

TRANS-MEDIA: THE BIOCYBERNETIC REVOLUTION IN THEORY AND ART

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Ozum Hatipoglu

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# TRANS-MEDIA: THE BIOCYBERNETIC REVOLUTION IN THEORY AND ART

Ozum Hatipoglu, Ph. D.

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We no longer exist in the realm of mechanical reproducibility; we now inhabit one in which biology and information theories unexpectedly combine to produce a new, simulacral form of technological reproduction in which bodies and organisms become affective codes, scripted texts, and discursive and non-discursive modes of communication flowing among various media networks and systems. This bioinformatic revolution signifies not only the conditions of new forms of biopolitics and its various regulatory and oppressive mechanisms determining, controlling, and constructing the actual life, the social reality or lived social relations that are shared across and between various networks and systems, but it also provides us with theoretical and practical tools that enable transgressive and subversive tactics, strategies, and approaches that transform the aesthetic stakes of everyday life by suggesting new ways of thinking about bodies, subjectivities, identities, and sexualities.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

After graduating from the Koç University Department of Psychology, Ozum Hatipoglu completed Master's studies at the Department of Visual Arts and Visual Communication Design at Sabancı University, following which she started her PhD studies at the Cornell University Department of Performing and Media Arts. The subjects of her doctoral thesis and fields of interest are gender studies, new media technologies and aesthetics, and psychoanalysis.

In her PhD thesis titled *Trans-Media: The Biocybernetic Revolution in Theory and Art*, she studies how new media technologies constitute and foster Lacanian concepts such as the unconscious and desire through the concepts of network and system. In her dissertation, she is primarily concerned with the contemporary conception of systems and networks: systems and networks as complex, dynamic, contingent, open, vital, heterogeneous, process-driven, non-linear, multiple and interactive entities. She foregrounds her definition of media in the notions of medium and mediation by discussing mediums as systems and networks that link heterogeneous elements such as organs, bodies, texts, objects, artifacts and elements that stretch across and that bind diverse spaces and times. She considers these spatial and temporal networks as intercorporeal networks of desire. By studying these notions in the context of sex and gender, she opens to discussion such conceptual subjects as gendered space and spatial and temporal desires and orientations in the context of a series of works of contemporary art from Turkey and around the world.

She found the opportunity to share the subjects of her dissertation with undergraduate students in a course titled "Technologies of Desire" during the Fall 2016

semester at Cornell University, which she launched with an award and scholarship from the Feminist, Gender & Sexuality Studies Program. She taught 6 unassisted courses at Cornell on the subjects of new media art and technologies, performance, and psychoanalysis. In addition to these courses, she worked as a teaching assistant for 11 courses on visual language, film and performance at the Sabancı University MA Program and at the Department of Performing and Media Arts at Cornell University.

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## **Introduction: Trans-methodologies**

In the inaugural issue of TSQ:Transgender Studies Quarterly, Stryker, Currah, and Moore acknowledge the diverse meanings and definitions that is attributed to the notion of trans. The multifarious meanings of the term occupy a broad range of keywords and concepts including abjection, monster, archive, asterisk, sex, sexuality, gender, identity, performativity, nationality, subaltern, diaspora, and ethnicity. The term relates to diverse fields such as LGBTQ and feminist studies and psychoanalysis in addition to postcolonial, cultural, and film studies (Stryker, et al, 2017, 11).

What prompts Stryker, Currah, and Moore to enlarge the definition of trans with the hyphen “trans-” is the frequent usage of the term in relation to sex and gender. Trans is a term that is frequently only attached to meanings associated with gender identity and sexuality. Mapping the conceptual topography of the term, trans-studies not only includes the rapport between the terms trans, sexuality, and gender but also opens up the field to trans -gender, -national, -racial, -generational, -genic, and -species (11).

The notion of trans- is itself a hybrid concept. The hybridity of the notion of trans- or transing brings forth new fields of inquiry. Transgender and transvestite are only a part---albeit a very important part--of trans-studies. The concept of trans- is thus cast here in relation to trans-disciplinary studies both in terms of content and of a methodological tool of analysis. The diversity of the term trans, and its interdisciplinary nature, necessitates and fosters various disciplines and fields to engage with the subject and to bring different approaches together, catalyzing them to generate new forms of thinking. Therefore, trans-studies is a meta-theory.

In terms of methodology, Langer refers to the materialist/discursive binary, alluding to Bhabha’s purely theoretical means of approaching culture and politics as it passes over both material culture and its cultural context and specificities (Langer 2011, 5). In his “commitment to theory,” Bhabha, however, highlights the need for the



convergence of theoretical/conceptual and material/cultural analyses. He writes:

Must we always polarize in order to polemicize? Are we trapped in a politics of struggle where the representations of social antagonisms and historical contradictions can take no other form than a binarism of theory vs politics? Can the aim of freedom of knowledge be the simple inversion of the relation of oppressor and oppressed, centre and periphery, negative image and positive image?" (Bhabha, 2014, 28)

This methodological question of how not to think in binaries refers to many approaches, perspectives, and ways of thinking and writing that include the prefix 'post,' such as postmodernity, poststructuralism, and post-media.

This is because the concern with binary thinking consists primarily in the divide between context and content. And, the division between the conceptual/discursive (theoretical) approach on the one hand and the material/cultural (more of a practical handling of the cultural material) on the other finds its expression in the added prefix "post". Despite the obscurity and interchangeability of these terms that include the prefix "post" and that occupy a broad range of meanings and definitions, "post" is inextricably tied to the notions of temporality and posterity. Moreover, it is frequently acknowledged that "post" is not only linked to the idea of posteriority in terms of temporality but it also refers to space.

It is thus crucial, as Bhabha claims, to "locate the question of culture in the realm of the beyond":

The 'beyond' is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past ... we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. (1-2)

The beyond is caught here in-between the space and time of "here and there, ... forth/da, hither and thither, back and forth" (2). This continuous movement of going beyond the boundaries and limits and turning back or backwards (closing in on itself) is bound to a medium's self-referentiality.

As such, it is not farfetched to suggest that the prefix "post" contains within it a

medium's posteriority with respect to itself. Exploring this then entails exploration of a medium's temporality and spatiality, particularly in terms of identifying medium as a hinge between difference and identity, past and future, and inside and outside. The idea of the act of the mediation of a medium with itself or medium's self-referentiality overcomes the binary of conceptual versus material analysis through its subversion of the regimes of identification and through the identificatory thinking's preoccupation with fixed representations, schemas, categorizations, and classifications when grappling with cultural materials.

At first glance, intersectional methodology does this. Intersectional methodology takes gender, race, class, ethnicity, nationality as intersecting categories and promotes the analyses of these categories as they intersect with each other. Exploring these categories as they intersect entails exploring the ways in which these categories subject individuals to mechanisms of power, oppression, repression, subordination, and violence (Kimberle 1241-1299). However, intersectional methodology operates within the limits of regimes of identification and representation. Intersectionality as a methodology or the intersectional and simultaneous analysis of the multiple categories of sex, gender, race, class, ethnicity, and nationality foregrounds the idea of difference, as the term difference denotes here the difference between these various categories of gender, race, class etc., in identity politics' conception of difference. Despite that this definition of the intersectionist method gives the impression that what it counts is the difference of difference, what is really at stake here is the difference between these pre-given and pre-determined categories of difference, and thus, this approach consists primarily in the identificatory regimes of difference and representation.

To put it otherwise, the identificatory regimes or regimes of identification consist in the analyses of race, gender, class, ethnicity, nationality as fixed, stable, pre-given, original, pure, and homogeneous categories and representations. Bhabha writes:

The move away from the singularities of 'class' or 'gender' as primary conceptual and organizational categories, has resulted in an awareness of the subject positions – of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation – that inhabit any claim to identity in the modern world. What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes ... These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating of selfhood ... that initiate new signs of identity. It is in the emergence of the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domain of difference... How are subjects formed 'in-between,' or in excess of, the 'sum of the 'parts' of difference (usually intoned as race/class/gender, etc.) (2)

What is being emphasized by Bhabha is the liminal space that contextually and content-wise overcomes binaries that are pre-given, original, fixed such as stable versus processual, pressencing, emerging, temporary, here versus there, past versus future, inside versus outside, identity versus subjectivity, and representation versus difference. What will undo these binaries is the analysis of the in-between and the interstices which enable something to be on the border both in terms of spatiality and temporality. New affects, subjectivities, desires, sensations, and perceptions only emerge, come to the fore, or presence at the border. It is crucial to explore the presently emerging affects, desires, sensations, and perceptions, and the way in which these emerging presences produce spatial and temporal networks, affiliations, and affections. Only then we will engage not with representations of differences, but with difference itself, or rather the difference of difference. These emerging networks of difference consist of complex webs of interactions and relations. These complex networks perform their spatial and temporal states of being.

The complex webs of interactions among the disparate parts and elements of networks and systems are co-constructed by conceptual webs (human) and material webs (non-human). I will suggest that networks and systems are agentic. In order to self-sustain, these networks and systems constantly perform the relationalities that they embody. This is why Latour, one of the founders of actor-network methodology, states that "the object of a performative definition vanishes when it is no longer performed"

(37). My interest in new media art, to be explored in this dissertation, is related to the performance of these networks and systems. New media technologies address a shift from single and discrete objects to networks and systems. These networks and systems perform the relationalities that they embody and construct among things.

I situate the notion of performativity in performing networks and systems, which are co-constructed by conceptual and material webs that constantly transform into one another and transform each other such that they cannot be distinguished from one another. I link performativity to technological systems neither at the level of signification nor in terms of materiality but rather at the level of space and time. I address the notion of performance from a spatial and temporal perspective rather than in terms of signification and materiality. By doing so, I relate performativity to technology via the agency of systems. Human and non-human agencies are co-producers within these horizontal, participatory, and process-driven systems. What is at stake here, I argue, is the a priori materialization of conceptual relations and a priori formalization of material relations. Therefore, when we refer to conceptual relations, we are already referring to material relations, and similarly, when we refer to material relations, we are already referring to conceptual relations. As Hayles, whose approach resonates with the material-semiotic theory, succinctly puts:

Conceptual fields evolve similarly to material culture, in part because concept and artifact engage each other in continuous feedback loops. An artifact materially expresses the concept it embodies, but the process of its construction is far from passive. A glitch has to be fixed, a material exhibits unexpected properties, an emergent behavior surfaces – any of these challenges can give rise to a new concept, which results in another generation of artifact. (15)

While material relations express the conceptual relations that they embody, conceptual relations express the material relations that they embody. However, because there is not any one-to-one correspondence between the conceptual and material webs of relations, this process is recursive. It repeats itself infinitely. That is, the conceptual

webs map the material relations. These material relations necessitate the generation of new conceptual webs, which, once again, reconfigure the webs of materiality. The interaction between the two is always being reconfigured. There is always dislinkage and disjunction between conceptual and material relations. There is dislinkage because the spatio-temporal relations that conceptual relations construct are disjointed from the spatio-temporal relations that material relations construct. Therefore, interaction between the conceptual and material relations is essentially spatio-temporal. Rather than trying to rejoin this disjunction between the conceptual and material relations via representation and identification, a performative approach affirms the potentiality of the spatio-temporal gaps to link things together.

I will use the notion of trans- as it relates to the terms boundary, border, border-crossing, self-referentiality, medium, environment, milieu, marking out, crossing over, passing by, territorializing and deterritorializing. The way I approach to trans-studies is first and foremost concerned with the idea of trans-ing. Trans-methodology encompasses emerging spatial and temporal alignments, affiliations, affects, perceptions, alliances in varied and varying trans-worlds.

Returning to the theoretical/conceptual and material/cultural divide, we might benefit from Deleuze who writes:

As long as we stick to things and words we can believe that we are speaking of what we see, that we see what we are speaking of, and that the two are linked: in this way we remain on the level of an empirical exercise. But as soon as we open up words and things, as soon as we discover statements and visibilities, words and sight are raised to a higher exercise that is a priori, so that each reaches its own unique limit ... And yet the unique limit that separates each one is also the common limit. (65)

The disjunction between conceptual and material relations paves the way to emerging spatial and temporal affects and affiliations. As conceptual relations do not represent material relations but transform the relationalities constructed between material things, material relations also do not represent conceptual ones. Material relations transform

conceptual relations as they are constructed between concepts. This disjunction between the conceptual and material relations opens up new spaces and times. It is through these newly formed spaces and times that new relationalities between things emerge. The theoretical and discursive divide refers here to the disjunction between the conceptual and material realms. What is worth mentioning here is also that the prefix “per” in the term performance means “across, by means of, agency, through.” One might argue that system’s per-formance pertains to its trans-formation.

Therefore, the opening up of the relationship between conceptual relations and material relations poses fundamental questions about the role of performativity in trans-methodological approach, particularly in relation to space and time. This relationship has several implications. First, at the common limit of concept and matter, the relationship between the two expresses itself in terms of space and time. Then performativity refers here to the dynamic and active networks of the spatio-temporal relationships between the conceptual and material relations. By using a performative approach, I map out a trans-topology of acts of transing.

The diversity of systems and networks thinking, and its interdisciplinary nature, necessitates and fosters various disciplines and fields to engage with the subject and bring different methodological strategies together, generating new forms of thinking. However, I am primarily concerned here with the contemporary conception of systems and networks wherein systems are complex, dynamic, contingent, open, vital, heterogeneous, process-driven, non-linear, multiple, and interactive entities. This more recent approach that has replaced the static, mechanic, deterministic, causal, hierarchical, and stable models can be traced back to early twentieth century. It includes contributions from many diverse research areas. However, whether the systems are biological, ecological, linguistic, social, psychic, aesthetic, literary or technological, there is a general agreement among the variety of disciplines about how systems operate. Broadly speaking, systems interact and communicate with their

environments by constantly exchanging information and transforming each other's states. The complex webs of interactions among disparate and heterogeneous elements make the structure of communication among the systems dynamic, contingent, open, asynchronous, decentralized, chaotic, non-linear, distributed, interactive, and dissociative.

We no longer exist in the realm of mechanical reproducibility; we now inhabit one in which biology and information theories unexpectedly combine to produce a new, simulacral form of technological reproduction in which bodies and organisms become affective codes, scripted texts, and discursive and non-discursive modes of communication flowing among various media networks and systems. This bioinformatic revolution signifies not only the conditions of new forms of biopolitics and its various regulatory and oppressive mechanisms determining, controlling, and constructing the actual life, the social reality or lived social relations that are shared across and between various networks and systems, but it also provides us with theoretical and practical tools that enable transgressive and subversive tactics, strategies, and approaches that transform the aesthetic stakes of everyday life by suggesting new ways of thinking about bodies, subjectivities, identities, and sexualities.

My interest in new media art, to be explored in this dissertation, is related to the performance of these networks and systems. What remains to be seen is howHowever, how the notions of systems and networks come together with media technologies? As Castells argues, systems and networks are not new forms of organization. Rather, they are as old as the Earth--and the same can be argued for information. What then is "new" in new media technologies that are deeply interwoven into the Information Age? Is there a crucial difference between print and electronic media and the new digital media technologies?

This question of the relationship of old media to new media or whether new media is new at all is taken up by Bolter and Grusin through their notion of

remediation. Remediation refers to our media-saturated culture that achieves its immediacy through hypermediacy: “Our culture wants to multiply its media and to erase all traces of mediation: ideally, it wants to erase its media in the very act of multiplying them” (5). While the proliferation and ubiquity of new media threatens the legitimacy of old media, old media reemerges by incorporating itself into the forms of new media. The constant resurgence of old media in digital media complicates the question of the newness of new media whose hypermediacy is contingent upon its efforts to eliminate any trace of mediation in order to present its mediatedness as immediacy. New media invokes this immediacy by opening itself up to the intrusion of old media through whose resurgence it upgrades itself by transforming the old forms of media into new forms. If new media technologies enable the re-contextualization of old media by transforming them into new forms of media, then the notion of ‘meta-media’ refers here to the fact that it is no longer possible to talk about the medium-specificity of any media because new media is constituted by the integration or juncture of many different mediums. While old media was about the singularity of a medium as in traditional media such as painting, photography, or television, the defining characteristic of new media is its multiplicity. New media is about multi-media and mixed media. In that sense, Manovich’s description of new media provides us with tools to translate old media into new forms, thereby corresponding to Bolter and Grusin’s emphasis on media’s infinite multiplication of itself by referring to itself or translating its older forms (itself) into newer forms. One might then argue that with new media technologies, the act of mediation of media with itself or media’s self-reflexivity has become its newly found immediacy.

The notion of media includes more abstract and philosophical descriptions anchored in Heideggerian interpretations of technology as the primordial act of enframing. Because the technologies of new media accompanying the paradigm shift from the Industrial to the Information Age stress a continuity between the biological



and the technological, proposing the networked environments as living, evolving, self-generating, and autonomously transforming systems, I will ground my approach to media in the question of what medium is and from there expand towards understanding new media technologies. The technological paradigm shift from mechanical artifacts to systems and networks with the Information Age relates the notion of medium back to Heidegger's primal act of the enframing of the natural by revealing that the biological is already technological in itself. McLuhan's definition of the medium as the extension of nervous system, consciousness, or man, Clark's idea of extended or distributed mind through which he describes human being as a "natural-born cyborg" that is constantly upgraded by technical artifacts as well as cybernetics' blending of the human and the machine, or Haraway's feminist reading of the cyborg as the coupling of biological and technological can all be traced back to Heidegger's approach to enframing, which, he reminds us, is "neither only a human activity nor a mere means within such activity. The merely instrumental, merely anthropological definition of technology is therefore in principle untenable" (10).

