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GUIDELINE FOR RABBIT KEEPERS  
MASTER OF ART THESIS

TUĞÇE AYDIN

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# GUIDELINE FOR RABBIT KEEPERS

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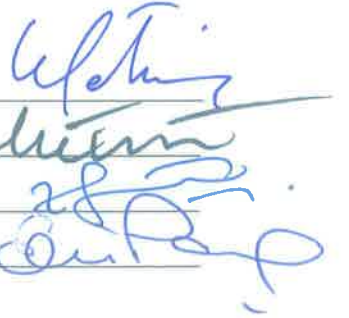
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“I, Tuğçe Aydın, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis”

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tuğçe Aydın', is written over a horizontal line.

TUĞÇE AYDIN

## **ABSTRACT**

### **GUIDELINE FOR RABBIT KEEPERS**

TUĞÇE AYDIN

Master of Arts in Cinema and Television Program

Co-advisors: Prof. Çetin Sarıkartal and Asist. Prof. Defne Tüzün

April, 2015

The study, based on my readings on the concepts of "*abjection*" and "*liminality*", consists of the video records of subsequent performances that I have created using my bodily expressions and my reflection in the mirror, as well as the following text in which I have given an account of my own experiences of the processes.

**Keywords:** Performance, Body, Liminality, In-betweenness, Abject, Julia Kristeva, Uncanny

## ÖZET

TAVŞAN BESLEYENE KILAVUZ

TUĞÇE AYDIN

Sinema ve Televizyon, Yüksek Lisans

Danışman: Prof. Dr. Çetin Sarıkartal

Eş Danışman: Yard. Doç. Dr. Defne Tüzün

Nisan, 2015

Bu çalışma, “*abjection*” ve “*liminality*” kavramlarından hareketle, kendi bedenim ve onun aynadaki görüntüsü aracılığıyla gerçekleştirdiğim üç performans ve video kayıtları ile bunlara ilişkin deneyimlerimi aktardığım bir metinden oluşmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Performans, Beden, Liminality, In-betweenness, Abject, Julia Kristeva, Tekinsizlik



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*“A rabbit keeper  
should also learn to live with a living being  
who will never call out to her  
-though trying to call out to it from time to time-  
and while doing that, also venturing to be aware that what she is doing is inane.”<sup>1</sup>*

*Oruç Aruoba (1995: 24)*

## **Performance Text**

“I”<sup>2</sup> am the one which is oriented to you  
both here and now.

The “other” is me having  
an “other” body.

The “other” as being an “other”  
has a same body with me.

“I” am in-between object and subject  
thus a flesh  
which is “*abject*”.

---

<sup>1</sup> *“Tavşan besleyen,  
kendisine hiç seslenmeyecek bir canlı ile birlikte  
yaşamayı da öğrenmelidir-  
arada bir ona seslenmeyi deneyerek-  
bunu yaparken ne budalaca bir şey yaptığımı  
düşündüğünün farkında olmayı da göze alarak.”*(Trans. Tuğçe Aydın)

<sup>2</sup> It was hard to narrate the experiences using the ‘I’. That is why I have used “I” as an empty signifier of a performer-status. This “I” is not a homogeneous status, rather, it appears while performing, uses same body with the one who perform, yet cannot be owned. The I on the other hand, that does not have an inverted comma, is a signifier of the narrator me. However, in chapter 2.2 and 2.4 the narrator I and the performer “I” were integrated and the reader who would like to follow up the experiences should not consider them separately.

In addition to that, sometimes I have used personal and possessive pronouns in inverted commas in order to emphasize ambiguous nuances in their original meaning. For instance, even if I was aware of the body or its representation could not have been possessed, I have used “my body” or “my representation” expressions to convey the experiences clearly.

## **Introduction**

When I started to think about my project I had lots of questions. At the very beginning I thought about the self-portraits of artists and photographers. Why do they take their portraits? Why do they paint self-portraits? Had they not been curious about what I have been pondering on, would they have painted their likes? What have they painted and what do I see? Is there any difference between what I see and what they have painted? What did they hope to see and what did they see at the end?

And then I did not want to see myself simply the way “I” viewed “myself”. I wondered how I really looked like. Not how I was seen and perceived by people. Rather, what I looked like in the mirror. How would the camera record these moments of reflection? What would I see while watching those recorded moments? Fundamentally, I focused on such questions. Both what I would see in the mirror, and “I”, would simultaneously need to be seen and recorded by the camera.

I intended to write this thesis directly based on my experiences, and decided to use performance dynamics as my research material. In the performance I tried to find answers via experiencing. Departing from the self and having a performer identity would give me a chance to experience.

It was necessary to have more concrete ways of documentation, and therefore I got the performance, and the experiences recorded to the extent that it was possible. What I saw in the mirror –the reflection- and the body should both have been recorded within the same moment. It is because I was searching to which extend “I”

felt that in-betweenness and I was really wondering where “I” was standing regarding the concept of *liminality*<sup>3</sup>.

In the first performance I had challenging moments with respect to being seen by the camera. In order to be completely seen in the camera frame, most of the time I gave up seeing the entire body and was contented with seeing only parts of the body in the mirror. I could easily escape from the mirror frame but there was no chance of escaping from the camera frame. The cameras could see the body in its entirety from a vantage point that I could not physically dominate.

I was searching for the conditions affecting the body in-and-off entirely. What are the things affecting the body between boundaries? What is happening in and off the body when “I” am in-between? Do those situations arouse curiosity or repulsion? Are there any appealing sides to it? Where are the boundaries of the body? And what happens to “me” -to the performer- when “I” get beyond them? What happens when “I” experience the zone of liminality?

At what point does the performer “I” dissociate from the reflection in the mirror? And where do “I” coalesce with it? I do not physically dissociate the body from its reflection. But I wish I could separate the body from its representation, could tell 'it' apart from the reflection in the mirror, could listen to “one of them” from here while seeing “the other one” speak over there, in other words, make the divide

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<sup>3</sup> According to Richard Schechner, who borrows the concept from Arnold Van Gennep, rituals and performances both have definite time and space. They both take place “betwixt and between” and thus they are both liminal (1976: 2-3). In this case, being in a liminal phase, the “I” is neither here nor there, not-this-not-that, in the midst of a journey from ‘one subject to be’ to ‘another subject to be’. This is the phase where the “performer-status/liminal entity” cannot be put in a mould; in fact it is precarious. This entity is not “me” and on the other hand it is not “not me”; the in-between. The performer-status has a sense of transformations through flowing in time and space.

between the body and its representation clearer. Then I thought, if I were to record the performance, I could perhaps separate the two.

I am aware that Lacan once said that every communication is miscommunication or that all communication ultimately fails (1955-56: 184). But let's ponder on the following for the sake of simplicity: it is easy to separate "one self" from "the other" while having a conversation with "somebody" as "everybody" is already a separate body. Everybody talks, and listens to others; and then, the others listen to how everybody listens to them, and then everybody continues to speak to each other. However, in the mirror, that activity of speaking-listening between the reflection and the body gets confusing. Who is speaking and who is listening are unclear.

Speaking and listening to one's body before the mirror is an illusory act. I transformed this act into a performance. The first performance was held live, i.e. "at that moment" and "in that place". I chose a school corridor as the performance area. I prepared three different set-ups for recording. After the editing, I realized that the performance did not bear any marks of my experience. I had not gone through the intended experiences because the performer-status failed to be formed. And then, in the thesis defense, another performance unexpectedly happened on the stage, in front of a wall completely covered with a mirror. Although I came very close to finding an answer, I had no camera and could not record those moments. Hence I could only reflect on the experiences in that second performance through what is remnant from the performing body. As per the decision of the committee members, I did another performance; on stage and this time recorded. In that performance, I felt some traces appear in/on the body. The "I", or the other "I" in the mirror, or let's say, the "I" that I had not encountered before; we met somewhere in time. This became visible, but

just between me and the audience. The fact that they were just sensible yet not easily visible made it unfortunately impossible for the camera to record those moments. But still, the performance and the feedback about our experiences could be recorded; documented.

In this thesis, I will try to put on paper what “I” failed to experience but was just able to observe during the first performance, what is remnant of my pure experience of the second performance, and what was uncovered from the body (which was used by the performer) during the last performance. And thus I will guide those who keep rabbits.



