identity cards which have both the photographs and information on, to the plastic bags, in order to characterize these materials. I associated the little identity cards and the information related to the materials with the plastic bags and leaden seals. In this way, I transformed them into laboratory samples as mentioned. These samples lost their

identities showed on their identity cards.



Figure 7. Detail from *Soaprigenerator*, 2006.

Additionally, the unusual height of the construction, defines the borderlines of the ground and the ceiling. This setting describes the process spatially, whereas the video screen mentioned above stresses on the process in terms of “time”. Although the construction disposes a smooth and neat appearance on the lower part, it looks rough and unpainted while ascending. I relate this condition with the soaps, which partially dissolved and partially stayed on the surface as solid; but most crucially, with an unfinished, neverending process in both cases. Finally, the body disengages from the internal organs which organizes and huddles the organs together.

ii) The

This work consists of nearly 20.100 chewing gums, a mobile pedestal, and a wallpaper made from the residues of the chewing gums, namely the packages of the gums. The mass of chewing gums, with its movement downwards, seems like entrapping its pedestal and threatening this pedestal's identity. The wheels and the pulling apparatus on the pedestal are for supporting and reinforcing its unstable position. The work, thus, actually would not have a conclusion and a constant position. In this way, the process gains the crucial role, rather than the result.

Moreover, the height of the mass' pedestal refers to a bust. It is an endeavour to personificate the mass. I aimed it to retain its own identity, location, and dimensions. Although this mass needs someone to maintain its unstable position on account of everything, this “someone” is not the author, or a specific person. Basically it has no owner, it seems like the work has its own volition.



Figure 8, *The*, 2007.

On the other hand, the tiled packages on the wall turn the process upside down. While on one side, the mass is constructed randomly and prevented from stabilization; on the other side, the tiles are composed meticulously and ordered, reversely to what people usually behave to those residues. However, it is placed on the wall as if it transgresses the boundaries of the ceiling, ground and the walls. By this way, I aimed to introduce a converse relation while considering the process.



Figure 9. Detail from the background of the work *The*, 2007.

Both the mass of chewing gums, and the wallpaper of residues are instances for abjection. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the abject alters the object of desire with the unwanted object. These bad objects fill the gaps that good objects left. Namely, we can obviously say that, fetishism is the basic appearance of abjection; for that reason I used chewed gums for this work as medium.

People have various reasons for chewing gums, some of which are preventing eating or smoking, canalizing one to work, contemplating, or just the opposite. Actually, gum chewing has the attribute of substitution. The act of chewing without swallowing, which is against the human physiology, gets the appearance of “fetish”. However, when the chewing gum is once taken out from mouth, it is something disgusting both visually and tacitly. The flexible and formless outlook of the chewing gum and its ability to easily take shape reinforce this bulk's repugnant appearance. Besides, the formlessness of the mass in general and its referent to the body's inside emphasize this aspect, intensely. It assembles all the dirt and dust around through its sticky surface. In this way, the 'thing's position as “externalized other” becomes immobilized. Dirt, as disorder would strengthen this mass of abjected chewing gums.



Figure 10. Detail from *The*, 2007.

Any material which does not have a specifically identified form always frightens us. For that reason, a formless object would cause the same result. In this way, such as the abject body of the mother, this work, namely “the”, shows itself as formlessness and oppositional to the image and symbolic order. At that point, while talking about the concept of fear, we can mention Freud's notion of “uncanny”, namely “*unheimlich*”. According to him, the uncanny is related to what is frightening and what arouses dread and horror. However, the uncanny is that class of the frightening which is known of old and long familiar, although it literally means unfamiliar. Thus, what is “*heimlich*”, turns into “*unheimlich*”. “We are reminded that the word ‘*heimlich*’ is not unambiguous but belongs to two sets of ideas, which without being contradictory, are yet very different: on the one hand ‘heimlich’ means what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed

and kept out of sight.”¹⁶ (Freud, 224) Actually, we can consider this definition as transgressing the duality of “heimlich” and “unheimlich”, which we elaborated a similar relation of inside and outside, at the other chapters. I believe that the work “the” has a corresponding approach to the notion of uncanny. While on one hand the work is undefinable and formless, on the other hand it reminds us an abjected body, body of the mother. It is neither inside, nor outside; neither object nor a subject. It is slimy and threatening. That's why, I gave the name “the”, which normally cannot appear on its own.