Approaching new technologies as complex systems plays a key role in understanding the relationship between performative environments and technological systems. Given that new technologies enabled the production as well as analysis of complex networks of relations, foregrounding the role of technology in the complexity of systems is crucial. The increased complexity of systems necessitates the need for a new conception of technology. Marx borrows and broadens Ellul's description of technology as a complex system to explain the social, economic, and political factors underlying the paradigm shift from single and discrete mechanical artifacts to technological systems, which cannot be limited to isolated technical objects:

Between 1870 and 1920 such large complex systems became a dominant element... In the era when electrical and chemical power was being introduced and these huge systems were replacing discrete artifacts, simple tools or devices as the characteristic material form of the

'mechanic arts,' that term also was being replaced by a new conception: technology. (16)

The term technology in today's usage of the word, Marx argues, didn't exist until the nineteenth century. Technology, newly defined as a complex network of interconnected systems rather than single mechanical artifacts, confronted the ways we understood the term materiality. According to Marx, when Carlyle was envisioning the new age as "The Age of Machinery," he was not referring to actual physical machines: "He had in mind a radically new kind of ensemble typified in, but by no means restricted to, actual mechanical artifacts" (15). This shift from single, discrete, and isolated mechanical artifacts to technological systems laid the foundations for a new kind of aesthetics, that is, the aesthetics of information processing and generating systems.

New media art emerged with the emergence of computers in the art scene of the 1970s. The new aesthetic possibilities opened by digital technologies also provide new media artists with theoretical and practical tools that enable transgressive and subversive tactics, strategies, approaches, and the possibilities of new modes of existence. These new modes are constructed with the conceptual and artistic understandings of recombinant, mutant, hybrid, and monstrous bodies, sexualities, subjectivities, and identities. In this regard, the notion of trans pinpoints the subversive potentials of sexuality via the convergence of biology and technology, moderating and modulating information flow as well as the distribution, circulation, and exchange of images. This shift from single, discrete, and isolated mechanical artifacts to technological systems laid the foundations for a new kind of aesthetics, the aesthetics of information processing and generating systems. Burnham defines this new kind of aesthetics as "Systems Aesthetics." Burnham's approach emphasizes the aesthetics of systems rather than the formal qualities of single art objects in that it does not restrict the aesthetic implications of technology to the formal analysis of discrete or isolated mechanical artifacts. Burnham's system aesthetics is "a paradigm shift from object to

system” (32). The study of the art object as a system or an environment rather than as a single object is crucial to address the way in which system itself might be conceived of as an aesthetic medium. New media art and technologies frames how I understand trans in this dissertation.

My first chapter defines and analyzes new media technologies in terms of the biotechnological reproduction of bodily sites and zones as signifying images that consist in discursive networks of the symbolic apparatus of desire. By reading Lacan through cybernetics, I argue that the geographical/territorial alignment of signifying networks of desire with bodily sites, parts, or zones opens up a new horizon in analyzing the biotechnological reproducibility of bodily images as simulacra and bodies as discursive networks and mediums. Through readings of new media artworks such as Brad Todd’s *Hearing Loss*, *The Krovers’* and Steve Gibson’s *The BioTech Eye*, and Norie Neumark and Maria Miranda’s *Machine Organs*, I argue that this simulacral form of reproduction deterritorializes bodily “images’ indexical relation to their referent.” I analyze bodies as media of communication. The body becomes a technical medium or a sense-apparatus that transmits information. This conception necessitates addressing the bodily stimulation within the context of the technological reproduction of the visual, auditory, and tactile organs as sense-apparatuses. This leads to the fragmentation of the whole bodily sensorium and reconfigures partial drives in terms of affective signals. The interface linking an organism to its environment goes through its inscription to the Other, the symbolic order. As I will argue in this dissertation, this is not a symbiotic or mimetic relation between the organisms and their environment. Digital alterity reveals a more radical alterity than the mimetic and projective identification between organisms.

New media art, information and communication technologies, put forward a new and different conceptualization of the body. Bodies are conceived of as databanks of psychic scansions. The process of cutting, copy-pasting, layering, and superimposing

different body parts chosen from a large variety of scanned bodily images disintegrates the body and establishes it as a complex montage and collage of technologically coded images that are distributed and exchanged across and between various networks. These digitally altered bodies reconsider sexuality and desire in light of digital circuitry. Digital signals operate similarly as the modulators of sexual desires, remotely activating and controlling the bodily signs. Through Lacan, as I analyze in Chapter Two the biotechnological circuitry of the body as the territorial distribution of bodily zones in which organs are mapped onto the signifying networks of the symbolic apparatus as “organ-instruments” of bodily drives. Digital signals operate similarly as the modulators of sexual desires, remotely activating and controlling the bodily signs. Sexuality becomes reformulated here as the digital codification of information; it concerns the flow of data and streams of bodily information. Contemporary biotechnological apparatuses articulate the conditions of new body-politics and new modes of subjectification.

The bioinformatic processing of bodies shifts the emphasis away from the idea of biological reproduction to the technical and technological reproducibility of the bodily regimes of signification. The idea of biological reproduction replaced with the techno-sexual reproducibility of differential signs foregrounds sexuality and desire in the technological generation of signs. Sexual reproduction understood in terms of technological reproducibility and differentiation of signs points towards a post-biological articulation of sexuality and desire, reformulating sexual signification in relation to structural interbreeding, monstrosity, montage, and the hybridization of bodily significations. The manifestation of bodies’ physiological and psychophysical responses at the level of the sexual reproducibility of images demonstrates that the sexual differentiation of signs is transmitted and distributed through the bodily networks of informational-linguistic systems. The technological inscription of bodies in the signifying networks of psychic systems replaces the idea of natural sexual

reproduction with the technological reproduction of digital images as sexual signs, which, in turn, leads to the necessity of rethinking the circulation, economy, and regulation of desire within the context of post-biological bodies.

The notion of post-biological body signifies not only the conditions of a new biopolitics but also the actual life, the social reality, or the lived social relations that are shared across and between various networks and systems, simultaneously yielding the exhaustion resulting from the production of informational excess and the endurance that comes from its replication and consumption. My approach to how biotechnological apparatuses, new forms of biopolitics, and their various regulatory mechanisms determine, construct, and control desire institutes new ways of thinking about sexuality.

Networks of desire consist of linkages that transform the aesthetic stakes of life by suggesting new forms of existence enacted by post-biological bodies and by providing an entryway into exploring sexuality and desire as hybrid, fluid, and constantly mutating into alien beings. Parisi challenges the idea of natural and biological sexual reproduction by examining the bioinformatic modulations of sex, desire, and reproduction in terms of the intensive modifications of sexual flows and powers, the acceleration, proliferation, and variations of cellular mixtures, as well as the artificial hybridization and recombination of species, sexes, and bodies. She argues that the biodigital age facilitates the freeing of sexuality from the necessity of reproduction that is coupled with procreation, replacing the biological conception of sexual reproduction with affective storage, production, and transmission of information. She describes sex and sexuality as an event, a molecular, unicellular, and organismic communication and an affective mode of information exchange and transmission. The biodigital modulations of sex and desire entail the reformulation of sexual reproduction within the idea of a technological regime of signs, shifting the emphasis away from the reproductive capacities of the biological body to the techno-sexual generation of affective information and erotic recombination of mutant species,

bodies, identities, and sexes.

The bioinformatic and linguistic processing of bodies shifts the emphasis away from the idea of biological reproduction to the technical and technological reproducibility of the bodily regimes of significations. The idea of biological reproduction replaced with the technological reproducibility of differential signifiers foregrounds sexuality and desire in the sexual reproducibility of bodily images as digital signs. The technological reproducibility of images refers here to the informational-linguistic register of psychic processes, the process of construing the bio-grammar of scanned images. Murray links this procedure of digital scanning to the process symbolic coding. Psychic scansion, Murray argues, replaces the Freudian mystic writing pad with the apparatus of digital scanner, through which “the procedures of scansion could be thought as functioning to rewrite subjectivity as a mere component of the deterritorialized residue of code and its repetition” (221). The paradigm shift in the technologies of writing establishes “new registrations of code and interactivity [that] is paradigmatic of the digital spectacle” (225). The manifestation of bodies’ physiological and psychophysical responses at the level of the technological reproducibility of images demonstrates that sexual differentiation is related to the transmission and distribution of signifiers via the bodily networks of informational-linguistic systems. Sexual reproduction understood in terms of the technological reproducibility and differentiation of signifiers points towards a post-biological articulation of sexuality and desire, reformulating sexual signification in conjunction with the structural affinity, interbreeding, and hybridization of the bodily regimes of significations. The psychic systems’ bioinformatic codification of the bodily network of signifiers opens a radically new perspective in terms of the structural and mimetic affinities and contiguities between the biological/territorial signification of bodily geographies and their linguistic-informational codifications.

In my second chapter, I foreground my definition of new media in the notions

of medium and mediation by discussing mediums as systems and networks that link heterogeneous elements such as organs, bodies, texts, objects, and artifacts and that stretch across and bind diverse spaces. I define these spaces through Foucault's notion of heterotopia and analyze these heterotopic networks as intercorporeal networks of relationalities and orientations through a number of artworks: Alptekin's Self-Heterotopia and Capacity, Altındere's Space Refugee and Homeland, and İlkin's Inverted House.

The second chapter defines heterotopic spaces as eclectic transit spaces that consist of juxtaposed and clustered heterogeneous elements and parts. Within the context of heterotopic spaces, I will study the relation between the body, embodiment and space. Thinking of the body as a form of movement that moves across space and constitutes new spaces, I will study how the body can be defined in this sense, and how it constitutes space through movement. I will study Alptekin's work in the context of the heterotopic space as a form of diversity that juxtaposes different cultural geographies. The chapter asserts that heterotopic space is a transitory space that consists of multiple spatial and temporal networks. Through these discussions, the second chapter will analyze how new media art forms heterotopic spaces.

The Turkish artworks under discussion prompt consideration of these transit and in-between spaces formed by the body, as well as bodily movement as the placement of the body in space. In the part I examine heterotopic spaces as the eclectic and transitory spaces of immigrants and refugees, explaining the inability of immigrants to settle in a place and how constantly staying in transitional spaces deterritorializes these individuals and makes them lose their geo-psychic orientations. The artworks perform through figure and installation how bodies form spatial and temporal networks as well as networks of intercorporeal relations that they stretch across diverse spaces and times. I conceive of the body as a medium, a complex network that links diverse and heterogeneous elements and parts. Additionally, I study

Altindere's work Welcome to Homeland as a work that brings together the biological and the technological. By blurring distinction between them, Altindere presents the astronaut Farsi as a biotechnological entity.

Stryker, Currah, and Moore explore “categorical crossings, leakages, slips of all sorts, around and through the concept trans” (11). As I emphasize above, when used with a hyphen (trans-), trans includes relationalities of all sorts (11). Among the important uses of the concept of trans is that which appears when the concept is treated along with the concepts of space and movement. In this sense, space and movement refer to “critical crossings of categorical territories”, as in the meanings of moving across boundaries and border-crossings. This usage in the context of gender transgresses “spatial territories” of identities (12). As such, it opens gender up to new concepts and new meanings that have not been pre-designed. With this usage, trans produces fluid, dynamic and porous transformations. Here identity is no longer fixed and bounded but turns into a changing and transforming concept. Boundaries between genders are thus transgressed through this usage. I discuss this form of movement as a liberating trans-movement.

The trans movement in Turkey defines its own goals as follows: “As we have been stating throughout our resistance, the liberty of homosexuals will liberate heterosexuals. But who will liberate transsexuals? Does anyone care?” (Lubunya 4-5). What does the trans movement open the way for, and what kinds of the spaces and times are opened? The Turkish group, Pembe Hayat, is an association that has openly campaigned against all minority-related issues in Turkish society. Trans writers who argue that the trans movement cannot succeed before all such oppressive movements are abolished and all other liberatory movements are successful have aimed to work with other social movements. They note that while they have chosen to stand with “Armenians, homosexuals, transvestites, Gypsies” against the injustice that is committed towards these other groups while defining their resistance as collective they



have not been accorded the same support themselves. The movement specifies the reason for this discrimination as follows: 1) transvestites and transsexuals are regarded the same as heterosexuals, partially due to their sex change operations; 2) all transvestites and transsexuals are assumed to be doing sex work and are assumed to continue this in various environments; and, 3) they are perceived as people who have violent tendencies and who harass others (Lubunya 4-5). But being trans does not only express gender and sexual identity politics. The reasons that a transsexual or transvestite may not be able to access a certain place are not limited to sexual identity; the trans movement is of interest to all movements and foregrounds a force and theory of independence beyond these movements. For trans individuals who are excluded from all walks of society, especially considering the sex work in which they are involved, the question to ask is: Do trans people have homes? In which spaces can they find a place for themselves, and in what times?

To this end, my third chapter analyzes Ganimet, a trans individual living in Turkey, as a singular trans-archive of intercorporeal desires and sensibilities through discursive networks such as her blog, Facebook, and essays. I will examine her life as it transgresses heteronormative networks of signification and desire. Her body becomes a medium of transgression bringing social, political, cultural, and sexual systems and networks together. I will discuss heteronormativity as it relates to heterosexual spaces and orientations through Ganimet's body and life as well as through Shu Lea Cheang's new media artwork Brandon.

The chapter begins by analyzing Cheang's 1998 – 1999 artwork Brandon, a multimedia account of the trans-individual who was raped and murdered in a small town in Nebraska. I analyze Brandon as a trans-network that brings heterogeneous and diverse elements together. The space created through Brandon is one that is formed through a complex web of interactions. As trans related materials are brought together virtually on a digital platform, they also inhabit physical space through actual

installations. With transitions between virtual and actual space, Brandon blurs the distinction between these two kinds of spaces and turns the artwork into a simulacral form of production.

Cheang's net-art piece Brandon displays a recombinant body that consists of partial bodily images. The artwork invites other artists to upload their images. It is through the interactivity of the net-art that Brandon emerges as a trans-network. The recombination of many different images in one of the interfaces and virtual-actual interaction in the other interfaces turns the spaces that the artwork inhabits into heterotopic spaces. The heterotopic space of Cheang's net-art generates networked trans-subjectivity, with subjectivity being the interaction between discursive and non-discursive networks. Moreover, the intertwining of actual and virtual spaces that the artwork inhabits makes one question the role of embodiment and materiality in new media aesthetics.

The open, fluid, and porous spaces that the artwork embodies leads to the reformulation of the categories of identity and subjectivity. Brandon questions and subverts the fixity, boundedness, and stability of identity. New media makes it possible to conceive of multiple, distributed, and heterogeneous identities and subjectivities. New media artworks enable a different conception of identity and subjectivity because they make us think about subjectivities as networks.

While regimes of identification build alignments between sex, gender, and sexual orientation, producing a heteronormative matrix based upon these identifications, the notion of trans-networks reformulates the notion of sex and gender through spatially and temporally different bodily orientations and relationalities. Through analyzing Ganimet and Brandon's trans-subjectivities, I engage with the notion of bodily orientations and relationalities, which, in turn, subverts the heteronormative matrix of sexuality and gender.

## Chapter 1

### Cybernetic theory, New Media Technologies, and Jacques Lacan

#### New Media

The advancement of information and communication technologies and the emerging field of cybernetics in the US had a strong influence in the formation of the discourse and methods of structural linguistics. The recent studies concerning the historical, social, and political underpinnings of the linkages between American technological innovations and postwar French theory clearly demonstrate the foundational role of the postmodern America's cyber culture in the formation of French theory (Lafontaine 27- 46; Liu 288- 320). The influence of certain theories and practices concerning American information and communication technologies on postwar French theory and the role of cybernetics in constituting and transforming French theory has been argued before (Geoghegan 96-126; Lafontaine 27-46; Liu 288-320). While these texts give a detailed account of the relationship between cybernetics and French theory, relationships between cybernetics and psychoanalysis are only covered by a few scholars, both of whom examine how information and communication technologies and digital media became a part of Lacan's theory of the unconscious.

It is not my intention here to give a detailed examination of the critical implications of the role of cybernetics and information and communication technologies in examining French theory. Yet, I will provide a brief historical overview to reveal how the convergences between information and communication theories, cybernetics, modern biology, and structural linguistics form the basis of Lacan's theories concerning the workings of unconscious, sexuality and desire. Lacan's theories open up a new horizon in understanding bodily significations and signifying networks of bodies and organs, which, in turn, bring forth a new understanding of subjectivity,

sexuality, and desire.

However, Lacan functions here as more an operator or machinery of a broader discussion. The reason why I analyze Lacan in conjunction with cybernetics and new media technologies is to open up a new discussion concerning the biotechnological reproduction of bodily sites and zones as signifying images that consist in discursive networks of the symbolic apparatus of desire. In other words, I argue that the geographical/territorial alignment between the signifying networks of desire and bodily sites, parts, or zones opens up a new horizon in analyzing the biotechnological reproducibility of bodily images as simulacra and bodies as discursive networks and mediums. I foreground my definition of new media in the notions of medium and mediation and I discuss mediums as systems and networks that link heterogeneous elements such as organs, bodies, texts, objects, and artifacts as they stretch across and bind diverse spaces.

### **Historical Overview**

Contemporary biotechnologies provide an entryway into thinking about bodies and organisms not as natural and biological entities but as informational media, technological apparatuses, instrumental mediums, symbolic systems, and coded means of communication, replacing the theories and practices concerning mimetic the imitation of life and the mechanical reproduction of nature with the semiotic, linguistic, and bioinformatic reproduction of bodies and organisms, as exemplified by cyborgs, clones, replicas, avatars, artificial organisms, and virtual life forms.