## **PERFORMANCE**

### **2.1. The first recording: A disappointment**

When I start performing, I feel that I am sacrificing myself. As soon as I continue to perform I have an impression that I'm transforming into a torturer. The torturer and the tortured were breathing in the same body. "I" act as an accomplice in both cases. Within the same body, guilt and its perpetrators cannot be sensed separately. Metaphorically speaking, at least two separate bodies within the bodyscape are needed: two surrogates, one for the tortured, and another for the torturer. So, I need two copies of this body; one for the tortured-performer and one for the torturer-performer. Rather than having mercy for the tortured, one prefers it to be perceived profoundly, since only then it can be made visible. Otherwise, one may endlessly hate oneself. One cannot sacrifice the body which is also the stage of the sacrifice but one can sacrifice the shadow of it which is the reflection. As a matter of fact, "I" am searching neither for the tortured nor for the torturer. That is to say, their imaginary manifestations are not the point of interest. "I" now just want the body to perform their hypothetical presences. Why do I start pricking myself while I am feeling like a tortured? Is it in order to protect myself from others' needles? Or is it to protect the self from being sacrificed by others? Why do I act like that?

It seems much more sane and humane to desist from trivialities in order to look for a grand essence. Thus, "I" prefer to sacrifice the reflection rather than the body in order to be able to follow up the experience.

I think physical actions have a stronger impact on me than intellectual actions. That is why I started performing before starting to write the thesis. I can describe you what being an “I” means to me. But I can also provide you with an experience of the body through “performer”. Focusing on the body and then conceptualizing what happens to it allows me a deeper understanding. However, as soon as I start working with the body, something goes wrong and I cannot easily define those corporeal changes. The body is not just a material, I cannot shape it. Mostly, it does not take the form of what I imagine. Even when it is embodied after what I imagine, “I” feel uncomfortable. The captive form of it makes me feel incapable. When “I” become a captive under the rule of intelligence, I feel incapacitated.

Before engaging with performative acts and scenarios, I was faced with a presence/absence dilemma. The only difference between the body and its reflection in the mirror was that the reflection stood opposite to the body. In front of the mirror, one could prove the reflection’s presence and would not doubt it. However, the presence of the mirror image could not guarantee the one’s own presence.

I knew that the body was there and I knew that it had a mirror image in front of me. However, I could not prove my corporeal presence and its reflection’s presence simultaneously. I could prove the mirror image’s presence just because I could behold it in the mirror. The body also had a presence there and the only way for me to behold its presence wholly was to have a record of it by a camera. My hypothesis was that if the camera recorded both the image of the body and its reflection in the mirror, and if I could recognize both images separately, then I could prove my presence. I would later recognize that it was just a hypothesis; anyway...

I intended to see/watch how the body and its reflection would be affected by the presence of the camera and people. At first it seemed essential to perform in a space used by people in their daily routines. I could only perceive their reactions to me during the performance as far as I could see their images in the mirror. I was calling the mirror as the “on-scene”. Although they might have encountered me in the performance space, the real encounter for me was eventually taking place in the mirror.

While I was watching the raw footage of the performance, I realized that my objective was not to purely induce someone to see something in particular. I was the one to perform, to record, to edit as well as to watch in this project.

I merely started with “myself”. I thought about my own performative discrepancies and I intended to conceptualize them from a psychoanalytical approach. To me, psychoanalytical approach was fitting well with my field of research. It was also relieving to handle the subject-object relation with such an approach. It was incredibly interesting to walk into the complicated pathways of psychoanalysis. I was surrounded by the lure of the unknown. I was thinking that I was dragged into a place where “I” would be cracked open.

I thought that I could explain the body's own in-betweenness (neither hereness, nor there-ness) exactly by the concept of "abjection,"<sup>4</sup> which was formulated by Julia Kristeva.

Reading about the concept of abjection was very important to me. It was partly because I had the chance to reconsider the body. Also, I could look back on my early stages of development. Thinking about why I was as I was, was challenging. The more I read Kristeva, the more I liked the concept of abjection. As far as I thought back to Kristeva's instances in her book "*Powers of Horror*", the concept of abjection seemed to be able to shed light on my in-betweenness and save me from the performative discrepancies.

Reading was not enough. I had to place "myself" in a moment/a circumstance/a performer's position, which was quite different from the established condition. It was 'a state of being' that I could not name or imagine in advance. Letting the body place itself in a precarious manner/status, I could manage with my performative discrepancies without giving any harm to the self. By means of such a replacement I could explain the experiences via the concept of abjection.

Performance could slightly touch to the borders but it could not transgress them. I knew that I would not reach this circumstance/state of being provided by the

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<sup>4</sup> I borrow the term "abjection" from Julia Kristeva as she describes it in her book "*Powers of Horror*". The effect of the abjection manifests itself when the demarcation lines separating inside-outside/subject-object/self-other are ambiguous. Kristeva specifies her notion of abjection through mother-child dyad. Abjection exists in a pre-objectal relationship, and at this moment, the ego of the infant is not a subject and the mother is not yet an object. It is a primordial otherness that is emerged in a blissful environment of amniotic cavity shared by both the mother and the child. The "subject to be" could barely dissociate itself from 'its' "object to be" and confronts with abjection.

In this thesis I will offer a new notion of abjection that is experienced through the body that "I" reside in, and had a struggle to establish a border between its reflection and its entity in the sense of liminality.

performer-identity under the actual conditions of life, because it was impossible to manage that by reason alone. On the other hand, it was also impossible to go beyond the limits of the consciousness while performing, which would be another protection to me.

I was using language. Through its medium, I was trying to convey something to the reflection in the mirror. It was all about language. Everything I said was so close to be associated with something. The situation was so likely to have meaningful interpretations. But I was not in need of definite meanings. On the contrary, I wished for unidentified things that I could not name or imagine in advance. Only in that case could I associate the potential experience with the concept of abjection. For the sake of proposing a thesis, I hoped that those non-definable circumstances could create an opportunity to conceptualize my ideas as well as binding my performance and thesis together. Once they could be brought together, the performance and the thesis could have significance.

Watching the raw footage of the first performance made me digress from the starting point. Instead of conceptualizing the performance as I decided in the beginning, I suddenly found myself in the middle of watching and editing sections of the performance.

When I first watched the raw footage I looked for any performative anxieties, disintegrations and changes in the performer-status. I found out that in order to convey the sentences easily to the reflection in the mirror, I frequently came physically close to the reflection, and even touched the mirror. Again, rather than standing before the mirror, I preferred a squatting position for a better “communication”. Furthermore, when I could see the entire reflection of the body in

the mirror, I thought that the interaction -or should I say miscommunication? - was stronger. I believed that I had a tight grasp on the reflection as I walked up to it with words.

After watching the record of the first performance, I concluded that it was far away from relating to the performative discrepancies. Rather than looking for a real solution, it was as if I was acting the process of looking for a solution. My extreme self-consciousness was so evident in the records. Rather than engaging “myself” in the performance, I frequently worried with placing the cameras, adjusting their angles and their coordination.

I did not know when the cameraman was on standby and when he was recording. I was always anxious about whether the cameras were recording or not. That is why at times I asked the cameraman if he was recording or not. There were two reasons for that anxiety. Firstly, I wanted to make sure that the process was being recorded, because I wanted to have a visual documentation of what was going on. Secondly, I was particularly curious about the recording process at certain moments of the performance, which I thought to be much closer to the ideal state of “communication” as I had imagined before the performance. Those moments were mostly the ones during which I got closer to the mirror in the squat-position.

Sometimes I thought that the performance was an unavailing attempt. It was mostly because of me constantly reasoning; I was compelled to think that way because my consciousness had a need for reasons. Yet, I was still able to continue the performance by my desire to somehow integrate the conceptual and the practical.

Since the performance was to be done within certain boundaries, I built up some. There had to be a performance area and that area had to contribute to my belief

that I was in a threshold. Believing might have been in vain as well, since I was the only one who believed in the threshold, whereas there should have been another entity to believe in it: the reflection in the mirror.

Well, how reasonable/possible could it be to treat the mirror reflection as if it were another “being to be”? It was just a reflection, but it did not look like me as far as I saw. It was derived from me, it was speaking the same language as me but it understood different things than what I had meant. It was as if adding some comments to what I had said. Sometimes, it was hanging on all my words. Other times, it did not pay attention to me at all. It would pretend as if it paid attention, but the words -the text- scattered around. In order to prevent them from scattering, I had rhymed the words. However, I still felt that the words could not engross the reflection of the body even though they fulfilled the requirements.

There were some moments that I thought that I was physically bonded with the image that I saw. In those moments, I got suspicious of the presence of the mirror. Was it a reflection or an extension of me? How far did my borders go? I was totally confused.

Sometimes my own words seemed too big and absurd to me but at other times I did not care about them at all. I just submitted myself to the feeling of fluidity. I was especially interested in those moments of fluidity, since they would enable me to escape from facing myself.

I did my best to escape. I was thinking that the reflection in the mirror had another image than I felt. According to my experiences, I can easily say that looking at someone is quite different from looking at the same person’s image appearing in

the mirror. I think the difference is due to the illusion provided by the mirror. That is why I wrote that poem which did not make any sense to me most of the time.