Figure 11. Exhibition view of *The*, 2007.

¹⁶ Freud, Sigmund. The “Uncanny”. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works.

iii) Column

This is a site-specific work, which makes one of the elements of the gallery subservient. I used plaster blocks in order to reconstruct a new column on the stable one; in other words, I 'attired' the existing column.

The most important feature of this construction is its parallelism with the other installation in the gallery, named "Soaprigrator". In a way, they talk to each other with their attributes of identifying the limits of the gallery, or in short, defining the space.

On the new column, there are several pictures and a video which have identical dimensions and positions. These materials are placed quite beyond the surfaces of the column. This act transgresses the borderlines of a surface, a space, or a threshold. Besides, this is an opportunity for the inside to challenge the outside.



Figure 12. Detail from Column, 2007.

The pictures on (or in) the column are composed of some transformed, hybrid internal organs. These creaturelike hybrids got rid of the body and were transformed into machines as well as kind of prosthesis. In this way, the body, likewise the opposite, disengages with the organs, such as Deleuze illustrated his notion of “body without organs”:

The body without organs is not the proof of an original nothingness, nor is it what remains of a lost totality... It is the body without an image. The imageless, organless body, the nonproductive, exists right there where it is produced... The full body without organs belongs to the realm of antiproduction. (Deleuze, 8)



Figure 13. Exhibition view of *Column*, 2007

Among these hybrids, I embedded a video on a small screen. In this video, the dissolving process of the first work, namely the “Soapriggerator” can be seen. I chose a small screen on purpose, to display the video; because I aimed everyone to observe their own processes, on their owns. Thus, only one person would occupy the video and watch his or her private process.

Last but not least, I intended to create an interaction with the first work not only in terms of dimentions and position, but also with sharing the elements of the works. Consequently, these works can be assumed “one” in general, rather than two, seperate works.

iv) Serial-Conversions

In this serial, I converted four different classical paintings whose subjects are seen as objects of desire, into the unwanted, undesired. An aestheticized body, such as in the original versions of these paintings, is a purified body which never challenges social control and the “cleanliness” under discipline. However, an abject body is dirty unweieredly, and always reminds of the fragility of the hegemonic discipline. This body is both has to be and at the same time impossible to restrain.

Furthermore, we cannot simply reformulate the body in non-dualist and non-essentialist terms. It must also be reconceived in sexed terms. As Grosz stated: “Bodies are never simply human bodies or social bodies. The sex assigned to the body makes a great deal of difference to the kind of social subject, and indeed the mode of corporeality assigned to the subject.”¹⁷(84) For that reason we have to analyse these paintings in terms of gender and sexuality.

¹⁷ Grosz, Elizabeth. “Bodies-Cities”, in Jones, Amelia. Ed. *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*.



Figure 14. Exhibition view of *Conversions*, 2007.

Conversions 1

In the first painting, I converted Tiziano's "Venus of Urbino" into an anatomical illustration. Anatomy, is a fact which has to be kept away from aesthetics as discussed earlier. The woman's body has to be transformed into something which has no "inside", such as in antique sculptures. Therefore, internal organs, and muscles should be restrained from the fine arts. Consequently, after these processes, female body lost its corporeality. Tiziano's "Venus" used to carry a noble simplicity, and a silent supremacy, before undressing her skin.

Skin, is the element which constrains the body when we consider this corporeality as our primal locality. Skin is the phenomenon which gives the body's own reality and at the same time it shows where the body begins and ends. Namely, skin is the real cover and borderline of the body. Whatever we call "body" is in fact concealed under the skin. This body covered by skin is a "stuffed" matter impossible to pass beyond. That's why, if there occurs a split on the skin, the body would start to leak outside; in this way, the borderlines

would be transgressed.



Figure 15. *Conversions I*, 2007.

On the other hand, the skin is something deceptive. In classical antiquity and the Renaissance, all human beauty is dedicated to the skin, that's why lots of nude works were made. In fact, people are not naked when their skin is on their bodies. The real eroticism is created with the skin itself, so skin is the most attractive dress anyone can wear. However real nakedness begins with the undressing of the skin.