There has been an epistemological shift from the mechanistic philosophy of nature and the mechanical conception of bodies' and organisms' physiological and

physical processes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries into modern biology's organic and vitalist conception of life. Subsequently, contemporary post-biological and post-evolutionary approaches to life, nature, and body evolved, the formation of which can be traced back to molecular biology's intertwinement with cybernetics, information theory, and linguistic research in the post-WWII era in the United States. The foundations of contemporary bioinformatics and biotechnologies lies in the convergence of information and communication theories, cybernetics, and linguistic research (Johnston 105-163; Geoghegan 96-126).

The migration of Roman Jakobson, a Russian-American linguist, and Claude Levi-Strauss, a French structural anthropologist and linguist, to the U.S during the war played a pivotal role in structuralism's revision within the framework of cybernetics and information theories and technologies. The reformulation of structural linguistics heavily relies upon Jakobson's and Levi-Strauss' incorporation of information and communication theories and technologies into their semiotic and linguistic research. Their collaboration in both The New School for Social Research, a new home for European intellectuals escaping to US from the Nazi threat in Germany and elsewhere, and in the Rockefeller Foundation, which funded research on digital media, information and communication technologies during the post-war era, radically transformed the nature of structural linguistics and had a major impact on its reception as a significant post-war intellectual movement. Jakobson's and Strauss' introduction to digital media technologies and theories via the Rockefeller Foundation and their collaborative teaching in The École Libre des Hautes Études, an institute of The New

School for Social Research that promotes French theory, laid the foundations for the emergence of new structuralism (Lafontaine 27- 46; Geoghegan 96-126).

By bringing together the theories of molecular biology and modern genetics with information and communication technologies, Jakobson and Levi-Strauss significantly revised the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's pioneering work on structural linguistics. In *The Savage Mind*, a work that employs cybernetics and media technologies in explaining the structural dynamics of the primitive thought, beliefs, and practices, Levi-Strauss refers to modern biology's reliance upon information and communication technologies and analyzes species' physiological and genetic diversity in terms of chromosomes, maintaining that the technological generation and the production of signifying chains corresponds to the biological signification of the molecular chain of species (Geoghegan 96-126). Levi-Strauss' structural integration of information theory and biological discourse in his explanation of the logic of myths, rituals, kinship, marriage, and other modes of cultural expressions and social practices via linguistic codes, syntax, grammar, and messages, leading him to find structural affinities, contiguities, associations, and patterns between socio-cultural and bio-genetic diversities; the existing social and cultural relations correspond to the technological inscription and transcription of the biological regime of signs. The idea of bio-semiotic storage and transmission of signs enabled the denaturalizing and historicizing of the bio-genetic diversities through their informational-linguistic significations. This structural correspondence between modern genetics and linguistics not only points towards the compatibility between the species' biological and genetic diversities and the linguistic-cultural codification of these diversities in terms of the

socio-cultural codes, but also towards Levi-Strauss' cybernetic and linguistic conception of modern biology. This, in turn, enabled him to reformulate the Freudian unconscious as a social and cultural operator, describing unconscious symbolic structures in terms of the semiotic and informational-linguistic functions and processes (Seriot 141-174).

The profound influence of Levi-Strauss' revision of the discourse and methods of structural linguistics on Lacan's subversion of the biologically-oriented Freudian theory of the unconscious is widely understood. However, theorists have overlooked the fundamental role of the information and communication theories and technologies and digital media in Lacan's reformulation of the unconscious' symbolic operators of desire and sexuality. Upon his return to Paris from the US in 1948, Levi-Strauss shares the significant role of cybernetics and information theory in the formation of structuralism with his close friend Lacan, to whom, in 1950, he also introduces Jakobson. Lacan's exposure to the conceptual relationship between structural linguistics and information and communication technologies lays the foundations of his theory of the unconscious as a symbolic apparatus, which simultaneously registers the biological and the technological, maintaining one through the other and integrating both in sexuality and desire.

Levi-Strauss' biological and technological account of the regime of signification relies upon Jakobson's earlier work. While Saussure's linguistic theory orients around a Darwinian approach to explain the genetic evolution and kinship of languages, Jakobson, with his colleagues in the Prague Linguistic Circle in 1920s and 1930s, lays the foundations of contemporary semiotics by rectifying both the European organicist

model of linguistic theory, which has its roots in the nineteenth-century biology and its mechanical natural laws, as well as what follows this organicist model, that is, the genetic view of language based on Darwinian evolutionary theory (159-174). Although highly influenced by Saussure's use of film theory and technologies to study the acoustic perception and technological inscriptions of sounds as phonemes, Jakobson's non-Darwinian semiotics deviates from the evolutionary and genetic theory of the sign. Yet he still maintains modern biology as an analytic framework for studying linguistic theory as exemplified by his conception of linguistic species as living organisms. By extending and developing the geographer and linguist Lev S. Berg's ideas that are governed by non-Darwinian biology, Jakobson rejects the genealogical tree model and describes the organic adaptation of species or languages to their environment in terms of the convergence of languages via their acquired characteristics rather than grounding the storage and transmission of genetically inherited linguistic variations in the descent and divergence of languages from a common ancestor or a same genus (115-138; 141-174). The understanding of languages as the offspring of an original language still maintain the idea of a pure origin, relying on the belief that every language pursues a regular trajectory of natural evolution. Any deviation from this genetic and biological classification is considered to be an anomaly. Because the idea of language crossing and interbreeding is entangled with the idea of impure and mixed origin, language hybridization is associated with monstrosity, contamination, and artificiality.

This naturalist and genetic view of language pertains to political and ideological concerns because it corresponds to the fundamental tensions and contradictions concerning boundary issues or nation state boundaries in Europe at the time. In order to



conceptualize linguistic species in terms of their impurity, hybridity, and non-state as well as border-crossing affiliations, Jakobson turns to modern biology. In the search for a new logic in explaining the convergences and resemblances between genetically unrelated languages, he adopts the idea of mimetic species from modern biological discourse. From this perspective, genetically unrelated languages' acquisition of similar characteristics through their tendency to imitate refutes the essential role of genetic inheritance and kinship in the evolution of languages by linking the preservation and transmission of linguistic variations to the geographical proximities and territorial distribution of signs.

Although Jakobson demonstrates an intimate connection between linguistics and geography, his argument of phonological entities as they “exceed system boundaries” and “spread like an oil stain” (qtd. in Seriot 78) also shifts the emphasis away from the role of geographical proximities in language evolution to the regime of signifiers' predisposition to structural affinities, demonstrating that structural affinity and mimetic similitude is not limited to the sheer fact of geographical proximity. Affinity, in Jakobson's usage of the term, pertains to similarity acquired through “propensity to come together, mutual attraction, spontaneous attraction between different, genetically unrelated objects or beings” (qtd. in Seriot 150). The significance of the incompatibility between phonological and geographical boundaries, the fact that “phonological features tend to overflow the boundaries of a language and spread over vast contiguous areas,” becomes especially evident by mid 1960s with Jakobson's growing interest in technological modes of information theory and molecular biology (155-162). By bringing structural linguistics together with information theories, media technologies,

and cybernetics, Jakobson opens up the possibility of thinking the structural affinities and differentiations between biologically and genetically unrelated languages in terms of their technical and technological genealogies rather than grounding the linguistic variations or similarities in the idea of geographical proximities and determinations.

It is at the interstices of these connections between modern biology, structural linguistics, geography/territory, and information and communication theories and technologies that Lacan locates his conception of unconscious, sexuality, and desire:

I can do no more than point out here, what, in the biological register, is associated with sexual differentiation, in the form of secondary sexual characteristics and functions ... It is modern structuralism that has brought this out best, by showing that it is at the level of matrimonial alliance, as opposed to natural generation, to biological lineal descent – at the level therefore of the signifier – that the fundamental exchange takes place and it is there that we find once again the most elementary structures of social functioning are inscribed in terms of a combinatory. (*The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* 150)

The notion of the unconscious as it is mapped by Lacan over structural linguistics' intrinsic kinship with geography/territory and information and communication technologies enables him to examine sexuality at the site of the convergence between linguistic-informational, biological, and psychoanalytical discourses.

### **Trans-Desires**

In order to ascertain the workings of the Lacanian symbolic apparatus as a psychic digital scanner, it is crucial to briefly refer here to a particular problem concerning the English translation and appropriation of the concepts play/game and stochastic/aleatory. This issue is raised by Liu as follows:

it is startling to ponder how two different concepts “game” and “play” in game theory have morphed into

a single idea of 'play' in literary theory ... what gets lost in translation is the concept of 'game', 'game theory', and, more importantly, the associated history of cybernetic developments in the cold war ... The stochastic process ... involves the play of chance and probability... But this concept is caught in a similar blind play of signifiers, as in the instance of 'game', when 'aleatory' returns to English through literary philosophical translations that seldom render the French word back to 'stochastic'. (*The Freudian Robot* 153-154)

The notions of play and aleatory with their wider scope of reference to digital media and cybernetics exemplify how Lacan utilizes the game of even and odd, electrical circuits, and cybernetic machines to demonstrate the symbolic apparatus in terms of the radical alterity of the Other.

The symbolic apparatus embodying "the discourse of the Other" points toward the alien, foreign nature of signification. It concerns the digital alterity of the regime of signification: "the unconscious is the discourse of the Other". The radical alterity of "the discourse of the Other" is related to the machinic game of signifiers. The symbolic apparatus is an autonomously operating meta-machine, whose self-reflexivity is grounded in "the play [game] of signifiers". The symbolic order is a machinic apparatus that "takes itself into account" [se compter elle-meme]" (Johnston 55). It operates on the basis of the machinic game of signifiers. The symbolic operators follow "the play [game] of signifiers" because the structure of the unconscious operates by "the function of the signifier" (Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* 152). Thinking the symbolic apparatus as the facilitator of the play [game] of signifiers conversely opens up the possibility of considering the unconscious as a meta-media network of simulacra, a psychic apparatus that speaks the Other's discourse.

It is within this context of the machinic game of signifiers that Lacan distinguishes between the imaginary and the symbolic orders. Within its broader reference to digitality, the term game is linked to the term aleatory in the sense that alea “is the Latin name for the game of dice”, including connotations such as “based on a decision independent of the player, an outcome over which he has no control”, “entirely passive”, “blind verdict of chance”, “negation of the will, a surrender to destiny”, and “pure equality” (Liu 153-154). The distinction Lacan draws between the imaginary and the symbolic orders overlaps with the distinction between the notions of play and game: “The one thing which cybernetics clearly highlights is the difference between the symbolic and the imaginary orders” (Johnston 306).

To explain the symbolic signification on the basis of the machinic game of signifiers, Lacan uses Edgar Allen Poe’s “The Purloined Letter,” of which, Lacan notes, “the cyberneticists, I noticed, make something of.” (*The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*, 179). The part Lacan refers to concerns the policeman Dupin telling a story about a schoolboy whose success in playing the game of even and odd, which consists of one player guessing whether the number of marbles that the opponent holds in his hands is an odd or even number. Dupin, with another policeman, concludes that the schoolboy’s success was dependent on the strategy of “identification of the reasoner’s intellect with that of his opponent” (180). This identification “depends . . . upon the accuracy with which the opponent’s intellect is admeasured” (180). This kind of reasoning, according to Lacan, is based on the assumption that winning or losing in the game of even and odd concerns “the subject adopt[ing] a mirror position” (181). By identifying with the opponent’s point of view,

the other person tries to correctly guess the opponent's decision. Lacan challenges the role of this imaginary identification with the other in understanding the game of even and odd: "the heart of the matter lies in a completely different register from that of imaginary intersubjectivity" (181). While the imaginary intersubjectivity consists in the regimes of identification, the symbolic order primarily consists in the machinic game of signifiers.

By incorporating the notion of cybernetic biofeedback loops into his theory of the symbolic order, Lacan demonstrates that the symbolic apparatus operates as the digital interface linking the organism to its environment. This does not concern any symbiotic or mimetic interaction between organisms and their environments. Digital alterity reveals a more radical alterity than the technologies of identification between the one and the other. It transgresses the imaginary order's identificatory regime between the one and the other:

Whenever we are dealing with imitation, we should be very careful not to think too quickly of the other who is being imitated. To imitate is no doubt to reproduce an image. But at the bottom, it is, for the subject, to be inserted in a function whose exercise grasps it. (*The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* 100).

Lacan's notion of mimetic desire significantly diverges from Walter Benjamin's conceptual linkage of the mimesis to the technological reproducibility of images via the photographic and cinematic devices. While Benjamin's notion of the optical unconscious serves to historically reconcile the spiritual power of the ancient scriptural logic with the cinematic technologies of writing, Lacan links information and communication technologies to primitivism via the bio-technological reproducibility of images (their biogrammar). The biotechnological reproducibility of images refers here to the informational-linguistic register of psychic processes construing the bio-grammar of digitally scanned bodily images. Murray relates this process of digital scanning to symbolic encoding. Psychic scansion, Murray

argues, replaces Freudian mystic writing pad with the apparatus of digital scanner, through which “the procedures of scansion could be thought as functioning to rewrite subjectivity as a mere component of the deterritorialized residue of code and its repetition” (221).

The new media technologies, according to Murray, subvert the modern mimetic technologies of inscription and its technological regimes of imaginary and projective identification by leading “to more complicated distinctions between copy and copy” than the Benjaminian “distinction between original and copy” (164). According to Benjamin, the cinematic inscription of the world recaptures the primitive mind’s mimetic mode of thinking and its spiritual cosmic experience by means of the cinematic technologies’ restoration of the law of similarity and resemblance between the copy and the original: “Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range, by way of its likeness, its reproduction” (Benjamin 223). For Benjamin, the camera as the modern mimetic technology of inscription has the spiritual and divine power of the ancient script. By containing the “structure of cosmic being” within the law of “magical correspondences and analogies” (334), the primitive mimetic mode of thinking brings microcosm and macrocosm together, connecting “what is nearest to us and what is remotest from us, and never one without the other” (338). The cinematic inscription of the world recaptures the primitive mind’s mimetic mode of thinking by restoring the mimetic and sensuous similarities between the signifier and the referent via the camera’s sensuous embodiment of the world. Benjamin’s conception of the cinematic reproduction of the primitive mind’s mimetic mode of being is grounded in becoming “mimetically at one with what it attempts to represent” (16). And, as Taussig succinctly claims, the Benjaminian mimesis in relation to primitivism and alterity is “the

ability to mime ... [which] is the capacity to Other” (129). Taussig argues that it is through “the magic of the signifier” that cinematic technologies restore ancient scriptural logic:

And if I am correct in invoking a certain magic of the signifier and what Walter Benjamin took the mimetic faculty to be -namely, the compulsion to become the Other- and if, thanks to new social conditions and new techniques of reproduction (such as cinema and mass production of imagery), modernity has ushered in a veritable rebirth, a recharging and retooling the mimetic faculty. (xviii - xix)

By bringing cybernetics and information and communication technologies together with the unconscious functions and processes of the primitive thought practices, Lacan, on the other hand, reconfigures the unconscious as the site of the radical alterity of the Other. In this, he follows Levi-Strauss, who argues that the savage mind’s “principles of interpretation ... have been revealed to us [Westerners] only recently through very recent inventions: telecommunications, computers, and electron microscopes” (qtd. in Geoghegan 97). This perspective attributes the primitive mind’s symbolic unconscious to nature’s simulacral form of technological reproduction. The biological reproducibility of images conceived of as a simulacral form of technological reproduction subverts the Benjaminian biomimetic understanding of modern technologies of inscription. As Murray argues, the paradigm shift in the technologies of writing establishes “new registrations of code and interactivity [that] is paradigmatic of the digital spectacle” (225). According to Murray, new technologies of inscription replace the Freudian mystic writing pad with that of a digital scanner. The radicality of digital media lies in “effac[ing] the prestige of images by opening the subject to linguistic abstraction” (220).

The symbolic apparatus as a psychic digital scanner operates at the level of the regime of signification. This trans-inscription of the subject to the symbolic order suggests a psychic digital scansion, an unconscious digital encoding process that concerns the signifying

reduction of the subject's image to a series of 0s and 1s. By linguistically reducing the subject to the binary codes of 0s and 1s, the process of scanning inscribes the subject to the symbolic order. The psychic scansion's bioinformatic codification of the subject's image reveals that digital media's "deterritorialized code" refers here to the denaturalization of indexical relation between an image and what the image refers to.

Benjamin links primitivism to the cinematic technologies of inscription as well as to the sensuous and mimetic similarities between the signifier and referent through the modern mimetic machinery's opening up of the unconscious as the space of the Other. Somewhat differently, Lacan's conception of the sexual reproducibility of bodily images as digital signifiers transgresses any indexical or referential relationality. Lacan's notion of the unconscious "as the discourse of the Other" relates information and communication technologies to the primitive thought via the radical alterity of the Other. Here the structural logic of primitive scriptural technologies is grounded in the techno-sexual reproducibility of the regime of signifiers: "It is true that, up to a certain point, all the reality of the heavens may be inscribed in nothing more than a vast constellation of signifiers ... one might say that primitive science is a sort of sexual technique" (*The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* 151). Therefore, according to Lacan, mimetic desire is a "sexual technique": "the root of the scopical drive is to be found entirely in the subject, in the fact that the subject sees himself ... he looks at himself, I would say, in his sexual member" (194).