I was getting anxious about the idea of being understood by the mirror image. As soon as I would see the ebb and flow of “her” chest while breathing, I would shudder to think that “she” could be alive, that she could have real blood flowing in her veins. Speaking the same language was also threatening to me because “we” could be eventually affected by each other and could not help ourselves from falling into each other’s arms. Mutual red-handedness could be revealed reciprocally.

During the performance moments I tried to get various motivations. For instance, I spoke with pauses. Speaking with pauses, “I” got the impression that I was trying to dictate something to myself. Such an ability to dictate brought about a pointless hierarchy. And then, the moment that I waited for from the very beginning of the performance, the moment of cracking open, did not appear at all. Whenever I rattled off the poem, I did not know what I was saying and had doubts that I was listened to by the reflection. Furthermore, in one instance where I rattled off the poem, I forgot the lines that I had written. After all was said and done, I was convinced that neither the speed nor the manner of speech had an influence on the performance. Then I turned towards the other points in the research.

Another layer of the performance was related with the audience who were about to pass through “that place” “at that moment”. They were affecting my manner of speaking, which was changing the performance dynamics in return. When I had started to design the performance I had made certain decisions and I imagined the audience as the borders of the performance. That is why I would not have been affected were they to pass by me or stand around me. I would have focused on my



corporeal presence. However, those who passed by and those who directly reacted to the set-up were affecting me. Their potential reactions to me or to the camera disquieted me and changed the manner of speaking. On the other hand, the idea of being recorded also disquieted me.

I was obsessed with controlling the camera. However, I did not let the struggle between being focused in performance and controlling the camera seen through. Even if I always yearned to reach the threshold/liminality, I saw from the raw footage that my obsession with making sure that I was recorded was hijacking my performative efforts. Then I realized that I was trapped by the idea that the records could be watched again and again.

When I was dreaming about this project, the poem was the only thing that was decided upon from the very beginning. It was the only material that would not change or transform. But for the body there was an area of freedom to make all transformations/changes possible. In a sense, the idea of freedom frightened me. The idea that I would open up to such an extent rather caused me to retreat and closed the representation upon itself.

People that were passing by me would not have known me and could have had weird ideas about what they were seeing. I thought that I had taken enough risk. That is why their regardlessness was a safe haven. In other words, as far as they did not take notice of me, I could easily take care of the performance. This was a relaxing idea. On the other hand, it was blocking the representation. Although I was trying to push performer out, I could not experience any moment of dissociation. The camera and the idea of being recorded were adding even more to that. As a matter of

fact I was trapped and pinched by the corporeal borders while I was out to hunt down those very borders.

## **2.2. After the first defense: A new form and a new space.**

While I was in the thesis defense I could not get a grasp of the experiences because I was lost in the performance and I could not position myself into one role. I was the one who designed, performed, demarked and recorded the performance. I was aware of being recorded. I was controlling the camera movements all the time. I had an anxiety for being recorded. In addition, I was the one who watched and decided how to edit. In the last instance, I was trying to comment on my visual documentation. Consequently, I was confused about who or what I was. While searching for who I really was, I got doubly confused.

I was having hard times about making sense of the project. All of a sudden, I found myself on stage by the direction of Çetin Sarıkartal. He told me to open the curtains. I knew that behind the curtains, there were mirrors lined side by side across the wall. I realized that I could make everything clear. I was very excited about making my case clear through performing. I was awed by the idea of coming face to face with “myself” on stage. I was also frightened of coming face to face with my performative problems. As a matter of fact, nobody knew those performative discrepancies as well as Çetin Sarıkartal did.

I opened the curtains. I was scared that I would cry. The crying scenario was quite familiar with me if I came to think about those discrepancies. I was frightened of hating what I would see in the mirror. And then, Çetin Sarıkartal asked the defense committee to position their chairs on stage. The chairs were to face the mirror. That

way they could see their reflections besides mine. They positioned their chairs. And he requested that I took a position before the mirror.

I was between the committee and the mirror; we were seeing our reflections through the mirror. As soon as I took that position, I looked at the mirror. All I could see was a mummy. The only image that I could see was that elaborate mummy. I could not even move my arms. In the mirror, there was a sculpturesque body that looked like Medusa. I thought if I looked at “her” in the face for too long, I could turn into a stone. “She” was expressionless.

Besides, there was another, a second one, behind the one that I could see. That one was hiding. I was familiar with both of them. I was familiar with what I saw, and also familiar with the concealed one. The one who hid was the one whom I had never answered. I did not like the idea of facing “her” again. That explains why “she” hid all the time. I could not say that I knew her exactly, but I was familiar with her. She was full of emotions and I could not handle that much sentimentality. Yet, “I” tried to face her, but then I failed. That explains why I treated her as an alien each time she attempted to show up.

It was so challenging to meet her up again. She was like a kid. But she was dressed up like a woman. She was so fragile. At that point, I felt “myself” small yet I felt that my arms and legs were bigger than me. I wanted to pull them in, and to get rid of this disproportionality. I wanted to be complete. But my muscles got so hard or stiff that I could not even move my joints.

Çetin Sarıkartal told me to perform under the stage lights. All the defense committee was also lit. First of all, I did not want to concentrate on them directly. I thought that I could utter the words only if I looked towards another direction.

Suddenly, Sarikartal directed me to look at them through the mirror. I looked at them, I felt belittled, and suddenly, a feeling appeared. That sensation was welling up inside me, flowing out, and surrounding me again and again. It came like an impulse and at that time I became familiar with it. It was like an inwards flood. I could hardly breathe. I wanted to scream and I did. Crying was not enough to pour it out. I needed to vomit/squirt it.

It was an *uncanny*<sup>5</sup> situation where I could not see the committee members when I looked at “my reflection” in the mirror. In that case, it was impossible to speak the sentences to the committee members’ reflections and to “my reflection” at the same time. At that moment, my perception of time was modulated. When I saw “my reflection” in the mirror, I could not see committee member’s reflection. And when I saw them, I could not see “my reflection” in return.

I felt that uncanniness more than ever as I looked at “my image” in the mirror. I could not feel safe when I was facing it. At least I could guard myself when I locked my eyes with someone else’s eyes. Within those confusing moments, Sarikartal motivated me to accept the incoming sensation which had been already flowing out of me.

Then, I wanted to hold those senses and stop them. I asked “myself” if I would cry and had a smoldering sensation... I knew that I would cry. I tried to settle down. However, it was impossible to resettle “myself” because of the energy surrounding the body. I could neither get rid of that energy current, nor could I

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<sup>5</sup> The idea of uncanny often coupled with the concept of abjection. Freud describes “uncanny” as terror that leads back to something which has been known for a long time, and once has been familiar (1919: 222). Uncanny in German “Das Unheimliche” semantically expresses itself in a better way; as –heim means home, family, familiar, belongs-to-home and then unheimliche becomes unfamiliar, unfamiliar, and does not belong to home. It provokes sense of fear, because it penetrates with what is sealed off.

transform it. That was a moment that I was familiar with. Every time the moment came, I had to block it out. At that time, as I always do while performing, I pretended that the moment was a stranger to me. And then, Sarıkartal asked me to enunciate the poem. I could not even say a word properly. I stuttered on every letter. It was grueling work to perform. So hard! It was hard to speak the lines, as well as to transmit them to the reflection and to the audience's reflection. The reflection was falling apart as I uttered the words. "Think about your eyebrows and release your jaw" Sarıkartal said. I could not even move my jaw. I could not articulate the sentences fluently. I was stuck between crying and uttering the sentences. In the meantime, I heard some motivations coming at certain intervals: "Do not hold what's coming to you. Talk from inside out, don't hold, and say it from there. Do not hold. Accept what's coming from inside. Talk. Now watch. And think about being watched. Go on from there."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> I need to further explain these directions/motivations which I was already familiar with from Çetin Sarıkartal's "Advanced Acting" classes. I have not come across these concepts in any other source. I need them for conveying the experiences in this paper.

"Do not hold what's coming": We sense that various kinds of moods appear when we listen/try to feel our impulses attentively. Those situations can be felt and expressed as long as we are in a highly sensitive state. Rather than following what's inside, most of the time we name those changes in the body with an emotion, and that's why we cut off the flow of energy. However, what's expected from a performer is to witness those emerging feelings without interfering.

"Accept what's coming from inside": Although we do not suppress or hide the emerging feelings, sometimes we do not accept them for what they are and we attribute meanings to them. However, if we accept what's coming directly from inside, it becomes possible to let it out, and our present state of being can manifest itself as an emotion.