Conversions 2

In this painting, I transformed Vermeer's "Girl With a Pearl Earring" into an entrance point, where the object circulates inside and outside. Different from the first conversion, I reduced abjection to the position of the mouth, in a subtle way.

Mouth is a threshold between inside and outside. This condition is not only related to the mouth, but also to the skin which discriminates the inside and the outside, moreover it is concerned with preventing the other limits related to skin. Namely, the mouth is the transition point where the inside comes out, and vice versa. It is one of the holes on the body which causes abjection.



Figure 16. *Conversions 2*, 2007.

Ancient Greek and afterwards, the Renaissance, have a conception of beauty which externalizes all sensual expressions. In this way, human body is visualised in a divine supremacy. “Laokoon” in Hellenistic era and all the crucifixion paintings in the Renaissance are instances which idealize and enoble pain and discipline sensual expressions; and thus, prevent the dignity of the body. In this way, they are assumed as “beautiful”. Consequently, when the inside and outside of the body become permeable via holes and pores such as mouth, this body loses its dignity and becomes abject.

Conversions 3

This painting is a conversion of Ingres' "The Bather of Valpinçon". In this neo-classical painting, the orientalized woman, sits on a beautifully designed bed, nearby a velvet curtain. This is a place where a 'woman' belongs to, according to a male-gaze. For that reason, I manipulated this place which emphasizes the outer beauty of the female in the composition, and moved her to a surgery where always signifies our insides. I transformed the velvet curtain into a paravane, and the bed into a medical couch. The woman, right now is not standing as an object of desire, but who has the probability to become ill.



Figure 17. *Conversions 3*, 2007.

In this way, I tried to emphasize the subject matter not with the 'figure' part, but with the ground part of the composition, different than the first two conversions.

Conversions 4

In the last work, I manipulated one of Caravaggio's paintings called "Bacchus". In this painting, the object of desire is a boy, rather than a woman. However all the paintings in this serial, share the same concern, because the effeminate boy in the painting has the attribute of being a part of 'othered' groups, such as 'woman'.



Figure 18. *Conversions 4*, 2007.

If we check these mutations again, in the first conversion I undressed the woman from her skin whereas in the second one, I only opened up her mouth. In the third transformation, I made this transition via the ground part, rather than the figure. However, in the last one, I did not make any transformations during the painting process. Thereafter, I made my friend disrupt it by uniting his eyebrows and drawing a moustache on the face by a ball point because, this action is always done by some others to the faces on newspapers or magazines. With this ironical manipulation, I turned this object of desire, into an abject.

v) Paintings with hybrids

In contemporary art, artists use bodily disintegrations and worthless materials in order to represent all the internal factors become externalized. In this new era, we are “cyborgs”, and “bodies without organs”.

When we define the woman body as object of desire, it must be a perfect Gestalt, namely an entire body from the outlines of which nothing is missing or the opposite, which something is extra. In these paintings I tried to attack this accuracy by challenging it with missing and extra organs. Moreover, I took out these internal organs and attached them to the outside of the body as an unhandy prosthesis. In these paintings the body is recreated as technologically with the appendant prosthesis, which we can assume as our secondary nature. In this way, the body is dismantled by assembling different body parts and organs together.

If we consider the concept of “cyborg” which is scrutinized in Part 1, we can obviously assume these bodies with ‘hybrid’ prosthesis as cyborgs. However, there is something different in this transformation process. We can talk about a double augmentation. In these paintings, the internal organs which are totally organic, protrude and combine outside of the body. By this way, they abandon their essential functions and transform into kinds of machines; thus, the organic matter, turns into the machine. If the cyborg is an abject which transgresses the boundaries between human and machine, these paintings can be postulated as images of cyborgs.



Figure 19. *Ver*, 2006



Figure 20. *Dur*, 2006



Figure 21. *İçtendiş'a*, 2007



Figure 22. *İçteniçe*, 2007.



Figure 23. *Dişli Kadın*, 2007.



Figure 24. *Kivrıl*, 2007.



Figure 25. *Untitled*, 2007.

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