The bioinformatic circuitry of the signifying networks corresponds to the territorial distribution of the bodily zones only because these organs are mapped onto the signifying networks of the symbolic apparatus as the regulators of drives. Lacan's notion of "organ-instrument" pinpoints this overlap of the biological and linguistic-informational functions of



the bodily organs as the instruments of drives. The psychic scansion of drives through the inscription of organs onto the signifying networks as the instruments of desire demonstrates that the bodily drives are symbolic codifications.

At the level of the scopic drive, the symbolic apparatus marks the eye as a signifying bodily image. The eye is codified as the organ whose symbolic function is “to see.” The eye as a bodily organ becomes inscribed into the networks of signifiers in the form of an image whose symbolic function is transcribed as the organ-instrument of the scopic drive. In that sense, the biological function of the eye is the same with its symbolic function. The eye as a biological organ functions as the organ of sense of sight because it corresponds to “the function of the signifier” (152). Lacan’s notion of organ-instrument pinpoints this overlap of the biological and linguistic-informational functions of the bodily organs. The eye is neither a biological organ nor a signifier--in terms of the signifier signifying its referent. The eye is an abstraction while it is a biological organ at the same time.

Now, turning back to Lacan’s argument that imitation, undoubtedly, refers to the reproduction of an image in that “it is, for the subject, to be inserted in a function whose exercise grasps it,” one recognizes that the subject’s insertion in the symbolic order necessitates its inscription in the symbolic apparatus of desire, which is regulated by “the function of the signifier” (152). The function of the eye as organ is integral to its symbolic function, because the eye is marked as a signifying bodily image. In other words, the eye as an organ that is mapped onto the signifying networks of the symbolic apparatus is a bodily image that transcends this image’s indexical relation to its referent.

The symbolic apparatus scans and remotely activates the intensive multimedia network of bodily drives. The eye is marked as the multi-media network of the scopic drive:

we must now pose the question as to the exact status of the eye as organ. The function, it is said, creates the organ. This is quite absurd – function does not even explain the organ. Whatever appears in the organism as an organ is always presented with a large multiplicity of functions. In the eye, it is clear that various functions come together. (102)

The eye is then the medium which brings all these heterogeneous functions together and organizes them according to the function of the signifier. There are many parts and elements that contribute to the sense of sight. However, the organ which is symbolically codified as the sense organ of sight is the eye. The scopic drive is organized around the network of the eye. As a part of the signifying networks of the symbolic apparatus, the eye differentiates itself from the networks of the other signifying organs via its instrumentality. Therefore, the eye's instrumentality is inherent in the signifier's function. This demonstrates the relationship between the organ and the organism. By referring to the problems with the term instinct, Lacan says:

one does not realize that instinct is the way in which an organism has of extricating itself in the best way possible from an organ. There are many examples, in the animal kingdom, of cases in which the organism succumbs to an excess, a hyper-development of an organ. (102)

As the regulator of the scopic drive, the eye “has separated itself off as organ”(103). In other words, the eye has differentiated itself from itself. At the level of the scopic drive, the symbolic apparatus extracts the eye from the eye itself. The eye as the multi-media network of the scopic drive brings all the parts and functions that have a role in the act of seeing together and singularizes these functions according to the function of the signifier. The signifying web of the eye acts as the medium of the sense of sight.

The biological network of the body parallels the complex signifying network of drives only because the organ-instruments such as the eye are bioinformatic codifications. One of the critical implications of this lies in reformulating organs as exterior bio-technological sense-

apparatuses. The eye is the prosthetic supplemental excess of the sense of sight. It is absent from itself, because it is extracted from itself by the symbolic apparatus of desire. The eye is then a “semblance of itself, a purely symbolic construct.”

While examining the Freudian homeostatic drives in terms of the enclosure of the erogenous signifying circuits, Lacan incorporates the biofeedback mechanisms into understanding the symbolic apparatus of desire. The homeostatic reference addresses here the nervous system’s equilibrium, its discharge of energy, in relation to the cybernetic biofeedback mechanisms, the returning of the drive to its point of departure. It is through these bio-cybernetic reflexive feedback loops with the outside that a system turns back on itself:

this thing turning back on itself. It’s called feedback, and it is related to the homeostat ... We call that a message ... What is a message inside a machine? Something which proceeds by opening and not opening, the way an electronic lamp does, by yes or no. It’s something articulated of the same order as the fundamental oppositions of the symbolic register .... this something which turns has to, or doesn’t, come back into play. It is always ready to give a reply, and be completed by this selfsame act of replying ... this comes very close to what we can conceive of as Zwang, the compulsion to repeat. (*The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*, 88-89)

The message becomes transmitted when systems feed back onto themselves. A system’s self-reflexivity is contingent upon its turning back on itself. The biocybernetic reflexivity implies that any system, by closing in on itself, makes this enclosure simultaneously possible and impossible. By closing in on itself, it becomes identical with itself. However, this act is also self-differentiating. Because only by recursively turning back or closing into itself may it differentiate itself from its outside and become the same with itself (inside). That is, its singularity is constituted on its pure difference from itself. A system’s biocybernetic reflexivity thus refers the medium’s act of mediation with itself. Through the reflexive

feedback loops with the outside, systems fold back onto themselves, by folding the outside into the inside. Reflexivity might then be defined as this act that constitutes the outside as the inside of the inside, or vice versa. In other words, the transmission of the message--the enclosure of the signifying circuit--has nothing to do with meaning. It does not signify anything but only concerns the auto-erotic enclosure of the signifying circuits. Desire is dehumanized here, because the satisfaction of drives relies upon the opening and closing of the drive circuits.

The satisfaction of the scopic drive relies upon the enclosure of the signifying drive-circuit, the arrival of the drive to its point of departure. According to Lacan, "I" is through the auto-erotic enclosure of the scopic drive-circuit, or the reflexive closure of seeing oneself seeing, that the symbolic apparatus regulates the "outwards-and-back movement" (178) of the scopic drive. The reflexive "outward and return movement of the drive" (178) situates the subject at "the correlative of the picture" by weaving threads that link one to the other at each point in space, "a point-by-point sweeping of space, a scanning" (316). In other words, the auto-erotic closure of the scopic drive, the reflexive closure of seeing oneself seeing, is the same as the enclosure of the signifying circuit.

The symbolic codification of the turning back of the scopic drive to its point of departure results in the bioinformatic codification of the eye as the "organ-instrument" of the sense of sight. The reflexive closure of seeing oneself seeing depends on the constitution of the subject as the reversed reflection of the other, the process through which the other is reversed or inverted into what the subject articulates as "I". The signifier "I" is the inverted form of the "you", the other through which "I see myself seeing myself." By moving back and forth from one pole to the other, the subject becomes constituted as the one (ego/I) that sees herself from

outside of herself as the other. This relation of the subject with herself as the other links self-replication to self-mutilation, the technological reproducibility of an image of oneself in the other as the stain or spot: “I situate myself in the picture as stain – these are the facts of mimicry” (Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 98).

In pronouncing the reflexive visual trope of ‘I see myself seeing myself’, the subject replicates itself, revealing a further insight into the symbolic apparatus regulating this process of signifying reversion. ‘To see’ is the reversed form of ‘to be seen’. ‘To be seen’ is turned inside out to see that which is ‘to be seen’. It is because of the signifying reversion of the outside into the inside that one sees oneself seeing. This reflexive relation of the subject with herself corresponds to the scopic drive’s act of closing in on itself. The inside is determined as the reversion of the outside, or similarly the inside is determined as the outside of the outside.

The enclosure of the signifying circuit reduces the subject to zero and the subject becomes captured by the non-signifying networks of desire: “the subject always remains unperceived, for it is reduced to zero. In so far as the gaze, qua objet a, may come to symbolize this central lack expressed in the phenomenon of castration” (76-77). The subject symbolizes her own vanishing in the form of I/ego: “That is why ... misunderstood (meconnu) ... the subject manages, fortunately, to symbolize his own vanishing and punctiform bar (trait) in the illusion of the consciousness of seeing oneself see oneself” (83). As Lacan’s reference to the skull in Holbein’s anamorphic perspective indicates, the subject that is caught up in the crisscrossing networks of desire confronts her own death or annihilation:

In Holbein’s picture ... the singular object floating in the foreground, which is there to be looked at, in order to ... catch in its trap, the observer... as subjects, we are literally called into the picture, and

represented here as caught ... It reflects our own nothingness, in the figure of the death's head ... desire which is caught, fixed in the picture. (92)

The subject becomes caught in the signifying networks of the symbolic apparatus of desire: "And there is only one method of knowing that one is there, namely, to map the network. And how is the network mapped? One goes back and forth ... one cross-checks" (45).

The symbolic apparatus demonstrates the bodies' sensorial cartography in terms of the overlap of the biological and linguistic-informational circuits. With the signifying reversal of the 'being seen' from everywhere outside into the inside or the reversal of 'being seen' into seeing that which is 'being seen', the eye becomes extracted from the 'flesh of the world' as a signifying bodily image that is mapped onto the signifying networks of desire. As the organ-instrument of the scopic drive, the eye is then inscribed into the networks of the symbolic apparatus as the signifying image of the scopic drive. Therefore, the eye as organ transgresses this bodily organ's indexical relation to its referent. In other words, the eye is a biotechnological instrument. It is a simulacrum.

The reflexive movement of the drives, their arrival to the point of departure, constitutes the subject by linguistically reducing her to the binary code of presence and absence of the I/ego. The symbolic function of this auto-erotic enclosure of the drive-circuits finds its expression in the digital codes of being (1) or non-being (0). By being integrated to the symbolic apparatus, the subject constantly questions the presence and absence of the ego: am I or am I not, is it yes (1) or no (0)? "Everything comes back to 'to be' or not to be", Lacan writes, "absence or presence" (*The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*, 192). The symbolic order operates by yes or no: "As soon as the subject himself comes to be, he owes it to a certain non-being on which he raises his being" (192).

The code of life insistently returns back in the form of yes or no, the constant opening or closing of the drive-circuits.

The psychic oscillation generated by the turning back of the drive-circuits manifests itself at the level of the incessant closing and opening of the signifying circuits:

Once the door is open, it closes. When it is closed, it opens. A door isn't either open or shut, it must be either open or shut, it must be either open and then shut, and then opened and then shut. Thanks to.... what is called feedback, it is sufficient for the door to close for it to be returned ... to an open state and that is its closure again, and its opening again. In this way what is called oscillation is produced. This oscillation is the scansion. And the scansion is the basis upon which one can inscribe.... a series of montages. (Lacan 302)

Turning back to the way Lacan relates the Freudian homeostasis to the reflexive enclosure of the drives via the compulsion to repeat (*Zwang*), one recognizes that repetition manifests itself by way of the symbolic function of 1 (am I?) or 0 (am I not?): “repetition ... emerges beyond the pleasure principle. It vacillates beyond all the biological mechanisms of equilibration ... It is only introduced by the register of language, by the function of the symbol” (90).

The repetition of the symbolic code signifies the death drive, which, as Freud argues, lies beyond the pleasure principle. The enclosure of the signifying circuit corresponds to the death drive, that is, “the biological finality of sexuality”: “when the loop is closed ... there has been a reversal, when the other has come into play, when the subject has taken himself as the end, the terminus of the drive” (Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* 183). Sexuality is examined here in terms of the death drive, as the death drive addresses the relationship between sexuality and signification: “all the sexual drives as articulated at the level of significations in the unconscious, in as much as what they bring out is death – death as signifier and nothing but signifier” (257). The idea of biological reproduction replaced with

the techno-sexual reproducibility of differential signs foregrounds sexuality and desire in technical and technological genealogy and generation of signs. The interlocking themes of bioinformatic modulations of sexuality entail the reformulation of sexual reproduction within the technological regime of signs, shifting the emphasis away from the reproductive capacities of the biological body to the technological transmission of affective information and generation of recombinant or mutant bodies, identities, and sexualities.

This perspective reconsiders sexuality in light of the bodies' bioinformatic circuitry. The bioinformatic processing of the bodies emphasizes the technological reproducibility of the bodily regimes of signification: "with regard to the biological finality of sexuality, namely, reproduction, the drives ... are partial drives" (175). Sexual reproduction understood in terms of the technological reproducibility and differentiation of signs points towards a post-biological articulation of sexuality and desire, reformulating sexual signification in relation to the structural interbreeding, monstrosity, montage, and hybridization of bodily drives and organs.

The psychic system's digital montage of partial drives opens the possibility of conceiving of the bodily organs as hybrids, complex montages of digitally copy-pasted parts. Psychic scansion concerns the digital montage of drives: "It is because of the reality of the homeostatic system that sexuality comes into play in the form of partial drives. The drive is precisely that montage" (176). This conception necessitates addressing the bodily stimulation within the context of the technological reproduction of the visual, auditory and tactile organs as sense-apparatuses, which, in turn, leads to the fragmentation of the whole bodily sensorium and reconfigures partial drives in terms of electronic and digital affective signals. Bodies become corporeal media of information transfer. The process of cutting, copy-pasting, and



superimposing different body parts chosen from a large variety of scanned bodily drives and organs disintegrates the body and establishes it as a complex montage and collage of technologically coded images mapped onto the signifying networks of the symbolic apparatus. The symbolic apparatus is thus a trans-archive, the databank of pre-scanned images and models. It is the trans-archive of desire, because it possesses the complex digital montages, layering, collages, and superimposition of various bodily organs and drives.

The biological network of the body parallels the signifying networks of desire only because of this digital montage, this collage of bodily drives and organs:

they deal only with that part of sexuality that passes into the networks of the constitution of the subject, into the networks of the signifier – sexuality is realized only through the operation of the drives in so far as they are partial drives, partial with regard to the biological finality of sexuality.  
(177)

Therefore, the technological inscription of the bodies in the signifying networks of desire replaces the idea of natural sexual reproduction with the technological reproduction of digital images as sexually differentiated signifiers. Sexual reproduction understood in terms of the technological reproducibility of signifiers foregrounds sexuality in the technological reproducibility of bodily images; these images are structurally differentiated signifiers that are inscribed into the bodily networks of informational-linguistic systems.

The psychic systems' bioinformatic codification of the bodily network of signifiers opens a radically new perspective in terms of the structural correspondence between the biological/territorial signification of the bodily geographies and their linguistic/informational codification in the symbolic apparatus. This correspondence between the linguistic signs and their territorial distribution reconfigures the inscription of the bodily organs and drives in the

signifying networks of the symbolic apparatus in relation to the digital montages of bodily drives and organs.

The symbolic apparatus is the site where the biological and linguistic-informational processes are coordinated. By trans-coding (deterritorializing) the bodies' sensorial/geographical cartography through the overlap of the biological and linguistic-informational circuits, it makes it untenable to view signifying functions and biological functions as distinct categories. The symbolic apparatus is an autonomously operating self-reflexive medium that moderates and modulates the information flow across and between various bodily networks. By generating a corporeal flow of data, it incorporates the body back into the digital code.

It pinpoints the inability to coordinate between materiality and signification because it refers to the radical exteriority of the Other, which refers here to pure signification itself. In other words, signifiers do not signify. They don't signify, because there is no outside to be signified. Everything becomes a sign; everything speaks, but only to each other: "the signifier is a sign that doesn't refer to any object, but insofar as it forms part of language, the signifier is a sign which refers to another sign" (167). It is not signifying but at the same time it is not not signifying. It is where the inside-outside distinction is lost, when there is no inside (the signifier) there is no outside (its referent). It operates by "the function of the signifier", however signifier refers to its referent only when the machinic game of signifiers is interrupted. The symbolic apparatus is a meta-machine that operates by randomly blinking signifiers signifying each other. "The symbolic world is the world of the machine" (Lacan, *The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*, 47). The digital alterity of the Other concerns this signifying operation of the symbolic apparatus.

The body is always colonized by the radically alien and foreign nature of signification. Or, as Stelarc says, by remote and alien agents. This alien nature of the symbolic apparatus of desire lies in the machinic game of the signifiers. Therefore, desire is always radically foreign, alien, and extraterritorial. Digital media overlaps with the primitive thought structures and practices by means of this digital travesty of the Other. The symbolic apparatus remotely activates and controls the bodily network of signifiers. Primitive thought is cybernetic because it is plugged into the radically alien nature of signification.

It is thus not a coincidence that Lacan describes sexuality and biological reproduction by using the term “travesty.” Nature is the site of simulacra:

Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage ... In the case of travesty, a certain sexual finality is intended. Nature shows us that this sexual aim is produced by all kinds of effects that are essentially disguise, masquerade ... which must not be distinguished too hastily as being that of deception. (Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* 99-100)

Alien is anything that is fully subjected to the machinic and symbolic order of the Other. Its aesthetic does not only lie in its hybridization of heterogeneous elements such as plants, animals, humans, machines, yet also in its singularization of the very medium through and in which these elements come together. Alien then is an hybrid that is equal to or same with its own hybridity. Networks that consist of the linkages of these varied and varying elements come to the fore because they are brought together to be singularized.

We are all subjected to the Oedipal relationalities in family relations, family relations, no matter how healthy is always Oedipal, its logic is Oedipal. It is Oedipal in terms of the organic organization of the body. All the organs, the constructed relationships between the

organs such as eye, arm, body, face, hands, genitals, each refer to a set of senses that deterritorize the bodily sites of these organs, subjecting them to become transmedia.