"Say it from there": Saying something within a state of being and to perform from there is hard. On the other hand, thinking about what we are saying, rather than thinking about showing what we have inside is valuable. In that way we can get what is needed. The more we say, the more we convey. If we say directly what comes to us, we can continue to convey without cutting off the flow of energy. "Thinking of/ Listening to a part of one's body" (e.i. listening to my feet, listening to my back): Trying to adjust our bodily attention to feel/listen/think of the parts where the impulses are gathered, to feel them with our whole sincerity. For instance, when I listen to/feel/think of my feet, I focus on my feet more than in normal life such that I can be more sensitive to my feet than in real life. My actions get slower, and I reach a higher sensitivity to the parts of my body. With that sensitivity, I can feel all the impulses gathered in my feet at that moment. I can feel the flow of energy that is growing in that body part. After a while, I realize that I am "holding what's coming from inside" or "not accepting them as they are" because of the blockage that I have developed. Then I can remove the blockages that have been developed as soon as I become aware of them during performance. This is the ideal situation. However, it becomes difficult to get rid of them when "reasoning" is involved. And

At that point, I felt that something was about to be vomited out from my stomach. I could still cry. Then, there was a moment of suspension. Again, but this time with a persistent tone, I heard: “Try to send your voice to the mirror. Do not hold it. Think about what you are saying. Do not hold, and go ahead!” Those whispers were giving me some kind of strength and I was ashamed of being supported in front of the audience. Sarıkartal’s whispers were supporting me, forcing me, and on the other hand saving me from the sense of drowning.

After a while, the sentences that I was about to utter began to touch the reflection and thus they affected me too. As the words met with the reflection and echoed back to me, they were vigorously hitting me back and causing me to fall apart. The words that I could not say were becoming easier to utter than before. The word that I remember much was “in-between”. That word could not be uttered easily; it had never hit the reflection strongly enough and that is why it could not hit me back in return.

Suddenly, the vibrations in the body grew altogether to be destructive. Then, they dissolved into smaller pieces, but did not lose their total effect on the body. Conversely, I felt impulses from every part of the body. Such an over sensitivity caused me to lose control.

I perceived that the speaking and listening moments were extended in time due to the presence of the committee members’ reflections in the mirror. While I was trying to transmit something to their reflection by means of the mirror, I started to think that it took a longer time to speak through the mirror than to speak directly at

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this blocks the way to perform. The reason why Çetin Sarıkartal whispered those motivations to me while I was performing was to show me a way around feeling and getting rid of those blockages that appeared during performance.

their face. In that case, my perception of time was destroyed by the mirror. I tried to gather all the glances in the mirror by my look. But in this case, every impulse that I felt was becoming violent. I felt that I was retching but could not vomit. Sarıkartal's whispers had an impact of retching and helped me to express what was inside me. The reason I visualized those moments as vomiting was that I felt as if something was stuck in my throat.

I found my articulation of words in English strange. In the meantime, I was alienated because of language, found my pronunciation and tone of voice different than usual. I thought that I could have articulated better if I had rehearsed. But then I realized that worrying about the articulation was nonsense in comparison to the appearance which was really terrible.

As soon as I finished the words, I released the urge to cry. It took me long to recover from the physical and emotional influences of those moments. Then, Sarıkartal asked me what I felt. It was all strange; on the one hand I had experienced a series of transformations that were familiar to me but on the other hand it was inexplicably different. There was a big gap between the first performance and the second in terms of affection. This time, I was incapable of keeping in touch with "my physical existence". That's why I was feeling a sense of lack of control and performing within ambiguous borders.

After the performance had finished, I listened to the committee members' feedbacks through their reflection in the mirror. They seemed to be a few meters away from me. I experienced a transversally expanded and longitudinally compressed space, and my perception of time was also retarded. At that point, if I were to speak, I felt like it could take a long time to convey the voice. That is why I

needed to face them directly. As soon as I faced them I could barely convince myself that I knew them. Until that moment, I had perceived their existence as a threat. But after facing them, I could demarcate my borders and felt safe.

Knowing/recognizing/identifying was quite confusing while I was looking through the mirror. In this sense, I was in-between, and could not perceive time/space/existence as I normally did, when I was living within the body. The sense of in-betweenness caused me to be alienated from “my ideal self”. In order to get rid of that sense, I tried to come back to the situation we were initially in. For my research of borders, the uncanniness had become a challenge within the discourse of liminality.

“I” feel uncomfortable when someone looks at “me” in a way that “I” do not want to-be-looked-at. That is why when “I” look at someone “I” automatically show “her” how “she” should look at “me”. “I” permit “her” to look at “me” when “I” see that “she” is able to look at “me” the way “I” look at “myself”. Normally, when “I” am looking, “the thing” that “I” looked at is “the object of my gaze” even if it is a person. “I” can attribute to “her” the status of “subjecthood” only if “I” should admit that “I” as “the thing” that “she” looked at is “an object”. But how can “I” admit to be perceived as “an object”? Only on the condition that what is seen by “the other gaze” corresponds with the “image of ‘me’ in my own imagination”. Then “I” can accept “her” as “a subject” who can look at “me”.

Consequently, when “I” look in the mirror, “I” look at it in the way that “I” want to-be-looked-at. Otherwise, if “I” look in the mirror in such openness, which would be completely curious about what is seen there, “I” would see the reflection as “an object”. This time, the “objective” reflection is now looking at “me” in return. Of



course, “I” can never accept to be “the object of the gaze of an object”. That uncanny situation makes “me” feel a rupture between the positions of “the subject” and “the object”, which “I” can only conceive of as “a state of in-betweenness”.

### **2.3. Two performances in a melting pot**

I thought of each performance over and over again in terms of being watched and I tried to reinvestigate the body. While trying to be loyal to the frame fixed by my friend in the first performance, I aimed to see the total image of the reflection and also to be seen by the camera at the same time during the performance. I went forward and back, leaned down, and spoke from those postures. I tried every possible way to crack “myself” open, but almost never achieved the goal of the performance.

On the other hand, in the second performance, as I was watching and saying something to the reflection in English, I found my articulation to be strange as a result of the static onlookers, i.e. the committee members. I got the impression that my jaw muscles and the shape of my lips were also strange, as far as I remember.

In my recorded performance, I wanted to ensure that what I experienced was being recorded. Thus, I aimed to normalize my process of acting. My desire to be recorded had increased but the visibility of the image had lost its power in the course of recording. On the other side stood the stage-performance, where I had become more disassembled, although I wanted to hide my existence.

Despite all efforts, I realized that the first performance was superficial since I was putting on an act of dominating myself. I was successful at dominating. On the other hand, in the stage-performance, I was just falling into an unknown abyss that could not be normalized, dominated by me. I had tried finding that abyss once in the first performance, but I had failed. Therefore, although the second performance took

place on a stage, it would be weird to label it as a play. I am not sure if it was a play or not but it was not real life either. It was the first performance that looked more staged in spite of its set-up located in a busy corridor at school.

In the first performance, I was the one to decide how much of the reflection would be seen by the camera and by me. However, this also brought certain challenges. In order for the camera to see the reflection in its entirety, I had to shift to the right or to the left. This, on the other hand, prevented me from seeing the total image in the mirror. For example, I would have to lose a part of my arm in the mirror, and that was really bothering. It was much more stressing than performance anxiety.

I noticed something while I was watching the first performance; namely, the direct glances of the people who passed by my side within the performance area. I could not experience a moment of real encounter during the performance itself, because they were making contact with the reflection and watching me from the back, instead of contacting me directly. Our glances could have intersected but I was too busy dealing with “myself” and looking directly at the reflection instead of them. I felt that they were looking at me much later in the game, while I was watching the video recording of the performance. I met with their eyes looking straight into the camera through the mirror. I felt their glances on “my body”, which was somehow disturbing.

Based on my watching, I could say that representation became impossible in the first performance because there was a mirror in front of me and there was a camera behind me; so I was stuck between them. Just like being in between two mirrors, being stuck in between a camera and a mirror multiplied the reflection so

much that it made representation irrelevant. Actually, I entered into the frame, exited from the frame, and changed the frame all the time. Moreover I tried to make the body visible in the mirror, put its reflection onscreen even in cases when the body was off-screen but indeed, I could not make the tortured – torturer dilemma visible at all. While trying to have a control over the performance process "I" found "myself" oscillating between the positions of the torturer and the tortured.

When performing on stage, since the mirror was the only thing reflecting the body, and there was no camera at all, I did not feel stuck. The boundaries were as large as the dimensions of the stage. It meant that I had a frame wider than the camera did. I did not use all of the performance area, I was rather static. Although I had not made any effort to show anything, representation became more available. So “I” witnessed that what I wanted to hide eventually spilled out. Things that I wanted to represent were unintentionally represented. Representation appeared in an undesired way because the roles of the tortured and the torturer were switched, contrary to my expectations. Before, I was relaxed and could say that it was just a reflection, not me that “I” sacrificed. I was entrapped and tortured by the reflection. Actually, it must have been the body that was writhing in pain there, so the real tortured must have been “I”. And the torturer should have been the reflection that projected to me such a representation. It was torturing “me” by reflecting “my presence”.

Another topic is how the camera angles affected the representation during the recording. I realized that representation was prone to be realized when it was recorded in wide angle. The reflection on the other hand could be easily seen in a medium shot. That is to say, in a medium close up, only a part of the body got into the frame whereas the reflection took most of the space. The medium close up could

witness the moment of representation more than any other frame sizes would, and that is why the visibility of representation was increased. I wanted to use more close ups because I wanted the camera to witness better the reality of representation that took place. I had thought that I could show the representation clearly when the camera would make close-ups, whereas I could not find integrity in the camera frame; there was just the reflection of the upper half of the body –a medium shot-. Though I thought that I was hitting the right spot when I got closer to the mirror during the performance, I saw that this did not increase the level of representation when I was watching the record of the first performance. More precisely, it was not sufficient to prove that something was being represented.

The mirror used for the first performance did not have the sufficient size to feel like I was getting lost in it. Its height was a little bit shorter than mine. Because of that, I had to shift to the right or left to fit the whole body into the frame of the camera, but I was unable to see the reflection of the whole body in the mirror. My perception of the place was restricted by the frame of the mirror, so it was easier to treat the mirror as an object. Liminality was out of question within such a performing area that had sharp boundaries like that mirror. The space could easily be dominated. Therefore, this case was supporting the idea that I could hold everything under my control. Besides, the fact that there was a mirror in front of me and a camera behind me converted the space into a safer one. The desire to see the body in the mirror at the same time as being seen by the camera had constrained the boundaries.

I could have kept the distance between me and the cameras shorter, such that the cameras could easily see the reflection in the mirror, and I would be seen by them. However, I wanted to have people to pass between the mirror and the cameras. I arranged the entire setup to fulfill that purpose. Doing that, I also constrained the

body between the mirror and the camera frames. In the beginning, I had not thought that I would be transforming the people and the body into objects for the camera. However, I saw that they became the objects of a film when I watched the recordings. In some scenes, it could be easily seen that I tried to perform some so-called subject positions but I could not make them visible.

In the last part of the first performance, my friend holding the camera had to leave, and I started to operate it on my own. At that moment, I needed to place the camera closer to me because I wanted to control it without any loss in the performative moments. I put the camera in place where I could use it without getting out of the mirror frame. The camera was placed behind me and to the left. I was sure that it shot me and I was aware of how the frame was positioned. The people were left behind me and the camera from that time on. With that new set up, something strange happened; I could not talk to the reflection any more. Although the camera and the mirror were very close to me and the camera was recording, I could not speak the words at all. I was just looking at the mirror; I looked at it for approximately ten minutes. I wanted to communicate with the reflection but it was only possible with my eyes. The distance from the camera seemed insufficient to me and I got off the frame for a few seconds to zoom-in more to the mirror. Then, I went back to place before the mirror. From that time on, I did not know whether any part of the body was in the frame or not actually. I continued to look at the mirror and kept silent without knowing which part of the face was in the frame. When I watched the recording I realized that in that new set up nothing could be seen except the reflection of the face. The frame of the mirror was not seen anymore. I was alone with the reflection of a face. Now the camera frame was so close to constituting an on-scene space, just like the way I wanted at the beginning. There was a private

moment between me and the reflection, in which speech had no meaning at all. My research might have evolved into something else if it could have resumed from that point on. However, I was very tired and I had to end the performance, as I was scared of the performer-state that I was about to enter. Even the camera's tape had just run out, and the records had ended already.

In the defense presentation, the last part of the film was the most convincing both for me and the committee members. Since in the beginning of the performance I could perceive and name the mirror as an object, I had experienced difficulties about the concept of space. In that last part of the film, the mirror was not an object anymore. That last frame provided a basis for the idea that a third performance could be useful. The committee members decided to see a third performance, which would happen on stage and be recorded by camera. Representation could be fulfilled on stage because the wall was totally covered with mirrors. And the camera could witness those possible moments of representation. Henceforward, it would be possible to encounter the reflection in the mirror without any boundaries in terms of both performance and representation, which was so uncanny for me.

*“Even language... is of no use, [it] cannot limn the soul, and gives only torn fragments at best. I always have a feeling as of dread, therefore, when I am on the point of baring my heart to someone, not because the nakedness would embarrass, but rather because I cannot show everything, simply cannot, and must fear being misunderstood because of this fragmentation.”*

*Heinrich Von Kleist<sup>7</sup>*

#### **2.4. The Staged Performance: A memoire based on the second recording**

Although the space was the stage, which I had gotten closely acquainted with, it did not contain a depth that I could define and determine for the borders of the performance. The little mirror I was using in the first performance was revealing a certain area which allowed daylight to pass through the space it reflected. However, the stage was black, and there was no daylight. This gave me the opportunity to get completely lost in space. There was a mirror ahead of me which covered the whole wall, on my left was a black wall, and behind me was the black curtain. The floor was also furnished with black wood. On my right was an empty space. When I realized all of those, series of thoughts came into my mind: getting lost, falling into emptiness, and getting sucked in by a black hole. All of those were frightening enough. The stage was tiny but my perception of space was more of an idea of infinity. It was as if I could get lost in it, like in a galaxy. There would be no "me". "I" could disappear in an instant. The spotlights would be the lights from other planets of that galaxy. Even though I had prepared the space to perform, I felt like there was nothing artificial. This is because there were no pre-determined actions to be performed. People watching, three cameras recording and the people using the

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<sup>7</sup> Ed. and trans. Philip B. Miller (1982: 90)

cameras; none of these seemed to be artificial or distracting. I felt like “I” was about to experience something real. In the worst-case scenario, nothing would happen. Since I did not want the performance to become a play, I had not rehearsed. I had only looked at the reflection in the mirror for a couple of hours the previous night, while adjusting the camera angles.

Before I began the performance, we watched the re-edited version of the first performance. While everyone was watching, I tried to walk on the stage and feel the space. During the screening, the seats were facing the empty space. For the performance, we had to re-adjust the seats so that they could face the mirror. Nothing happened after the screening of the edited performance. There was no talk. The audience placed their seats in a way that they could see “me” and “themselves” through the mirror. The spotlights were on. I actually do not know when the performance started. While the seats were being adjusted, the audience was trying to find the angle from which they could see me and themselves better. They were also trying to pick a spot from which the camera would see them. While those were being done, I was walking barefoot on stage. I was walking fast. Maybe the performance had already started. I was walking and only thinking of my feet. I tried to feel the black wooden floor underneath my feet and how my feet were stepping on the ground. As I walked, I listened to my feet and I also took deep breaths. I listened to myself breathing. I wondered where my breath would take me away, and I tried to follow it. I walked around the seats on which the audience was sitting. After a while I started taking deeper breaths.

I walked back and forth in front of the mirror. I felt like laughing. But that was not really laughing. That could only be curiosity. I was laughing to fill the emptiness created by the curiosity and the lack of knowledge of where to go. Then suddenly I



felt like crying. I was trying to figure out what I was feeling. I was walking back and forth and I had not faced “myself” in the mirror yet. I was so in between! (There were two moments in the entire performance in which I experienced that in-betweenness, one of those was when those changes began.) I was walking parallel to the mirror from the one end of the stage to the other. When I came to the edge of the stage, I was looking at the ceiling. The spotlights hung on that ceiling. Those lights made me happy. I was in-between; I did not know what to do. The only thing I knew was to keep breathing. But while I was breathing, I felt like either laughing or crying. Everything was so complicated. The only simple thing was how the light from that spotlight fell on me. That light was the only thing existing there. It came directly, straight out. It contained nothing complicated. It was unique for me and it was constant. It did not frighten me. It was warm. At that moment, that light was closer to me than even “myself”. It was opening itself up to me without expecting anything in return and wanted me to open myself up to it.