Hybridity is thus cast here in relation to the integration of the biological and the technological. It refers to the ambivalence relations that exist between the natural/biological and construction/mediation. The simulacra rests in-between what counts as natural and what counts as constructed. The natural is linked here to land, geography, biology while the constructed to technologies, technicity, and medium. To this end, the eye as the biological organ of sight is already a biotechnological supplement. It is not a biological or natural organ, yet it is an organized organ.

The body is colonized by the radical exteriority of the symbolic order, the order of the Other. It is colonized by the alien agents but the Oedipal scenarios and narrations require this order to be repressed – or as Foucault's repressive hypothesis reveals, these organic relations are over-expressed within the already existing social, political, and cultural institutions. Land is a situated territory, situatedness and localized in relation to familial and kinship relations which make you feel like you belong someplace.

### **Trans-aesthetics**

This new kind of techno-biological body has the ability to perceive, transcribe, produce, and transmit information about itself as code, syntax, and information, as both discursive and non-discursive modes of communication. It constantly evolves along with technological economies of desire, always changing with exposure to new technologies and media. Networks of desire consist of linkages that transform the aesthetic stakes of everyday life and provide an entryway into exploring sexuality, gender, and desire as generative of

hybrid, fluid, constantly mutating, alien, and monstrous beings. These objects of desire are neither copies nor models of biological forms but rather reflections of the ever-fluctuating relationships between technological networks of desire, their participants, their distribution, and their hierarchy. This leads to the necessity of rethinking the circulation, economy, and regulation of desire in terms of the post-biological bodies.

Mutant, monstrous, and hybrid post-biological bodies appear across a myriad of new media forms articulating the social, cultural, national, and ideological stakes of new body-politics and new modes of subjectification, sexuality, and desire. Networks of desire consist of bodies and organs that appear and shared across and between various networks and their contexts. Whether true is the insertion of digital artifacts or sensory devices into the body, the acoustic remapping of biodigital bits of the body, downloadable and zipped bodies, artificial organs, monstrous cross-creations, mutant and hybrid sexualities, or strange interbreedings, new media technologies bring forth a new understanding of the body as a biodigital communication device that regulates the processing and transmission of affective information.

The CTHEORY Multimedia online art exhibition Tech Flesh: The Promise and Perils of the Human Genome Project, curated by Timothy Murray and Arthur and Marilouise Kroker, consists of digital and interactive artworks from fourteen artists whose projects articulate the aesthetic stakes of biotechnological apparatuses, particularly in terms of the new means of biopower and the new regulatory and oppressive mechanisms that generate and legitimize racialized, gendered, and pathological bodies by reducing socio-economic, ideological, cultural, and historical diversities to biological and genetic variations, thereby naturalizing gender, class, and racial differences.

The ongoing interdisciplinary investigations into these areas provide a context for a wide set of scientific research practices including genetic mapping, genomic sequencing, genome databases, the process, storage, and modification of genetic information, biomedical data mining, computer-simulated evolutions, artificial life projects, and molecular, cellular, and human cloning. All of these practices pose philosophical, ethical, and theological questions about life and nature across many disciplines and fields. Artificial life (A-life), the name given by Christopher Langton in 1987, is one of these fields, which brings together modern biology and digital computation to simulate living biological systems and study the genetics, mutation, breeding and evolution of the digital life forms and artificial ecosystems (Johnston 215-275). By using genetic algorithms, A-life scientists and artists simulate genomic variations and study the alterations engendered by the reproduction, mutation, natural selection, and co-evolution of the silicon-based artificial organisms.

In addition to focusing on the ethical and religious controversies that these types of scientific research have raised, critics have also widely criticized and debated the techno-scientific military industrial complex in which these research practices are embedded. These debates are generally framed around corporatized biotech research, profit-oriented biomedical and genetic experiments, and private companies capitalizing on genomic information and imposing restrictions to information access and distribution by copyrighting the genetic information for commercial purposes. For example, following the Human Genome Project, Celera Genomics, founded by Applera Corporation in 1998 and acquired by Quest Diagnostic in 2011, has become a database business that capitalizes on and commercializes genomic information by mapping and cataloguing the human genome and supplying governments,

pharmaceutical companies, and biotech corporations with search engines and tools to have an access to the biological data.

However, the new aesthetic possibilities opened by digital technologies also provide new media artists with theoretical and practical tools that enable transgressive and subversive tactics and strategies of resistance in addition to furnishing the possibilities of new modes of existence. Through examining the digital aesthetics of the inscription of bodies, organs, skins, flesh, and genes as interactive transmitters and symbolic operators of socio-cultural signs, codes, syntax, and messages, Tim Murray maintains that new media aesthetics opens up the possibility of a post-evolutionary and post-biological future. The Tech Flesh exhibition thus engages with the conceptual and artistic understandings of recombinant, mutant, hybrid, and monstrous bodies, sexualities, subjectivities, and identities.

In Brad Todd's net art Hearing Loss, exhibited in the Transgenic Flesh section of the online art exhibition, Murray argues, "vision and voyeurism are layered in montage over the architectonics of the ear" (172). The integration of the visceral intensities of the electronic sound with the digital image of an ear reconstitutes the visual field as the digital and supplementary artifact of the auditory organ. Corporeal acoustics in artificial flesh of vision disintegrates the whole sensorium of the body, "reconfiguring the senses, creating hybridities and mutations of the previously separated ratio of the senses" (173). The auditory organ displayed as a mute sense-apparatus, or a digital sensory device that does not hear but speaks, creates semiotic confusions and sensory disorientations in the observer. The hybridization of the organs generates monstrous montages of distinct sensibilities, rewiring the digital circuits of sensations by disrupting the normativized physiological choreography of the body: "An eye that hears. Skin that speaks. ... A recombinant body with tactile smell, touch that arcs

across the color spectrum, chromatic sounds, muffled sweat, talking retinas and noise that bleeds, Lasix eyes, eyes that see but have no vision” (ctheorymultimedia.cornell.edu). Similarly, The Krokers’ (spoken words) and Steve Gibson’s (electronic music) artwork The BioTech Eye in the Tech Flesh exhibition decodes and superimposes new sensibilities, intelligibilities, and modes of perception. The BioTech Eye is the future eye, “a data catcher”, a digitized acoustics of the visual field, a bio-semiotic inscription, a non-signifying intensive network of sounds and words, a site for auditory emission of images and involuntary visual contractions of sounds, or an eye that has lost its ability to speak. These complex digital montages and hybridizations of visual, auditory, and tactile cartographies institute a new way of thinking about the body. New media forms and technologies lay out bodies’ sensorial cartographies in terms of linguistic-informational electronic and digital circuits.

Along similar lines, Norie Neumark and Maria Miranda’s Machine Organs exhibition in the Transgenic Flesh section of the Tech Flesh, encompasses a series of bodily functions uploaded into the wired membranes of the net: digestion machine, heart pump machine, breath machine, and x-ray vision machine. The artwork provides users with four links, links to digestion, heart pump, breath, and x-ray vision machines. Digestion Machine consists of incessantly repeating gulping sound, the image of two bouncing spheres, and a blinking group of words that diagonally move across the screen. Digestion is symbolized with a mechanical sound, a short and compressed version of the processes of putting the food in the mouth, salivation, pushing the food around, chewing, and swallowing. This amplified sound of the act of digesting becomes the material fabric of the phrases cutting the screen diagonally: “organ of hunger”, “hungry for information”, and “computers as stomach and intestines” (ctheorymultimedia.cornell.edu).



These bodily processes and functions are textually, visually, and acoustically coded and displayed as a combination of meat, sound, image, and code. Machine Organs lays out a digital, hallucinatory cartography of the fragmented body, complex hybridizations of uncanny whisperings, blinking images, flickering sounds, and words bursting out uncontrollably. It is an artistic display of the body as a multimedia object that fuses the visual, auditory, and linguistic systems of communication. Bodily interiority is portrayed by the artists as a delusional landscape, an unknown territory full of strange, dream-like sounds conflated with spasmodic images and twitching words. Hallucinating and delusional organs embedded within the electronic and digital circuitry of the computer bring the organic functions of the body together with the informational-linguistic codifications. This bioinformatic codification of the bodily processes reconfigures the body's biological territory in terms of linguistic codes that process and display information at sensorial and affective levels. As Neumark and Miranda state, "messy, unexpected eruptions, noisy, undisciplined digestion, strange unpredictable excretions. Computers as stomach and intestines" (ctheorymultimedia.cornell.edu).

Echoing Lacan's idea of "delusional endoscopies that the subject has of what is happening inside his stomach or lungs... of what goes on inside the system of nerve fibers" (*The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis* 35), this is a media-based transmission of bodily interiority in the form of a digital psychophysical landscape, manifesting a coordination between the territorial distribution of the body parts and their linguistic codification within the networks of desire. Lacan's notion of metabolic imagery points towards structural affinities, contacts, and contiguities between territorial significations of desire and psychophysical responses at the level of the sexual reproducibility of images.

The bodily organs as sexual images manifest their linguistic-informational codification via the erotic zones. This directly bears on the question of the erotization of language, the bioinformatic codification of sexuality by the symbolic apparatus of desire.

The biological register provides an interface to the symbolic apparatus that stimulates the physiological mechanisms of the body to send images and messages via nerve impulses, the electric signals that transmit information. This visceral wiring of the body through the network of signifiers demonstrates that signifiers operate as signaling nerves that transmit affective information. Signifiers operate as the unconscious animators of the bodily organs that are caught up in or captured by the networks of desire. These organ-instruments embedded in the networks of signifiers not only address the relationship between sexuality and signification but also redefines desire in terms of the technological inscription of the erotic zones in the symbolic apparatus of desire. The bioinformatic circuitry of the signifying network corresponds to the territorial distribution of the sexualized codes.

The artwork Machine Organs' illustration of the complex hybridizations of the bodily organs and drives into the circuits of signifying networks brings up the question of how the symbolic apparatus of desire scans and remotely activates the intensive multimedia network of bodily drives. Digestion Machine, for example, articulates the territorial/geographical alignment of the mouth as it is coded in the signifying networks of desire as the "organ of hunger," which becomes the speaking organ that is "hungry for information". The notion of "food as information" points out the structural affinities between the informational-linguistic register and the biological register of the oral drive. Concerning the mouth as the regulator and transmitter of the oral-drive circuit, Lacan writes:

Why are the so-called erogenous zones recognized only in those points that are differentiated by us for their rim-like structure? Why does one speak of the mouth and not of the oesophagus, or the stomach? They participate just as much in the oral function. But at the erogenous level we speak of the mouth, of the lips and the teeth, of what Homer calls the enclosure of the teeth. (*The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* 168-169)

The generation of the oral drive relies upon the inscription of the mouth in the symbolic apparatus as the instrument of the oral-drive. It is the body apparatus or the medium through which the oral drive comes into existence. However, the mouth becomes the organ-instrument of the oral-drive only if the oral-drive recognizes itself as the mouth in the symbolic apparatus of desire. By recognizing the mouth as the operator of the oral-drive, the oral-drive simultaneously recognizes itself in the symbolic apparatus and becomes recognized by the symbolic apparatus as the mouth. The mouth as the organ-instrument of the oral-drive is the oral drive's multimedia. However, the question still remains: why among all these organs (oesophagus, stomach, etc.) that participate in the satisfaction of the oral-drive is it the mouth that is caught in the signifying networks of desire as the erogenous zone of the oral-stage?

As the erogenous zone of the oral drive, the mouth is a boundary, limit, or point of contact that distinguishes the inside from the outside. The oral drive is channeled through the mouth because it is a territorial zone of erotic contact on the limit of the inside and the outside, a topological symbolic operator through which the self opens itself to the other. It is through the mouth that the linguistic register of the oral drive becomes coordinated with its bodily territorial distribution. In other words, the mouth is the bio-informatic and linguistic regulator of the oral drive because it links the inside and the outside at the limit of both. In other words, the mouth is the medium of the oral drive only because the materiality of the mouth is the same as its signification. The medium of the oral drive is the mouth, an erotic hole that brings the inside and the outside together via the function of all the holes.

To this end, Digestion Machine lays out the abjective landscape of what the artists call the “frightening, messy, noisy unconscious”. It manifests the psychic system’s digital scansion and symbolic codification of the bodily drives in terms of the monstrous hybridizations, collages, and montages of the joyfully filthy digestions, cannibalistic oral sounds, disgusting wastes, bleeding excretions, constipated words, dirty vibrations, decaying images, speaking organs, engulfing noises, and infectious bodily fluids.

The term abject, according to Kristeva, refers to the non-signifying intensity of the boundary, mid-place, milieu, or the medium, which simultaneously links and distinguishes the one from the other, the inside from the outside. She writes:

Loathing an item of food, a piece of filth, waste, or dung. The spasms and vomiting that protect me. The repugnance, the retching that thrusts me to the side and turns me away from defilement, sewage, and muck ... "I" expel it. But since the food is not an "other" for "me," who am only in their desire, I expel myself, I spit myself out, I abject myself within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish myself. That detail, perhaps an insignificant one, but one that they ferret out, emphasize, evaluate, that trifle turns me inside out, guts sprawling; it is thus that they see that "I" am in the process of becoming an other at the expense of my own death. During that course in which "I" become, I give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit. Mute protest of the symptom, shattering violence of a convulsion that, to be sure, is inscribed in a symbolic system, but in which, without either wanting or being able to become integrated in order to answer to it, it reacts, it abreacts. It abjects. (*Powers of Horror* 2-3)

Abjection refers to this “process of becoming an other at the expense of my own death”

(3). Kristeva describes this process as turning inside out.

### **Trans-mediums**

Thinking about sex and gender from within the nature/culture dichotomy reproduces many other binaries. Here sex becomes associated with biology/body/materiality while gender is with discursive/linguistic/technological. If gender is explored from within these binaries, the notion of gender becomes a matter of technical and technological construction and sex a

matter of natural bodies. However, gender is not a construction as sex is not the pre-given natural orientation of the body. The body and bodily organs are already biological inscriptions within the matrix of the imaginary order. The symbolic order is the order of transmedia; organs are yet to be organized.

From this perspective, the network of signifiers become inscribed in biological bodies, virtualizing the actual bodies by extending them into technological mediums. At the same time, however, the virtual information becomes actualized through its materialization in technological mediums, which manifest themselves at the systems level. This complex interweaving of the virtual information and actual bodies simultaneously transforms the actual and the virtual through the virtualization of the actual or the actualization of the virtual. By emphasizing the complex interplay between information and materiality, they discuss the convergences between the biological and the technological. The body as we conceive it is already a bio-technological construct.

I argue that the subversion of the dualities of information/materiality, body/machine, virtuality/actuality, bodies/codes, and biological/technological does not lie in identifying interaction as something that takes place between two things. If what is at stake here is the seamless integration of the virtual information and actual bodies and the subversion of their distinction/duality, then the starting point of this kind of analysis should be the point where there is no distinction between them. Medium is that point of contact or the interface where interior is already exterior, information is already material, and actual is already virtual.

In order to begin with the notion of interaction, one needs to begin thinking with the notion of medium, the interface of the biological and technological systems. Simply for the reason that interaction takes place in mediums, or rather what is interactive is the medium

itself. If the medium is the interface or the point of contact between information and materiality, then the augmented transposition of the actual bodies and the digital codes, through which the interaction between the information and materiality constantly transforms itself, is nothing other than the constant transformation of the medium itself. What determines the form of the interaction between them is the act of mediation of medium with itself. I will describe medium's recursive transformation as the precondition for the emergence of information and materiality. Therefore, instead of describing the complex interweaving of information and materiality via describing the virtualization of the actual bodies or the actualization of the virtual codes, I argue that they are already presently the same. Instead of discussing how they become the same, I will argue that the same is always already not identical with itself because it is dispersed in multiple spatio-temporal realities. By adopting the notion of sameness from Deleuze and expanding it to cybernetics, I will ground my description of medium in its sameness, in medium's recursive act of becoming identical with itself by differentiating itself from itself.

Now, to further develop this idea, one must consider the notion of the limit. Given that marking out also means crossing out, the act of marking out simultaneously determines where something begins and ends. It is only at one's limits that one simultaneously is and is not. Therefore, medium is the limit, the excluded middle, the third term, the mid-place between the inside and outside. By framing or limiting itself, the system determines its outside and inside spaces simultaneously. This operational closure is the condition of system's appearance as well as disappearance. In other words, the system marks out its presence by crossing itself out. Because it is not itself outside itself, it turns back on itself at the moment it crosses over

its limit. In other words, it acts out of itself only to turn back onto itself. It marks out its presence by crossing over its limits at the moment it is present.

This act is self-differentiating because only by recursively turning back or closing up onto itself may it become identical with itself. That is, its singularity is constituted on its pure difference from itself. It becomes singular only in the condition of being infinitely differentiated in and from itself. Medium is this pure difference, a difference that differentiates the exterior from the interior by self-differentiating. Mediums' act of mediation with itself thus refers to its self-reflexivity.

Borrowing the idea from Latour, Parikka suggests approaching media as an action: "Media are an action of folding time, space and agencies; media are not the substance, or the form through which mediated actions take place but an environment of relations in which time, space and agency emerge" (35). Latour argues that "the object of a performative definition vanishes when it is no longer performed" (37). Systems do not exist prior to their enactment, but rather they produce themselves in action. Systems are then formed only when they act out or when they act out of themselves. Systems' actualization are dependent upon their constant transformation. They become actual only when they reform themselves out of the already assembled system. An assemblage then becomes actual while it is transforming itself into a new form. It is through this transformative act that information becomes generated:

If a given ensemble simply lies there, then it is invisible and nothing can be said about it. The ensemble generates no trace and produces no information whatsoever; if it is visible, then it is being performed and will then generate new and interesting data. (Latour 31)

One might then argue that the generative act is performative. The term performance refers here to the movement which governs the generation and transformation of systems by

putting them into action. It is through this action that the various components and parts of a system relay and process information, producing complex interactive systems.