Maybe the performance had started; maybe it did not start until I faced the reflection in the mirror. Maybe this going back and forth could have kept going. But I could not wait to face the reflection and I had gathered all my strength inside. After a long look into the empty space and half way through my stroll I suddenly turned towards the mirror. This was not a pre-decided moment; it came naturally, suddenly, out of nowhere. I faced “my reflection” in the mirror for the first time and “my body” instantly reacted to this encounter. The moment I faced the reflection in the mirror I was shocked and I screamed. This encounter was happening for the first time and was, like all the other encounters in my life, unique. After a short period of time, my peace of mind was gone. The warmth of the light disappeared. Other feelings took its place and filled the empty space. I tried to breathe. As I was breathing, there were

cries and hiccups spreading from my tongue both to the environment and the mirror. Then I approached the reflection in the mirror. I was performing far away from performative anxieties. That was why I could let “myself” crack open. At that moment, anything could happen there. I felt nothing wrong with being open and did not feel the need to hold “myself” back. I could spill out everything I felt into the space. Mutual red-handedness could now be revealed. All this laughing and crying could have led me to a breakdown. However, “I” could somehow keep it under control. “I” was going to the edge of getting lost between all this laughing and crying, but “I” was finding a way out of the unknown. Those moments were either turning into laughter, or cries for a short period of time. The crying ended up with a feeling of pity for “myself”. But I did not want to end those moments with a feeling with which I was familiar. When I thought that I felt pity for myself, “I” tried to change that feeling into something else without judging or underestimating. Whenever a familiar feeling was coming, “I” tried to alter my way. “I” wanted to engage in a feeling that I did not know before. I wanted to discover the unknown territories inside me. I also wanted the body to cooperate with those feelings that I encountered for the first time. Sometimes “I” was trying to transform the feelings into something new, other times completely fresh feelings were actually born there. Sometimes an emotion was coming into light effortlessly. The body was loyal to those new feelings and was following them with all its sincerity. The self-birther feelings were more real than the ones that were transformed by performer’s effort. In other words, the feelings that came out there effortlessly were extremely real. What was more real was the fact that people were there as witnesses. What was more real than all of those was the reality of the camera, although I am doubtful of its ability to project the reality of the moment both in terms of feelings and actions.

Although the camera seemed to be more realistic than everything in there, it had a passive relationship with what happened at that moment. What happened was something invisible happening between me and the audience. This could only be felt! As I had no direct interaction with the camera throughout the performance, what happened there could not be felt entirely through the recorded images. The performance happened there, at that moment, appearing between me and the audience; the camera only recorded/saved it as a memory. It could never record what was there; it created the appearance/image of what happened. It was why performance's reality, the effort to make the performance real and the wish to watch/show it seemed tragic to me.

I cannot fully get a hold of what “I” did throughout the performance. That is, it is not possible to explain the experience in order. But I will try to explain/narrate via the differences in the body as I recall them. During the performance, there were two moments in which I came closer to the back area, where the audience was sitting. In the first one, I took a step back and the distance between me and the mirror grew. As I grew distant from the mirror, a fear spread through the body. But this was not a fear out of a sense of danger. I was startled. Its reflection in the mirror was perceived as a body in fear because I was screaming, but in fact not out of fear. I was screaming because I was being startled by “my reflection” and was also startling it. As I was startled, I was screaming, my hands and arms were scattered as if they wanted to expel the moment. Thinking that the reflection frightened the audience, I became more startled.

We could only fear what we knew; on the contrary, astonishment was something arising out of the unknown. What astonished me was not the very existence of the people behind me. Basically, my positioning between the mirror and

the audience startled me but it was also charming. I was anxious that the relationship with “my reflection” would break down. I was yelling as if I wanted to grab the reflection by the neck and I tried to force my corporeal being on and through it. I tried not to lose the bond between us. Sometimes as I yelled and tried to expel the anxiety through my hands,-the energy of the expulsion could mostly be experienced through my hands- I believed that the audience thought I was yelling because I was scared of them. I was actually not, I was only afraid of the very beings of the audience casting shadows between “me” and “the reflection”. I could not be close to them for a long time because I did not want to break away from the experience; “I” wanted to keep the connection with the audience and to contribute to that experience through my back. I felt that if I had gotten too close to them, we could all have lost our connection with the totality of the experience.

As I stepped closer to the mirror and looked/focused on the reflection of “my face”, i.e. when I felt “my face” as an exteriorization of “my entire body”, the relationship with “my body” became emotionally denser. Yet this could not be physically felt throughout the body. “My eyes” for instance, gave none of “my body parts” more importance than “my face”. Sometimes when I looked at “my face”, I was certain that “my body” was also there as a whole. This was like thinking there is a body for every living creature that has a head and facial expressions. At other times, even though I had definite proof that I was and seemed as a whole, I felt like I was broken into pieces. Actually in a way, this was like pretending that I did not have a body underneath “my head”, or not worrying about having one. It felt like it did not matter if I had a body -even if I was referring to a body in the text which I was trying to deliver.

When I edited the first performance, I had split the screen into two; on the left side was what happened before the performance, and on the right were sections from the performance. I had edited it as a split screen because I did not know where in this performance I could position “myself”. Was I the performer, the editor or the recorder? In the first performance, as I had entered and exited the space regularly, sometimes to check the camera, or been in constant dialogue with my friend who had been handling the camera, I had not stuck to the performance; I had broken off occasionally. While watching, I realized that I had also thought about being split into pieces in those moments. Which one was I and what was I doing? In fact, whatever I was doing, it was conscious. For instance, I had worn black for the first performance. I had thought that I could disappear, forget the moment. However, while watching, I noticed that I had cared about my appearance, always trying to straighten it out. So we can see that I was always on the watch when I disassembled “myself” into pieces, or when I wanted to tear “myself” apart into pieces.

During the performance on the stage, even though I did not spoil the coherence of the performance, (I did not enter and exit the moment) I still found “myself” being torn into pieces. The tights I wore on stage were skin colored and revealed the body parts. So I had separated the lower body, from the rest of the body, i.e. the torso, right from the beginning. Although it was striking, I did not glance at the tights or the lower body during the performance, nor did I worry about the appearance. In short, I did not give any thought to the details which I would normally consider as deformations in “my body”.

Normally, when I look at “my body” in the mirror, I think about how I look, from what angle I look better and how I can hide my deformations. However during the performance, I did not think about the angles of the camera and the appearance. I

had no intention of hiding anything or covering anything up. I could see and change all those on the reflection in the mirror. But when I looked in the mirror, all I could see were the scattered indications of my feelings surfacing in the reflection of “my face”. “I” could change/transform only through these, and this gave me an unlimited freedom. I could encounter “myself” and the audience without any earthly negotiators. It was all out there. At that moment, neither the feeling of the body, on which a sense of subjecthood was supposed to be constructed, nor the reflection in the mirror, which was supposed to make a representation of me, looked like me. It was as if I did not exist. None of them was like me, so I had no worries about introducing the body and its reflection bare-naked; I felt no shame.

I mentioned that I was trying to express the feelings in some parts of the performance. Maybe I need to further explain this. I believe that those efforts were not only made by me. I was having a hard time revealing the feelings that arose, it was like experiencing birth labor, I felt contractions and I was screaming. The audience was quiet, maybe a common result of the nature of performances, since they were aware that they were audiences. I thought that they performed secretly. This secrecy was creating a tension; both in “their bodies” and “mine”. That tension somehow needed to find a leak and reveal itself.

Even though this was an event built on “my body” and its reflection in the mirror, there was a reason for the audience to be there and in fact, we were all performing together. In other words, I needed them as much as I needed my corporeality in order to perform. Because the audience sat in a safe zone, in a bodily posture they desired, no sound or action was spreading from their bodies. However I felt their feelings being revealed through their half-veiled looks, even though I could not offer a look in return. I was listening to “their bodies” from my back as well as

listening to “my body”. I was listening to them just as I was listening to the space. In their secret performance, someone had to be sacrificed. This was probably why my screams and cries grew louder as I came closer to them. The urge to expel was also present in the audience, but since they could not express it properly, it grew stronger in “my body” and revealed itself through clearer actions or sounds. “I” was being sacrificed by “my own body” for all of us.

The thing that happened between me and the audience in the form of a scream was very intense. It could frighten the reflection in the mirror and it could destroy the “in-between face/interface” among us. This face had just been formed and was fragile. I was not sure that it could handle the intensity of the sound. I was worried it would melt away amidst the density of emotions. The fear of losing probably arose out of a longing for something that was never there but made its presence sensed. This moment was oddly nostalgic. This was a moment that I believed to exist, and one that I hoped to continue.

So how was this “in-between face/interface” formed? Sometimes I tried so hard and it came, at other times it just came and I tried to keep it away from the body. I did not want to keep it too far though; I wanted it to come again and again, without being broken or lost. I wanted to be close; then we were too much alike. I was scared. I wanted to keep it away; then I was scared that we would never be alike anymore. I held it. I walked towards it. I stuck with it. I wanted the other people there to stick with it, too. Words had no meanings anymore. Neither “I” was “the other”, nor “the other” was “I”. Because I was not using the body with my own will.

Let us imagine two wires. Two linear lines parallel to each other and going to infinity. Then let us imagine someone walking between those lines. When this person

walks straight between these wires without touching the edges, one would be in-between and would go on alone by itself without deviation. Deviations are not likely when the one is concentrated on its self. When the one is interested in something else, deviations are experienced. Then the one starts to touch at least one of the wires occasionally. The one that does not touch the edges touches no surface and is an exception to the friction (excluding the friction of the ground and the air.); the one is fluid. When no boundaries touch the one, the one feels fresh and calm. The mirror and the area where the audience was sitting were like those two wires for me.

Every look causes friction and therefore deviation when it touches another. Just like the way I felt when I got closer to audience. I felt more alive when I was closer to the edge of the audience. I had to experience deviations; I could not feel alive without touching the edges. These deviations were needed to experience bodily signs/traces/feelings.

Two people looking at each other keep on looking until they feel a hierarchy. One's look is averted when an inequality is felt. This is like hitting a wire. When one hits a wire, it feels the effects on its body. This is why, most of the time, the "in-between" is good. "Being in-between" gives us the freedom to forget the fact that we are "alive" for a second, and to focus on what is happening in between - that is why it is good. Throughout the last performance, there were two moments in which I felt "I" was in-between. The first moment was at the beginning, in which I was not sure if I had started the performance or not. The other one was at the end of the performance. I will refer to that further below.

However, what is interesting here is that, although the performance was happening between a start and an end, and I had to experience whatever I was to



experience between them, I did not feel “in-between” during the period that was “in-between”. There were little indications/impulses that made me feel “in-between” and made me say the words “in-between” as they appeared in the performance text. However the actual in-betweenness I felt was the little moment of beginning I experienced before the performance started and the little moment of not being able to end the performance. In other words, what made me explain the performance as an experience was not the period between the beginning and the end. That period was probably traumatic and left traces in/on the body rather than constituting a definite experience. The marks that I recall clearly happened during the beginning and the end. Whenever I think about the experience I think about the moments in the beginning and the end as the parts that left “me” “in-between”, which did not have a beginning and an end to themselves. I felt “in-between” the most when I tried to begin/be formed/create and to end/get out/be free. This means that the parts that comforted me and the audience by leaving “us” “in-between” were not during the performance - except for the several moments where the words “in-between” were uttered.

As I was about to begin and end, this “thing” that was formed in this moment of performance contained pieces of me. But it was not exactly me. It was “in-between”. We were grateful that it was not like me and comforted by the fact that it contained pieces of me. We -both me and the audience- were “in-between”, but since we were never fully in it, we gave “our bodies” enough space to relax.

I mentioned that the first time I found “my presence” strange was when I made eye contact with “myself” through the mirror. I want to further explain this state of mind. I was there not like as a being/appearance/presence, but rather an appearance of an absence. This appearance and instant state of formation prevented me from

revealing a certain representation. The representation was there naturally and occasionally, as it wished. It made “me” reach a perception of time and space that never let me block the representation. The state of appearance in the absence; without getting deeper in the river of consciousness, or without representing any state of formation directly; was paddling on the surface of consciousness, incorporating “me” into its flow and making the representation transparently visible.

The body surrendered to the space and time at that moment even though my brain refused to do so. As it refused, the screams grew more intense and the voices were naturally coming out of “my mouth” without losing anything from their intensity. As those sounds hit the mirror, the refusal of surrender kept hitting me back through the reflection. I actually wanted to surrender and lose the body completely in that fluid state. But then I could not say the words I had written. However, trying to reach the image in the mirror through the text I had written was a task that I was not to forget. The only way for me to speak the words would be through the expression of the secondary feeling created by the initial feeling that had been hit back to me from the image I saw in the mirror. This way or that way (sometimes crying, other times laughing or screaming), I was to express that feeling and make it hit back the other side again.

Here is a list of descriptions of the feelings and their derivatives as they appeared during the performances:

x: The feeling appearing inside “me” - The sensation which is about to hit the image in the mirror (the one in-between)

x': The feeling happening in the mirror that “I” am able to see - The feeling about to hit “me” back (the one in-between)

x": The emotional reaction that "I" am expressing - The feeling "I" am sending to the image in the mirror for the second time

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$x^{\infty}$ : uncertainty - again uncertainty = in-betweenness

The interaction between me and the reflection might roughly be encapsulated in a way that I explained with the abovementioned equations. Those equations were progressing in a very short time. In order to perceive the reflection and to be perceived by it, a very tiny moment/an interval had to pass between us. I recall it as a moment of suspension, for we could not talk and perceive at the same time. Moreover, "the in-between face/interface" that I have stated before was glimpsing and disappearing within those intervals.

In a way, it was not "me" appearing in the mirror, I did not feel it as "myself". On the other hand, I did not feel me as myself either. In order for the representation to happen we had to meet in an "in-between face/interface". "Me" and "my reflection" seemed to be similar but "we" could not sum up to an "I". "We" were strangers to each other. "We" were trying to make conversation, but this effort could not go beyond reciprocally derived reactions. To have a conversation, "we" both needed to feel the presence of an acquaintance; "an-other being" that "we" were both acquainted with. That "being" could only be "in-between", which was invisible, and thus facilitating our job. Every time "we" refrained from coming face to face, that interface made its presence felt by "me" and "my reflection". But once "we" met, the

interface disappeared. “We” were sacrificing the “in-between face” mutually, meeting on it and understanding each other.

This “in-between face” should have literally been “the body”. However, the body, at that moment, there, was invisible to me. Yet, when I am speaking of the “in-between face” I am not talking about a ghost, either. Straightforwardly, I am talking about an eviscerated body; “a body without organs”. That “body” was taking all the sins on it. Because, it was the only “entity” there on which all the suffering and/or all the pleasure could be attributed. Everything was actually taking place on it but the ownership of or the authority over those events was extremely anonymized. We, that is to say “my being” as well as “the others’ beings”, were “having” a derivative of what the body felt and getting affected from its consequences. The reflection on the other hand was receiving a derivative of what I felt and was getting affected by my experience. This could continue up to infinity. However, there was a “body without organs” in-between; if it were not for it, the thing that we experienced could hit each other reciprocally, reaching infinity. That is why representation became introverted in itself and we could not have a direct access to see it. The things that we were about to experience were sent from “me” to hit the body, then from the body to the mirror; and reciprocally, from the mirror to the body and from the body back to “me”; and were splitting the plane vertically, sustaining the moments of representation. As I walked backwards, I was having corporeally challenging associations with the audience; since in the scenario of derivation, they were adding possibilities of even more derivation through “their bodies” and “their reflections”.

The bodily presence of the audience created other possibilities of hitting, leading to a desperate situation. The body, -here should be considered as the performing body (or the body without organs), but I intentionally do not want to

recall it as mine while we were in the performance; it was used and sacrificed by everybody including me, represented as much as possible- was the only thing that released everybody's need to spill out. "Everybody" was there at that moment together with "their reflections" at the expense of losing the authority over the experience. "We" were altogether torturing the body but the body was taking revenge on us by dispossessing "us" from "our" experience. In this respect, the body was writhing in pains, screaming and mauling itself. I, in the backdrop, was taking pleasure, within the limits of libidinal economy. "I" had the impression that since the reflection of the body directly faced the audience, it could have been taking more pleasure than "I" did. It was as if it could have a chance to dominate the space in general; taking the audience's reflection to its side and seeing "me" directly, enjoying the event more than "me".

Now, I would like to mention the moment where I felt that "I" was "in-between" for the second time; i.e. the end of the performance. I will also tell how we concluded the performance. As I have mentioned before, this was not a performance that had a specific beginning and ending. At the ending, as it was in the beginning, I felt that I was experiencing some processes. Before it ended, I walked backwards-left and widened my point of view through the mirror. Then, the audience could see "me" from a different angle than before. In order to experience objectivity, I wanted to widen my point of view, a similar one to that of the camera but on the opposite side to it. Then, I looked at each audience individually. This was first the moment that I experienced eye contact with the audience. After some time, I went back to my original place. I tried to say the lines to "my reflection" again, and at that time, speaking out was quite easy. I thought that I was having an interaction with the reflection. However, I found speaking out or having an interaction through words to

be absurd. The very intense moments were over, and there was no need to talk anymore. As I faced the reflection again, I felt that we could not have an interaction as we had before. Then I released all I felt and cried like a kid. And then I released from inside to outside what I had kept until that time, in a lump.