As a result, this kind of complex interactivity leads to the emergence of new forms. Interaction with the environment operates as a mechanism that links discrete and dynamic components or parts together to constitute various sets of configurations. It is in this way that these complex systems are able to produce new codes, configurations, and constellations.

It is not possible to understand the compounding and interweaving of biological and technological systems from this dualistic perspective. What makes interaction possible is the medium, which situates them as one and the other. In order to conceive of these systems in terms of reflexivity, emergency, complexity, dynamism and as autonomously evolving and transforming systems, one should focus on the medium as the system that makes interaction possible. In that sense, affection is not about embodiment, bodies, and sensations. On the contrary, what is auto-affective is the medium itself, that is, the disjunctive unity of the technological and biological.

Much of the debate in studying the aesthetic dimensions of technology and science within the context of new media technologies revolves around the complex compounding of the biological and technological, with a particular emphasis on the interaction between the human/nonhuman, bodies/codes, actual/virtual, information/materiality, and machines/bodies. However, this interaction is not anchored in the notion of medium as an act or a machinic performance that makes possible a multiplicity of generative spatio-temporal combinations and hybridizations. In bringing cybernetics into discussion, my purpose is to demonstrate that the interaction between systems and their environments operate as a mechanism that links discrete and dynamic components or parts together. I argue that a philosophical approach to



cybernetics plays a crucial role in understanding self-generating, agentive, dynamic, randomly and autonomously evolving systems. Rather than beginning with the dichotomy of virtual information and actual bodies, I emphasize the distinctive role of the medium in bridging the gap between the virtual information and actual bodies, or biological and technological systems. My analysis of new media aesthetics with regard to this interrelated and interactive performance of the disparate and heterogeneous components or parts of systems and networks only allows a more comprehensive articulation of mediums as systems, but also defines performativity in terms of spatiality and temporality. I depart from the established definitions of the concept of performativity, which emerged with J. L. Austin's term "performative utterance" in his speech act theory, and was extended from there by thinkers such as John Searle, Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler to philosophy, gender theory, identity theory, and queer politics. By relating performativity to new media technologies and aesthetics via agency of systems and networks, I want to demonstrate that the performative act is neither discursive nor non-discursive, it is spatio-temporal.

I ground my description of medium in its sameness, in medium's recursive act of becoming identical with itself by differentiating itself from itself. I approach interaction in terms of the act of mediation of medium with itself. Rather than focusing on the duality of the biological and the technological as extensions of each other co-constructing the environment or medium, I argue the medium's act of recursive self-differentiation constitutes the biological and technological as different categories. The difference here is not in one or the other but in their interaction because acts create differences--not the reverse. In other words, I reformulate the circulation of things among different mediums as acts, not as extensions or projections.

## **Chapter 2: Heterotopias in Turkish Video and Installations**

In order to think about sex, sexuality and gender, we have to look at the relationship of the body with space, the placement of the body in space, and the way space or the medium itself becomes embodied. In my previous, I studied the discursive geography of the body and bodily sites as geographical signifiers. I analyzed the biotechnological reproducibility of bodily images, or rather, images as bodily signifiers. I examined the techno-sexual reproduction and signification of bodily sites as these sites implicate the technical and technological inscription of biological organs. In other words, I examined the ways in which the biological network of the body parallels the complex signifying networks of the symbolic apparatus of desire. This simulacral form of techno-sexual distribution of bodily organs as images demonstrates the overlap between the biological network of the body and networks of bodily signification: bodily zones as they constitute the medium of the symbolic apparatus of sexuality and desire. I discussed the discursive and territorial distribution of bodily zones, biological organs as discursive tools, and discursive signification of the bodily geographies through networks of desire. Furthermore, I examined the inscription of bodily organs in the signifying networks of the symbolic apparatus and digital and hybrid montages of bodily drives and zones.

In this context, the third chapter will study the relationship between space, body and sexuality. But what needs to be investigated initially is the subject itself of this chapter: the placement of the body in space, its relationships with the space and the medium it is placed in, and the networks created by these intercorporeal relationalities and orientations. In other words, I will examine the role of space and place in shaping intercorporeal networks of signification. Rather than exploring bodies' geographies of desires, I will examine here how these intercorporeal networks are formed through space and time and how these networks of signification stretch across diverse spaces

and times. This chapter foregrounds the notion of media in relation to the ideas of medium and mediation and discusses mediums as systems and networks that link heterogeneous elements such as organs, bodies, texts, objects, and artifacts stretching across and binding diverse spaces. I discuss these spaces in the context of intercorporeal networks of relationalities and orientations.

To this end, I corollate the notion of “postmodern geography” to the notion of bodily networks or intercorporeal networks of bodily significations. The notion of “postmodern geography” denotes a paradigm shift from representation, identity, and projection to locality, spatiality, temporality, and movement (Halberstam 1-22).

Halberstam writes that “Both Soja and Harvey claim that it was Foucault’s interviews on space and published lecture notes on ‘heterotopia’ that, as Soja puts it, created the conditions for postmodern geography” (10). She then adds, “The Foucault who inspires [them] is clearly the Foucault of Discipline and Punish, but not that of The History of Sexuality” (10). According to Halberstam, both Soja and Harvey neglect to “discuss the naturalization of time and space in relation to sexuality” (10). While Soja, Jameson, and Harvey define what they mean by postmodern geography through a political framework, Halberstam argues that the notion cannot be understood by merely examining capitalism, neoliberalism and globalization through a particular ideological framework and specifying the local-global relationship in a dialectical and oppositional relationship. Such an approach would fall short of explaining how space is sexualized and how this relates to spatial and temporal significations of the body (1-25). In Halberstam’s queer/trans conception of postmodern geography, “the notion of a body-centered identity gives way to a model that locates sexual subjectivities within and between embodiment, place, and practice” (5). Halberstam highlights the confluence of body politics and embodied places.

What interests me here is examining bodies within the context of intercorporeal networks of relationalities and orientations. I define the notion of body through

mediums of interactive and intercorporeal performance of heterogeneous elements and parts. How bodies become stretched across diverse spaces as hybrid combinations of many elements, not as discrete entities but as intricate webs and complex sets of relations, is what I will examine in this chapter. I will examine the body as a posthuman hybrid, which transgresses the distinction between the biological and technological systems.

In introducing and addressing the notion of heterotopia through spatiality and site, Foucault defines the twentieth century as the epoch of space (22). The epoch of space means here the epoch of simultaneity and juxtaposition, near and far, side-by-side, and dispersed. This way of addressing space and spatiality is not to ignore temporality, but rather to spatialize time and history. Space here has “taken for us the form of relations among sites” and it is “a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein,” “an ensemble of relations,” or “a sort of configuration” (Foucault 22). Heterogeneous objects belonging to different times and spaces exist side by side in an eclectic manner, rejecting a successive or sequential order. Heterotopia, as the name implies, refers to the heterogeneous nature of a composition, configuration and geography, or to spatially complex networks of relationalities inherent in a composition. Postmodern geography refers here to heterotopic spaces. Here, elements that stand sequentially, juxtaposed or overlapping, point to diverse, distinct, and different kinds of spaces and times. In a heterotopic space, “things are laid, placed, arranged in sites so very different from one another that it is impossible to find a place of residence for them, to define a common locus beneath them all” (24).

I will think about immigrant bodies through the heterotopic spaces they both constitute and are constituted through. Harvey writes that the “symbolic ordering of space and time provides a framework for experience through which we learn who or what we are in a society (214). While immigrants’ and refugees’ times and spaces are translated into other cultures’ time and spaces, they stay in between cultures as well as

in between past and future. The space that they inhabit is the space of present-time, or rather, the space of transition. Transitory spaces are neither here nor there. Because being in between brings diverse spaces and times that simultaneously function together, immigrant and refugee spaces are heterotopic spaces. In betweenness becomes the immigrants' identity. They define themselves through this in betweenness between different spaces and times. Returning back to Harvey's statement, immigrants and refugees construct themselves through the ambivalence and ambiguity that their being in between creates. Not being able to territorialize their experiences, they are without any territory and they experience the state of being neither here nor there as well as neither in the past nor in the future. The spaces they inhabit are the spaces between cultures, countries, and languages. Their experience of liminal spaces binds different times and spaces. The spaces they inhabit are transitory spaces or spaces of transition. As these spaces transform, they transform the experience of those who inhabit these spaces. Transitory spaces also mark the spaces of immigration as heterotopic spaces. Diverse spaces coming together form heterogeneous places or patchwork-like spaces. While analyzing Halil Altindere's artworks, I will be examining the way in which immigrant bodies relate to territory and land and how they perform their relatedness. Who are they, where are they going to, and how are they going there--all these questions are relevant to being immigrant. There is a process of ongoing negotiations over identity. In transit, everything becomes transitory. The ways in which the bodies relate to their surroundings transforms as what they are relating to is transforming. Altindere's work reveals how these transformations, and how being in a constant state of transformation, is embodied by immigrants. Altindere depicts the sensorial and affective geography of these embodiments through movement, performance, music and words. One witnesses the movement of the bodies within and across boundaries as these bodies perform their lack of belonging.

Commonality functions as a form of sociality that takes place between

immigrants spatially. This produces an ‘us versus them’ logic. Wilson argues that ‘spatial concepts’ such as ‘frontier’, ‘border’, ‘belonging’, ‘margin’, and ‘borderland’ are used when talking about various encounters between people from different geographical and cultural sites (453). These ‘spatial concepts’ are experienced and embodied by the bodies at the border, both on physical and actual level and on imaginary level.

Immigrants occupy what Dentice and Dietert calls the space of “transitional liminality” (70). In the process of transitioning from one identity into another, immigrants inhabit in between places. In between places are inhabited by a collective group of people, all in search of belonging to a certain place instead of inhabiting places that are neither here nor there. In between places are fluid and dynamic and they symbolize a constant transformation. While inhabiting a liminal place may be emancipatory for some, others look for solid or solidified boundaries rather than inhabiting fluid and unstable places.

How do the bodies of immigrants and refugees determine and embody borders? How does border crossing reestablish the boundaries of the culture that the immigrant bodies are failing to be a part of? How do bodies function as the borders or determine the borders while being determined by them? Returning back to Harvey, I will ponder how bodies function as the symbolic markers of boundaries. Boundaries constitute the spatial markers of the states and sensibilities of being an immigrant in an alien country. Discursive and material conditions of the bodies constitute and are constituted by the boundaries of here and there. As immigrants move from here towards there and frequently change places, they establish new boundaries.

Considering the places in transit, bodies’ ties to these places become transitory. Altindere’s videos display the experiences and manifestations of being in transitional places. Altindere depict bodies as they are in constant movement and transition, transitioning from one place to another. In his videos, we see bodies’ mobility as this

mobility is experienced in transing the boundaries, the boundaries symbolized in his video work as barbed wires. As Smith, Swanson, Gökariksel indicate, belonging to a place means “bodily territorializations and territorializations of the body” (259). Bodies are thus “active, territorial agents” that constitute the places that they are moving through (259). Transing various borders and boundaries, these bodies in motion discover and transform the uncharted territories of other cultures. Bodies are thus cast, in relation to other factors fueling movement and mobility, overflowing the boundaries and borders. It is this spatiality of their movement that which creates or constitutes the places in transit. Borders symbolize the limit of the bodies and they determine the conditions of mobility. As bodies move across and through certain places, they embody these places. This embodiment is displayed in bodies’ movement and mobility. Bodies that are mobile go through flux and transformation. As things move through space and time, their experiences constitute the geographical and cultural coordinates of the places they inhabit. Altindere’s videos reflect the bodies’ performances as they move through places in transit.

At the border, they are in a liminal space, they belong nowhere. It is this encounter at the border with another that transforms both the host country and the immigrants. Foucault writes:

If it is the other of two places, perhaps one place in opposition to the other place, forming a dialectic, a feedback mechanism between one and the other that generates the next place, a hybrid that becomes the generator of a new cycle of dialectics. (463)

At the limit of two spaces, a new hybrid space is formed. This hybridity includes elements from both cultural spaces. It is through this encounter with the other that these two spaces transform, paving the way to a third space, the space of in betweenness. Hybridity refers here to ambivalent spaces. Immigrants embody the state of being in two spaces simultaneously. This embodied space is neither the space of the country that they are coming from nor the country they are going to. The encounter between the two

opens up a new hybrid space. This hybrid space consists of both spaces and constitutes a new space and sensibilities that this new space embodies. It is in this context that I will first analyze Alptekin's artwork titled "Self-Heterotopia: Catching up with Self" and then I will analyze immigrant spaces as spaces of heterotopia in Altindere's artworks.

The work entitled Self-Heterotopia: Catching up with Self is from Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin's Heterotopia series, produced in the 1990s and 2000s, part of which Alptekin created on his own and part with Michael D. Morris, the piece assembles about 100 framed objects of various dimensions in a shape that resembles the geographical map of Turkey. Not related to one another before exhibition and collected from various geographies and places, these objects were taken out of their own signifying contexts and placed in different discursive contexts, forming multiple, new, and diverse signification networks. These objects lack any geographical references because they are decontextualized. The quantitative properties of the objects are as important as the qualitative ones, as quantitative properties refer to the concepts of collection as well as archival propagation and accumulation. Alptekin exhibits objects, photographs, texts, and images he collects from various countries and cities throughout his travels by bringing together various mediums and multimedia such as installation art, photography, video, and painting. Here notions such as fragmentation, deterritorialization, lack of placement, and disarrangement are at least as significant as the notion of being placed together. The coexistence and juxtaposition of eclectic times and spaces form multiple networks of relations through the interrelations between the objects. The objects set up various affinities, associations, and affiliations through diverse networks of relations. The work assembles situations, images, writings, and objects on a non-hierarchical plane and invites the participant to understand and sense this map of juxtaposition.

As long as the juxtaposition of these sections does not form a narrative sequence,



diverse and multiple situations and sensations will emerge. When dissociated sections are narrated in a story structure, they form a story that advances in a linear sequence, beyond their adjacent sections. A fixed and categorized story will form the temporality of a normative narrative. The coming together of objects that refuse to become a narrative on the plane of relationality, on the other hand, will allow a circulation of affects and sensibilities to emerge, rather than coded emotions. As such, objects belonging to different times and spaces can exist on an affective plane. When objects from different urban and cultural geographies are deprived of their context and recontextualized, their naturalized instrumentality and technicality become denaturalized.

As seen above, in Alptekin's Self-Heterotopia, the found objects exhibited side by side include individual objects such as marriage photos, the figure of Şahmaran, a hybrid creature in Iraqi, Persian and Anatolian mythology, flippers, coat hangers, towels, paintings, a knife, the photo of an old woman, drawings, an oven mitt, and collections of objects exhibited in frames. A significant portion of the framed objects, photos, and drawings form separate collections, or constitute Warholesque repeating drawings. While the installation itself is a collection and assemblage, some of the items it includes also incorporate the collecting, repeating, duplicating, and assembling properties of the installation and its archival structure within themselves. While the collection items look like individual objects within the whole, they also repeat the structure of the installation. Considered in the light of the part-whole relationship, each item is part of the whole only as long as the whole is part of each item itself. Basically, each composition begets itself by transforming the whole from within. Each distribution is determined as part of the relational whole; at the same time, the whole is determined as part of each distribution. Each frame transcends the whole by encompassing the whole as the whole it was. Therefore, the whole repeats, transforms and multiplies itself within each item in differing frames, degrees and levels.

The main themes of Alptekin's works are mobility, the cross-cultural circulation of signs, objects and images, the nomadic lifestyle, travelling to foreign lands and territories, the idea of home, transitory spaces such as hotels and bars, global and local circulations, globalization, translocation, and inter-and-trans-cultural objects. The content of his work is in line with the formal properties of the mediums he uses to execute his work, such as installation art, collage, objects, drawings, and video. The multimedia works Alptekin creates resemble the eclectic and multilayered structure of the work. The dynamism and actuality in Alptekin's work emerges with the relocation or replacement of the objects he brings from various geographies to the artwork. Each object added to or subtracted from the Heterotopia's archive forms a unique and new installation. New installations occur through the dislocation and redistribution of all the objects.

After Alptekin's death, the Grup Gripi Collective, started in 1991 by Alptekin and his graduate students Ali Cindoruk, Eray Makal and Erhan Muratoğlu, reinterpreted Alptekin's library and archive in 2013 with the exhibition Driftmentary: Index + Circulation. This reinterpetative project, exhibited at Salt Galata, recirculated Alptekin's archive by indexing his texts, collected objects, images, writings, situations, and drawings. Arguing that one needs to look at the Turkey of the 1990s to better understand Alptekin's work, the collective cited that the plentitude of objects and images circulated at the time was due to the hundreds of flea markets that emerged during the period. The economic and cultural changes that occurred with the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc and the Soviet Union caused thousands of objects to travel from these countries to Turkey and be sold at the flea markets. Often called "Russian markets", these markets sold medals, vodka bottles, knives, matchboxes, photos, household items, and all kinds of objects, in addition to mechanical and technological tools, on counters or sheets spread on the ground.

Alptekin's heterotopic space demonstrates various components and parts of the

installation interacting with one another, producing multiple interacting objects and images. Interaction among these objects and images takes place in multiple spatial and temporal realities that are interlocked within each other. Therefore, relationalities among these items or elements are multi-layered, asynchronous, decentralized, chaotic, non-linear, distributed, and dissociative. These objects collect different spatialities and temporalities under a common framework, and the objects stand together because they are delimited and brought together by a framework. And because they exist side by side by forming relations, the artwork itself is heterotopic. The assembly of the objects is a result of them being separated from the outside through a certain framework or delimitation. In this sense, the work is built on dynamics that closes in on itself, which at the same time make this turning in impossible. Closing in on itself with its framework and borders, the work makes the closure simultaneously possible and impossible. With the installation referring to itself, the heterotopic space closes in on itself, but at the same time, by closing in on itself, it differentiates itself from its out-of-field or outside. Therefore, the act of closing in on itself and separating itself from the other are in fact the same act. To this end, Foucault writes about the boat being a heterotopic space as follows:

The boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea and that, from port to port, from tack to tack, from brothel to brothel, it goes as far as the colonies in search of the most precious treasures they conceal in their gardens... The ship is the heterotopia par excellence. (27)

Other examples to heterotopias are rest homes, psychiatric hospitals, prisons, retirement homes where “adolescents, menstruating women, pregnant women, the elderly, etc” reside (23). In addition to this, cemeteries, sacred spaces, museums, libraries, and spaces that are “capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces” can be given as examples to heterotopic places (27). Foucault also cites transit spaces as examples of heterotopic space:

For example, describing the set of relations that define the sites of transportation, streets, trains (a train is an extraordinary bundle of relations because it is something through which one goes, it is also something by means of which one can go from one point to another, and then it is also something that goes by). (24)

As the train moves from one place to the other, it also takes those that are to go to that place to their destinations. Therefore, we can think of the train as a means of getting from one place to the other. As it connects one place to another, the train itself becomes instrumentalized as a means of connection. Considering that this instrumentality of the train is its reason to exist, we can understand that the train is equivalent to the space it constitutes in the act of creating a transit space, and that as an instrument, it is equivalent to its instrumentality. Going from one place to the other, the train takes not only its occupants but also itself to a destination. As it becomes a transitional space, it also transitions those that will be transported. In this sense, we can think of the heterotopic space as a self-referential meta-medium.

Foucault also cites the mirror as an example of a heterotopic space. When we look at the mirror, we see ourselves in a virtual space where we do not exist, a space that is not real: “I see myself there where I am not... I am over there, there where I am not... Where I am absent” (23). The mirror is present and real to the extent that it contains such a virtual space, and to the extent that it is absent. Because I can constitute myself as real and present through an absent and virtual space, and because I can only make myself actual and present by becoming doubled through such a space, the mirror is a heterotopic space. Foucault claims that it is thanks to this space that is simultaneously here and there, absent and present, that the “I” closes in on itself:

Starting from this gaze that is, as it were directed toward me from the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself, I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and reconstitute myself there where I am. The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy ... at once absolutely real ... and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there. (26)

For the body, which can only be here and present in relation to those that are there and absent, the presence of the possibilities of movement and the potential to act points to a spatial division between the one and the other. Dividing and orienting as it is subjected to the others in its relation to them, the body turns back to itself and becomes a simulacrum of itself. By becoming a simulacrum itself, the body has become a simulacrum of itself.

The technicality of the body begins to occur through recognizing the technicality of other bodily networks. The body appropriates this technicality to its own body. Appropriation here does not refer to a mimetic relationship like mirroring or identification. It refers to the third space where this identification is located. Thus, what I refer to here with the body that has become a simulacrum of itself does not correspond to the mirroring of Lacan's imaginary order. I refer to the symbolic order that is beyond the real and imaginary orders and that provides the conditions of that mirroring, which connects the one with others. For the doubling by means of the mirror to take place, a third space must exist that actualizes this mirroring relationship. This is the space of the simulacrum.

Heterotopic spaces can be read as the spaces of simulacra. Simulacra refer to spaces that are at once real and imaginary, or rather, to spaces where one cannot distinguish the difference between the real and the imaginary. Deleuze gives a more precise account of the interaction between actual and virtual spaces, and the loss of differentiation between real and imaginary spaces:

The real object is reflected in a mirror-image as in the virtual object which, from its side and simultaneously, envelops or reflects the real: there is coalescence between the two. There is formation of an image with two sides, actual and virtual. (8)

In the space of mirror, the virtual image reflects the actual object back onto the actual object, which then reflects the virtual image it has enveloped back again onto the virtual image. This exchange of reflections between the virtual and actual images

repeats itself. However, in each repetition, the relationship between the virtual and the actual transforms itself. The virtual image imitates the actual one, which then imitates its own imitation and reflects it back onto the virtual image. The repetition of the imitations constantly disguises itself. It becomes impossible to distinguish one from the other. Therefore, the repetition of the imitations is, indeed, the differentiation of the imitations. Imitations differentiate, because exact imitation is not possible: “Simulacra themselves [...] show the impossibility of distinguishing them from originals or from models” (Deleuze 9). Simulacra thus belong to the realm of the symbolic order:

Distinct from the real and imaginary, the symbolic cannot be defined by either pre-existing realities to which it would refer and which it would designate, or by the imaginary or conceptual contents which it would implicate, and which would give it a signification. (4)

This text makes two points. First, the pre-existing realities stand here for the material world. Second, the imaginary denotes the conceptual world. That is to say, the symbol does not belong to either the conceptual or the material domain. Rather, it can only be comprehended within the horizon of another order: “Finally, in depth we can distinguish axiomatic varieties which determine a common axiom for differential relations of a different order” (5). The symbolic is the third order complementing the real and the imaginary orders. More precisely, the symbol forms the third term with regard to the real and the imaginary: “We can enumerate the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic: 1, 2, 3” (6). Therefore, the symbolic order refers here to the differential relations of a third order. This third order is the order through which the actual object is the same with its virtual double: “The actual image and its virtual image thus constitute the smallest internal circuit. [...] Distinct, but indiscernible, such are the actual and the virtual, which are in continual exchange. [...] The actual–virtual couple thus immediately extends [itself]” (7). Simulacrum, then, refers to the overlap of the actual/real/material and the virtual/unreal/immaterial places.

## Mediums

Given that the emergence of information and communication technologies extended media studies to studying systems and networks as media objects, or studying objects and bodies as mediums, foregrounding the notion of media in the notions of medium and mediation is crucial. The relationship between the technological and the biological systems has extended media studies from its technical, social, political, and cultural aspects to studying natural or biological constructs as media, or anything as media, including artifacts, instruments, concepts, bodies, skins, sensations, and affects.

This theoretical approach to media is described by Guattari, Weibel, and Manovich, among many others, as the post-medium or post-media condition (Guattari 291-307; Weibel, Metamute.org; Manovich, Manovich.net). It is interesting to note here that this perspective implicitly claims that media's self-referentiality is embedded in its posteriority. What is thus noteworthy is the interlocking themes of post-media and new media. As such, it is not farfetched to suggest that the prefix "new" contains within it media's posteriority with respect to itself. Exploring post-media condition then entails exploring media's temporality and spatiality, particularly in terms of identifying medium as a hinge between diverse spaces and times. A singular technological object's enframing of distinct historical moments proposes a discontinuous, non-linear, and disjunctive conception of history. This argument links the disjunction between the content and medium to the technological relationality of media objects and traces the complex interweaving and overlapping of distinct times and spaces.

The blurring of this distinction between the biological and technological and its role in defining mediums as systems and networks also appears in Guattari's incorporation of cybernetic and ecological frameworks into media systems and networks in describing a medium as a process or an act of enframing that brings heterogeneous elements together within a particular context (Guattari, *The Three*

*Ecologies* 15-46). This perspective contributes to opening media studies onto a broad range of interdisciplinary work and diversity of approaches – from a media ecological perspective, examining mediums as ecological networks or environmental territories, to the analysis of biological media such as digital organisms, viruses, bacteria, parasites and from a media archaeological method to a historiographical approach, expanding the study of media objects from the physical artifacts, tools, and devices to texts, documents, descriptions, books, illustrations, that is, to discursive as well as non-discursive media, to sensations, perceptions, affects, and their apparatuses.

In order to examine mediums as autonomously operating auto-referential assemblages that heterarchically link animals, plants, concepts, bodies, sensations, affects, tools, and devices in various media ecosystems, Guattari discusses the interactions among systems and their environments. Guattari's conception of the notion of medium from the perspective of ecology, cybernetics, anthropology, and psychoanalysis examines information and communication systems not merely in terms of the technological devices themselves but rather as operating systems moderating information flow among different mediums and bodies such as humans, machines, animals, objects, and plants (15-46). Like Kittler, Guattari also discusses post-media in terms of the integration of previously different mediums, however, his conception of assemblage anchors media's multiplicity in the medium's operation as a system that is constituted by its technical, discursive, material, practical, social, and political elements.

Foregrounding the post-media condition in assemblages that integrate discursive, technical, social, cultural, and political systems rather than in the erasure of the medium enables defining medium in terms of the interactive performance of its heterogeneous parts and elements, which are brought together via the medium's act of enframing, the aesthetic act through which the intensities, forces, and flows of nature are contracted or extended within its framework (Grosz 1-25). Similarly, Sterling defines his notion of



spine as a virtual/actual entity and as “a set of relationships first and always, and an object now and then” (77) which is “not about the material object, but where it came from, where it is, how long it stays there, when it goes away, and what comes next” (109).

Conceiving of mediums as systems and networks shifts our understanding of things, because it is no longer possible to consider physical artifacts, objects, and tools as stable and concrete things that circulate amongst different mediums. Instead, the act of circulation itself constitutes the identity of things as mediums. In other words, something becomes identical with itself by becoming the medium that constructs relationalities amongst the parts and elements of different systems. Describing things in terms of relationalities is anchored in describing them as acts that link discrete and dynamic components or parts together. Here relationality as enactment addresses the dynamic interactions between simulated environments and bodies in terms of the two-way feedback loops: “a two-way relation, a feedback loop between biologically evolved capabilities and a richly technological environment” (Hayles 233). This reformulates the circulation of things among different mediums as acts, not as extensions or projections.

By arguing that the emergence of new technologies facilitated a shift from an “object-oriented to a system-oriented culture,” Burnham states that the shift from the physical and technical objects to complex technological systems laid the foundations for a new kind of aesthetics, the aesthetics of information processing and generating systems. Burnham’s description of information-processing systems as “unobjects” corresponds to his conception of systems as aesthetic mediums. According to Burnham, these information-processing systems are the new machines, the cybernetic systems which will transform the passive one-way contemplative relationship between the viewer and the art object into the active two-way communication that operates via interactive feedback loops of information between user-participants and the artworks

(31-35).

Considering the interaction between the artwork and the user-participant, there is not any unified system such as the spectator and the artwork, but rather there are many components and parts of these two systems that interact with each other. Both the artwork and the user-participant are themselves systems with many components and parts. These components or parts interact with each other and form sub-systems. Thus, there are many systems within systems. These elements or parts constantly interact with each other to form new systems. Systems operating in this manner develop complexity through simultaneous interactions and constant overlapping of its components, resulting in the emergence of complex patterns.

To further develop the interactivity between the participant and the artwork, we can examine Hayles' Borges reference. Hayles refers to this story to examine the cybernetic notion of reflexivity (8). The narrator in Borges' story dreams of a virtual student to be actually existing in the real world. It is through this dream that he finds out that the real world he is living in is also the virtual creation of someone else's dream. He discovers that he is the virtual dream image of someone else only because he now observes himself from outside of himself as the narrator who created the student. By observing himself as a system to be observed from outside of himself, he is observing the observer as an observed system. If, in order to observe himself observing himself he recursively needs to act out of himself only to turn back on himself, then the inside is determined as the outside of the outside. If the inside is the outside of the outside, then the outside space, from where he is observing himself as an observer observing himself, is nothing but the inside of the inside. Reflexivity might then be defined as the act that constitutes the outside as the inside of the inside, or vice versa. It is through this reflexive feedback loop that the system folds back onto itself, by folding the outside into the inside. There is thus only one movement: the infinite repetition of inside out (or outside in). Therefore, interaction cannot be conceived of as the

extension of the inside (observer) into the outside (observed system), as if these two systems exist prior to the act itself. It is the reflexive act of turning inside out, and hence outside in, which differentiates between the inside and the outside. This act is a self-differentiating act, a pure difference that differentiates the exterior from the interior by differentiating itself from itself. Now, if reflexivity refers to the movement through which the observer outside the observed system becomes incorporated into the observed system and becomes part of the observed system observing itself as a system to be observed, then meta-media is central to thinking about reflexivity.

Meta-media is a medium that takes its own content as reference for its form. Within the definition of new media, we see multiple kinds of media coming together. Thinking of installation as an art form and considering that new media first and foremost signifies exhibition techniques, we see that installation is a process, and the exhibited artwork is the process of installation itself. With installation, the medium is the artwork itself.

In his critique of representation and mimesis as the foundation of classical scientific knowledge, Murray also addresses the paradigm shift from knowledge that is grounded in single-point perspective and Euclidean systems of projection to the non-linear temporality, dynamism, interactivity, and multidimensionality inherent in new media. Spatial and temporal folding becomes entangled here with new media technologies and aesthetics. These and other issues, such as multi-modal perception and sensation, relational systems, emergent networks, immersive and responsive environments, emphasize the folding of information rather than its abstract projection and representation. By arguing against defining interaction in terms of the imaginary identification and mimetic projection between the user-participant and the artwork, Murray theorizes interaction as the act of folding. To this end, he analyzes digital aesthetics in terms of the temporality and spatiality of the Baroque fold (1-35). The fold operates here as the machinery of interactivity, through which the actual and virtual

interaction extends infinitely. By linking digital aesthetics to the Baroque folds, Murray subverts the disembodied gaze of the Cartesian optics, which privileges mind's eye over embodiment (5).

While the passive contemplation of an artwork is contingent upon visual perception, new media technologies disavows this ocularcentric view by defining the complex interplay between the machine and the human as an embodied interaction rather than a disembodied one. The machine and human coupling is conceived here in terms of systems and networks, attributing intelligence to the environment rather than to single and discrete artifacts. The interaction between the two is played out on the systemic level. This stresses the importance of the circuits between the biological and the technological, generating the concept of networked environments. As Burnham writes, "a dialogue evolves between the participants – the computer program and the human subject – so that both move beyond their original state" (31-35). What is at stake here is neither the human nor the machine, but rather the technological system that is constructed by the recursive feedback loops between the two. This technological system is considered here as a biotechnological entity, inventing its own modes of interaction and constantly transforming itself from one mode to another.

### **Spatial Networks**

In his new media artworks, Halil Altındere brings different times and spaces as well as distinct mediums together in order to circulate bodies, images, signs, ideas and objects. Altındere's new media artwork titled Welcome to Homeland (2016) was exhibited at the Sadık Paşa Mansion in Cihangir in September 2017. Like many other works by the artist, it was designed as a multimedia exhibition using video, painting, sculpture, photography, and 360 VR video. The exhibition was located across four rooms on two floors of the mansion. On the room to the right upon entering the mansion, there are four oil and acrylic works on canvas and two screen prints on

canvas. The painting and portrait of Muhammed Ahmed Faris with his friend and his family are surrounded by LED neon lights.

On the corridor close to the entrance of the room is a small 3D printed and hand-sculpted statue of Faris and his portrait in oil. Advancing down the corridor, in a hall-like room, we see the 360 VR video titled Journey to Mars, the AeroGarden and Seeds. Placed across from this area is the video titled Space Refugee, which incorporates archival footage, Skype interviews and fictional Mars images. On the upper floor, we see Altindere's 10-minute video titled Homeland, set to rap music that comments on the refugee crisis. In the next room, a photograph shows a plane with the Köfte Airlines designation, with numerous refugees sitting on the wings.

Space Refugee tells the story of Syrian Air Force pilot and astronaut Muhammed Ahmed Faris, the first Syrian and second Arab astronaut to go to space. Faris spent seven days in space in 1987 as part of the Syrian-Russian space program, was declared a hero in Syria, and, after the civil war that broke out in his country in 2011, walked to Turkey over Kilis in 2012 as a refugee and asylum seeker. Similarly, the video titled Homeland tells the story of Mohammad Abu Hajar, a rapper who lives in Berlin as a refugee. Both videos are essentially about the state of being a refugee, immigrant, and asylum seeker. Thinking about these issues along with the concepts of home and homeland, Altindere asks questions about belonging, homeland, territory, bodies, places, borders, and East / West. In Altindere's videos, we witness the performativity of bodies that have been unable to place themselves in the places they inhabit geopsychically or spatially.

In Space Refugee, we see Syrian astronaut Farsi floating in space in a spacesuit. In the absence of geographical references, Farsi becomes disoriented in space. With a space suit that helps him survive in space, Farsi is a biotechnological entity. Called an Extravehicular Mobility Unit, the spacesuit helps astronauts walk outside of their spacecrafts. In addition to this, it creates an earth like environment in space, helps one

endure extreme temperatures like -250 and + 250. It is actually a life support system, a prosthetic supplement required for astronauts' survival.

The video shows three separate spaces in articulation and at times in contrast: the underground, the surface of the Earth, and outer space. The transitions between the three spaces connect them to the artist's approach to the refugee and immigrant crisis. Altindere asks a very essential, and therefore very naive question through this personal story: If nobody wants the refugees, and everyone tells them to go elsewhere, what are the refugees to do? Should they go to space, to Mars? The power of this question lies in the fact that even though it is apparently asked jokingly at first, it is taken up as a genuine question. The thought of going to Mars is discussed genuinely through Skype interviews with NASA personnel, introducing both a fictional element and magical realism into the film. The colonization of Mars and the question regarding Syrian refugees are today's most current and real problems. While Mars symbolizes the utopia of outer space, the question of what to do with the scores of Syrian refugees who have nowhere to go is particularly important for Turkey, which hosts three million refugees.