Then, I turned my back to the reflection, leaned against the mirror and came face to face with the audience. I thought that the performance had finished, but suddenly, I started to feel “my body” to be denser. I felt the gravity worked less on “my body”; it was like walking on the moon. For the last time, I fell in laughter. I saw Zeynep Günsür in the audience, and laughed at her, and she smiled at me in return. And then, I spread this moment to each of the members of the audience. Almost everybody was smiling. After a moment of silence, as if we had a non-verbal/veiled conspiracy, we began to cool down the moment and started to end up together. As if we had never shared those moments, as if I had never cried and screamed at all. I was quite sure that everything had vanished into darkness. We shared a big secret, but we all had a share in it, that is why “I” was not responsible for anything; and nobody was responsible of anything either. The things had emerged between me and the audience reciprocally, in that manner, nobody could judge any of us and nobody could make anybody ashamed. That is why I felt relaxed. But still, there was an imperceptible silence suspended in the space. I wanted to say something normal to convince myself and the audience that the performance had finished. Silence was quite weird. I wanted to say something like “Hello!” as if we had encountered each other just at that moment. I could not think of any reasonable word to say. All I wanted to say that it was finished, but I was not sure whether it had finished or not. That is why I wanted to say “Hello!”; I could not do it for the first time but I succeeded at the second attempt. At that moment, I almost had no sense of

actual gravity. I wanted to talk. Çetin Sarıkartal asked me how I felt. “I” said “Spacious...Bright...Fresh...” Sarıkartal replied “You do not seem so, though...”. How did I seem to be? Sarıkartal said that I seemed to be exhausted and wretched. But I insisted that I was fine. Sarıkartal asked “Where in your body do you feel that fineness?” and “I” said “Here...and here...” as I showed my ears and jaw. Because my ears were burning and fineness was melting and diffusing throughout my jaw. In this case, something beyond my feeling had emerged; what “I” felt and what the audience saw were different.

## **Conclusion**

The major difference between the second –unrecorded- performance and the third performance in terms of experience was that there was no interference by Çetin Sarıkartal in the third one. Since I had been working with Sarıkartal in acting classes for three years I was so used to open myself up to the situation as a performer and could easily express what I felt at that moment under his guidance. However that time in the last performance, I had listened to the body, the impulses and tried to compose and convey what had been created; I also had a chance to watch its transformations and to follow the changes it went through by my own will. I had listened to the bodily impulses as much as I listened to the audience on the back, and I had expressed the reactions of what I felt through the body. I did not know what would happen at that moment in spite of the fact that there had not been any rehearsals. I did not know how to speak out, how to articulate the lines. I did not need to know anything except the physical setup and the conditions of the performance. My one and only intention was to witness the moments in the mirror and react to them naturally with the body and voice, and use the lines whenever I needed to.

I watched the reflected image and listened to its effects on me. The thing that emerged opposite to me was different than what I felt. I was seeing the reflection, listening to the body, therefore I could see to what extent what I felt was reflected in



the mirror. I was quite sure that what I felt in the body that “I” had nested in and what I saw in the mirror were not identical.

Late in the last performance, when I walked backwards-left and saw the audience, I introduced the audience to the performance. Before I made eye contact with the audience, I was listening to/trying to feel them from the back. However, as I widened my point of view, I listened to them by seeing them in the mirror. At the very beginning, I intended to relate something to the reflection by words, to find out how it would react. The need to change my point of view was unintentional and sudden. Again, I realized that what I felt regarding the audience and what I saw in the mirror were also different.

When I did not have any eye contact with the audience, I considered them as a threat; however, as soon as I came eye to eye with them, I realized that I became a threat for them in return. I also saw that I had a bigger impact on them than I thought. I was voluntarily occupying that new point of view and I could escape from their looks whenever I wanted to. However, I felt unprotected in the place I used during the performance and I was reacting automatically whenever I felt a threat.

After the performance, some of the audience stated their experiences; they could not identify with me, felt wretched, and felt that we were reciprocally torturing each other. Some other said that they needed a shelter by means of words; when I opened my arms to both sides and said “in-between” they emphasized that they found relief, because they thought that they were “in-between” at the same moment.

For some other it was an annoying experience as they remarked. Even though “I” was feeling spacious, their experiences were also important for my research. They looked at “themselves” and “others” in the mirror and saw everybody was looking at “themselves” and “me”. They felt discomfort because of the camera. They

readjusted their sitting postures, changed positions to see/to be or not to be seen and to have an accurate point of view through the mirror. They have decided in which point of view I would encounter and interact with them. There were some audience members that thought that I had made an eye contact with them while I was walking backwards and trying to determine “my borders”. However, I had never looked at them except when I looked directly at the audience as I walked backwards-left. Before that, I had kept “my eyes” just on “my reflection”.

Some other audience members found “my presence” to be disturbing, and the same people also thought that I was disturbed by “their presence” in return. In this case, they stated that they felt bad about “their own beings” due to what had been done. Some of the audience members felt that “they” were “in-between” because of the set-up. They thought that they were pretty away from being the audience; they thought as if they were also performing on the stage.

Some of the audience members said that we had a mutual agreement from the beginning and hence they had been aware of what they were getting themselves into. They said that they followed and witnessed my transformations more than they experienced their own. Some others accepted the mutual agreement, but, sometimes they could not refrain from asking “what are we doing at this moment?”, even if they knew it was a research. That is why they felt alienated from time to time. Even to start and end the performance was in “my own will”, they said that I did not manipulate them thanks to my intimate experience.

I experienced that it is possible to go beyond the “I” and “the reflection in the mirror”, where nothing is visible. Do we not really see “ourselves”? Either from where we stand or in the mirror... Where is that something/somewhere? Even if I looked at the image in the mirror as a representation of myself or as a mere

reflection, I was not able to reach at a total image of an “I”. As I saw the audience through the mirror, the interaction with “my reflection” had changed. Beyond all said and done, the audience and I had visited that “somewhere”. The image/presence and the words no longer had a meaning.

The key concept of my research, “*abjection*”, which I have begun with, was revealed within the process. I do not need to elaborate on the concept of abjection, within Kristeva’s discourse anymore; now the concept of abjection recalls new meanings in “my body” as far as I have experienced.

I became convinced that mentioning the word “*abject*” in the poem – “I” am in-between object and subject, thus a flesh which is abject – had become redundant. That is why I did not prefer to use it in the last performance. The words “I”, “other” and “body” had no more meaning as soon as they were uttered because they could be experienced beyond what was spoken. It was normal for both me and the audience not to identify with the performing body or with its reflection.

I might have called the body “*abject*” because I could not name it anything else before. However, I was not on the safe side labeling the body as “*abject*”. Experiencing in-betweenness and the state of liminality had more importance than the name itself; be it called “*abject*” or not. This status - abjection - emerged from one moment to another, as I felt in-betweenness. Especially, when “I” experienced liminal instances, it was represented throughout the body. In that case, instead of the “*concept of abjection*”, we might want to suggest “*a moment of abjection*” and “*a space of abjection*”.

Performance was held within the boundaries of the space that I used, and from one moment to another the boundaries of the space became unclear. Some other moments, both I and the audience members experienced that our own boundaries

were blurred. “A state of being” had erupted from those blurred borders. That state of being was not familiar to me. In that case, I could not place “myself” “inside” or “outside” of something/somewhere. Did I pull the audience into the performance or did I push them out? Or did I place them “inside” or “outside”? I can confidently say that the answers to those questions were changing from moment to moment. As time went by “I” found “myself” in a journey where the perception of space was always transforming. All of the transformations I experienced reached the audience through the mirror. The moments that we experienced might have aroused a sense of abjection; just at that moment. That sense in that case was moment specific. Just like in the definition of abject, everything was ambiguous; had two sides –both enabling and hindering representation- and differed in time and space.

Sometimes, during the performance, I was like a kid. On the other hand, the tights that I wore during performance were skin colored; and the body was almost nude. Although it was not emphasized, a woman’s body was standing there. Yet, there was a big gap between a woman’s body as it was standing there and a woman’s body that was lived by “me”. There was also another big gap between using the word “*abject*” and performing it as if it was not “*abject*”. Thus, in the performance I did not speak out the last sentence –thus a flesh which is abject-, I felt that I was living the abject, and I was contented with its appearance in the performance. At last, I tried to access the body through a path that I had not drawn or imagined before, but could then be labeled as “*abject*”. What could this body give back to me in fact; having witnessed the moments when “I” was “in-between”? The body witnessed the moments from which I had tried to liberate “myself”. Everything that I could not bear spilled out directly from the body, be it called “*abject*” or whatever it was.

*“A rabbit keeper,  
Should try to learn how to cope with  
serenity;  
which she can neither provide nor terminate  
And with  
mobility  
which she can neither prevent nor stimulate  
-with a kind of desperateness announcing that she could never accomplish...- “  
Oruç Aruoba (1995: 25)<sup>8</sup>*

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<sup>8</sup> “Tavşan besleyen,  
ne engel olabildiği ne de uyarabildiği  
bir devinimlilik; ne sağlayabildiği ne de sona erdirebildiği  
bir dinginlikle baş etmeğe çalışmayı da öğrenmelidir  
- bunu hiçbirzaman beceremeyeceğini kendisine bildiren bir tür çaresizlikle...” (Trans. Tuğçe Aydın)

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