As the three spaces of the underground, the surface of the Earth, and space are connected to one another in the video, we hear three languages: Arabic, Turkish, and English. Syria, Russia, and Turkey are involved in the story. The notion of freedom discussed through Mars finds reality as these triple notions operate together. According to the Outer Space Treaty of 1967, no country can claim property in outer space. Mars is not subject to sovereignty. While NASA personnel state that a lot of infrastructure must be sent to Mars for people to live on the planet, predict the approximate cost of the apparatus that will be required to sustain human life, speculate on what the buildings designed with space radiation in mind would look like, and emphasize that if people go to Mars, they will have to live in underground cities to avoid exposure to high doses of radiation, Farsi, as an astronaut who has been in space, claims that new cities can be built in Mars with freedom, pride, and justice there, absent from tyranny.

The fictionalisation of Mars as a utopian living space in the VR video titled Journey to Mars with 3D architecture design by Autobahn, gives the participant a chance to experience this utopia.

In space, the boundaries of the body and the world are transgressed. Going into space is indicative of technological advancement, but the video also specifies that space cannot be plotted and subjected to property ownership. Still, it sets outer space as a space waiting to be explored and colonized. It is unknown how and towards what the body would be oriented in a space without geographical and psychic references. What kind of a relation can bodies floating in space have with the void? Is Farsi's body in space an unidentified body that turns identity politics inside out, or is Farsi still a Syrian immigrant in space?

Floating in space with a space suit, Farsi is a biotechnological entity and an embodied form of hybridity. He brings the biological and the technological together and transgresses the boundary that separates human from machine. Farsi is a cyborg who resides neither here nor there, or rather, neither inside nor outside. With the concept of the cyborg, Haraway opposes the notion of considering the biological and the technological as separate. The cyborg is a conglomeration of patterns. It is a network that encompasses the human and the entities it is in relationship with, organic or inorganic. This is a machine-like network, not mechanical, but machinic (149-181). By refusing to establish the relationship between the biological and the technological through regimes of identification, the cyborg, in effect, refuses to define the relationship as a biomimetic hybrid. Considered in the light of the the nature-culture dichotomy, the notion of the biomimetic becomes part of the regimes of identification and representation. Haraway states that "the cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality" (292). Returning to my discussion of simulacra denoting the overlap and indistinguishability of actual and virtual spaces, it can be concluded that cyborg is a simulacrum. It is neither the product of imagination nor

material reality. It brings these different spaces together and transgresses the distinction between actual and virtual spaces by being both of them simultaneously. Rather than define the relationship between the biological and the technological through mimetic appropriation, Haraway defines the cyborg as a hybrid entity that has transgressed this dichotomy. According to Haraway, the cyborg is an entity or figure that transgresses the boundaries between animal, human and machine. The cyborg is a post-gender hybrid that does not experience pre-Oedipal and Oedipal scenarios. It is a radical alien that simultaneously exists and does not exist as itself and cannot be colonized by the regimes of representation and identification (149-181). The territory of the hybrid is extraterritorial, because it refers to alien that has simultaneously both placed and failed to place itself in a space or spaces.

Burton argues that the notion of hybrid should be viewed through the dichotomy of the biological and technological. The hybrid is “manifestly about movement through space and through time” (qtd. in Langer 108). Thinking of the notion of hybrid through movement in space, we understand that spaces can also become hybrid, or are hybrid. What does it mean for a space to be hybrid?

Every space contains diverse spatialities. Space is woven by the orientation of the body inside the space, and bodies are bound to space by these networks. Here, we can speak of a space that anticipates the subject and argue that the subject itself is constituted through one’s bodily movements in the space she inhabits. In this sense, we argue that the hybridity of the space itself carries many diverse potentials of spatializations and these spatializations are realized through diverse bodily relationalities and orientations.

The second video in the exhibition is titled Homeland. The video starts by showing derelict, vacant buildings in ruins. Syrian rapper Muhammed Abu Hajar, who lives in Berlin, accompanies the 4-part video with his rap songs. The video approaches the problems of immigrants and refugees through Abu Hajar’s perspective. After



images of derelict buildings, streets and roads, we see images of people, who probably are not refugees, practicing yoga and meditation by the sea. After these images, refugees walk on the sand towards the sea and put empty water bottles around their waists to swim. Simultaneously, we see the words “Welcome refugees” written on a flotation ring. In the third part of the video, we see a crowd of refugees trying to cross a border lined with barbed wire, rocking and pushing the wire. The refugee bodies are registered by the camera like sudden explosions, as constantly moving masses of bodies as they cross the wire. Abu Hajar crosses the wire and keeps singing his rap songs.

What is presented here is the presentation of the state of being together. In other words, the present multiplicities becoming local and taking position by being counted as a collective body. When something is presented as being “counted-as-one” (24), what the presentation displays is its there-is-ness, the place of taking place. Badiou argues that everything that is counted-as-one has a structure and that situation is a structured composition (83). If structure takes place through “count-as-one,” metastructure is the presentation of a thing’s situatedness. As what is exhibited here is the act of exhibition itself, an entity being present means the entity is performing its state of being present and heterogenous. Here, heterogeneity underlines how scattered, disparate parts assemble to form various and varying conglomerations and compositions. The complexities created by the assembly of such pieces exist through an act of enframing or enclosure. Towards the end, we see a large crowd of refugees who seem to have been walking for a long time. A train arrives with a heap of refugees on top. We see a similar image in the photo depicting the Köfte Airlines airplane, with refugees and immigrant sitting on top of the airplane and on the wings. The sea, barbed wire, trains, and roads are spaces inhabited by immigrants.

Returning back to Foucault’s description of heterotopic spaces as transit spaces, the spaces immigrants occupy in the video are liminal spaces, spaces that are in

between and that are simultaneously here and there, virtual and actual. At the limit or border that separates the one from the other, the entity is both itself and the other, or neither itself nor the other. Taking a cue from Lacan, Bhabha names this space the “third space,” as it is a space that brings together and delineates the notions of the one and the other, an in betweenness and liminality (Bhabha 53). This liminal space points to an experience of the border, to states of sensation of the borders. Because it differentiates the difference, border is where the difference turns in on itself. We witness these spaces along with Abu Hajar’s rap songs.

Rapping throughout the video, Abu Hajar starts what he specifies to be the first part by saying that “the first part was set in the past”, and comments that it “told him that tomorrow would come”. In this part, he uses symbols of family and homeland such as mother, sister and the home of his first love. After the first part where he takes on such themes as escaping from bombs and leaving his country, the second part is more clearly about the theme of home and points to the evolution of the notion of escape from home from thought to reality with elements such as crossing the wire. Lyrics such as “home is lost, home is dead, home is left behind”, “I jump over heaps of barbed wire... I can feel the blood in my hands”, and “being a foreigner is getting so beautiful” signifies that the family and homeland are left behind. The third part begins with the following lyrics: “Hello brother, I’m a refugee”. This part, where the state of being a refugee turns into an identity, touches on the experiences of border crossing and death during migration. In addition to referring to the drowning of refugees as they leave their countries on boats before they get to their destination, Abu Hajar touches on such topics such as refugee camps, poverty, and unemployment. He speaks of his inability to find a job with the following words: “But there’s no money. I’m looking for a job. They all say you’re Syrian, no jobs for you”. In the last part, he depicts the situation of refugees who have arrived in Berlin as they wait in front of the social services building for shelter, huddling together in the cold. During this wait, Abu Hajar asks, “Is this the

first class world of human rights and civilization”? He laments that he has been cast out of civilization and ends his song with the following lyrics: “You can never belittle me with the existence of refugees. The refugees stole, the refugees burned, the refugees raped, but they never integrated. Now tell me what integration is”.

Immigrant and refugee bodies are bodies that cannot find a place and cannot exist where they do find a place. They try not to lose the notions of home and belonging but are destined to gradually lose them. We see these bodies as multiple, unfolding, scattering and reassembling bodies in motion; body not as a distinct entity, but as an intricate complex set of relations that is singular in its hybridity. Altindere’s work questions the state of being unable to find a place, being unable to exist in language and in a body, constant displacement, and the mobility that these bring. By climbing on top of each other, most of the immigrant and refugees exhibit a collective existence. We witness an intercorporeal state of being unable to find a place, and its affects and sensibilities set to rap music. We see refugee and immigrant bodies who have left behind their homes and homelands, who have set out to find new homes, but are never fully accepted anywhere. We are unable to see where these immigrant bodies that exist in transit, on the road, in derelict buildings and streets –in other words, in liminal spaces and borders– are going and why they constantly have to be in transit. These spaces of transition constitute the heterotopic spaces of the artwork. The lack of geographical references for the orientation of the bodies indicates that we are facing bodies that collectively go to and fro between places. What we see here are bodies that, in the lack of geographical references, can never completely settle anywhere.

Considering the orientations of these bodies, we see that there are no geographical references to orient them, or if there are, they cannot be located. As we watch the bodies on a quest, never able to find a place and to settle into a geography, we see that the references of the urban geography leave them outside and on the margins, both physically and geopsychically. We can consider the work itself as the

sensorial discovery and reproduction of this lack of belonging.

The exhibition by Altındere curated by Ferran Barenblit in CA2M Madrid (2013) was a one-person exhibition that brought together the editorial, curatorial, and artistic practices of Altındere. The exhibition catalog features an interview with Altındere by Vasif Kortun, which includes important information regarding Altındere's artistic practice and contextualizes his output. I would like to briefly touch on 15 Minutes of Freedom, an unrealized work by Altındere which nevertheless carries important clues regarding his artistic practice. Intended for the Documenta exhibition, the work set out to take 6-7 prisoners from the Kassel Prison, which carries the properties of "panoptical architecture", with a helicopter to show them the public spaces of the city they live in for fifteen minutes. Specifying that the curators of the time were extremely sensitive regarding public space works to be executed in the city, Altındere states that "I wanted to show the public space to those who would not be able to view them while living in the city" (4). Among the reasons Altındere wanted to execute the work is that the prisoners viewing the city from above would invert the "panoptical surveillance," which is constituted through and within a biopolitical frame. The prisoners would thus go from being convicts under 24/7 surveillance to watching those who are watching them.

Foucault defines power and control through complex system or, one can argue, through biotechnological networks. To question identity politics means to question the mechanisms of power, authority and control. As we try to consider and understand the biopolitical techniques of power in the context of its operational mechanisms, we must also try to understand how these mechanisms constitute the body through time and space (21-22). The subject is subjected to power through spatio-temporal subordination. This subjection is also constitutive of a subject whose existence is assumed. Subjected to power through interpellation, the subject places itself in this space reserved for itself through the repetition, attributions, and references of this

interpellation. The space it places itself in has been designed before it becomes a subject. The subject can only become a subject when it places itself in this predesigned space.

Returning back to the notion of “postmodern geography” in the context of Altindere’s artworks that explore the themes of immigration and home in relation to the notion of space, we see that bodies are stretched across multiple connections and that this creates interrelated and intercorporeal bodily situations. In this sense, the body is a medium that connects multiple spaces and times, which is constituted by these very connections. As a medium, the body incorporates multiple networked relations.

Considering that the body’s parts are spread across space, that in the body’s relation with its surroundings all parts and their performativity are about moving in space, that with its orientations the body sets up for itself a medium made of flesh, and that the body exists in the space occupied by its techniques, we see that the body occupies a space and embodies this medium. Farsi floating in space in his with astronaut suit uses his surroundings for orientation and this orientation reveals his body’s biotechnological capacity. Space suits as biotechnological supplements determine Farsi’s bodily relationship with its surroundings. In the map of this relationship lies the biotechnicality that his body owns through its acts and orientations.

Farsi as a biotechnological hybrid depends on certain performativities that direct the body. This discourse takes the body as a network that has spread into its surroundings and internalized its connections with its environment rather than a part of nature or matter disconnected from its environment and moving on its own. The body embodies its connections with its surroundings. In fact, the body is the sum of these connections and patterns, or rather, these patterns form the body. These connections are fragmentary, and open to being re-established at any time.

Taking the geographical placement of bodies in the context of the one and the other, we understand that the one that is here is “here” through the other that is “there”

and simultaneously, the other that is here establishes its here-ness through the fact that the other is “there”. Every “here” encompasses different and multiple “theres”, and every there, different and multiple “heres”. Placement in space happens through the one and the other subjectifying the different and multiple ways of placement of the “here” and the “there”. This, while embodying space, spatializes bodies. In other words, the process of subjectification is conditioned upon the differences of spatial orientations.

Every space contains multiple mechanisms of corporeality. Every space forms different relations with control, power, and authority, and these relations subject the body to the content of control, as well as holding in itself the techniques, practices, strategies, and tactics for subverting control relationships. Even though biopolitical techniques embody the subject or subjectivities with the technologies of control, bodies also incorporate a great many potentials that have not yet been materialized.

Space is the place of exhibition of bodily or inter-bodily relations. As the ways the body relates to its surroundings change, the body’s relationship with the space also transforms. When the static and fixed relationships in the space are severed or fall apart, the way all the objects in the space connect with each other and with the space transform. At the moment when these relationships fall apart or dissolve, it is revealed that bodies we see as solid, static, and stable are in fact fluid and dynamic. Objects and things are permeable and transitive, articulating one another in various ways. Considering that this is spread over a process, we recognize that the object is processual. Since the installation of the objects, placement in space, and solidification happen through a process, the object incorporates diverse temporalities. What matters is what kind of networks one connects with the parts of the other networks and what kinds of new subjectivities are created through these connections.

To break something down means to reveal the various modes of existence brought together by its parts and to see how it is fixed, constituted, and solidified in a particular spatial and temporal order. By breaking them down, these parts are included

in a flow again and are embodied in different ways. The placement of a thing and its state of being connected to a place shows that it is local. That which is local is that which has a place, that which has placed itself, and the performativity of the connections this placement builds with its surroundings is fixed and frozen. To put them back in motion is to deterritorialize a thing that is territorialized. It is to reveal the performativity and technique of the relation it establishes with the place. It is in this way that we see where, how, and when that which has placed itself is placed.

These different ways of connection and relating in formation make up various subjectivities. Identity emerges through the categorization of these subjectivities. And the redistribution of these subjectivities in every context causes the falling apart of identity and the relations of identification that it brings. The embodiment, becoming-body of the body, is possible through bodily techniques. These bodily techniques become apparent in the constitution of the body in space, as well as in the constituted space becoming the body itself.

As the body transitions, it constitutes the site where it is situated as a site that can be made trans. What becomes trans here is neither the body nor the space. If we take the body as a constantly transforming entity or material, we see that the body and the site simultaneously trans-form one another and change and become transformed together. This process itself can be referred to the process of spatialization. Here, the body is spatialized with/in space.

To think of something as a transcultural form does not mean depriving it of its locality, or more precisely, not regarding the territory that it is localized in. The concept transcultural points to how the locality of a thing contains the global, and how this content is re-contextualized to become local again. To become connected to a place, the subject localizes it. When the coordinates of the space it localizes and places itself within are parallel with the coordinates of the body in the space, the subject has placed itself in the space. The map of the orientations of the subject in the space is the map of

the body's relations with the space. The technicality of this relationship shows the orientations of the body in the space. The localization of these orientations happens through the placement of the body in space. This placement does not only include the relation of the body with the space, but also determines the beyond of the space and the dynamics and mechanisms of the placement of the beyond. In other words, the outside determines its borders. This border refers to the border of the body's movements in the space. But how does a body placed in the space change place, and thus create new embodiments? In other words, how does the body get oriented anew and differently, and how does it localize this way of orientation?

The body is placed in space through the objects being "there" in the space designating the point where the body stands, or the "here", and the objects perceived from the "here" becoming "there." Every "there" turns inside out to become a "here," and every "here" turns inside out to become a "there". Here, by reflexivity, I refer to a self-reflexive movement. For the body to become a "here", it needs to close in on itself. The distribution of objects in the space is possible through the "here", the point where the subject stands, positioning it in accordance with this distribution. This distribution depends on the relationships between the objects being determined. This connection becomes embodied as the body moves in space. As this connection embodies the relations between the objects, it objectifies itself. Butler's ambivalence to agency that has to do with the existence of a subject that objectifies this activity and can also view itself as an object. Viewing the reflexivity of the body with the activity in the space through the concept of performativity in Butler, we can say: "Conscience is a means for the subject becoming an object for itself, to reflect on itself constituting itself in a reflective and reflexive way" (30).

At the basis of all these definitions are the relations, or more precisely, the ways of relating of the one with the other or others. What is meant with ways of relating here is not the adding up of existing relations, but quite to the contrary, the falling apart of



the ways of relating of previously related situations and senses and how new connections are established in this falling apart.

The constitution and existence of the subject happens through its interdependence with the objects and subjects around it. These states and situations of interdependence constitute the subject as constantly connected to others. The notion of “subjection,” which Butler approaches with reference to Foucault, has to do with the ways and mechanisms through which these connections bind the body and make it subject to power. Therefore, power is not only outside the subject, but is also its constituent. We cannot speak of a subject that exists before subjection. The subject becomes a subject as it becomes subject to biopower through these connections. Power is immanent in the process of subjectification, and it signifies all the mechanisms that the subject both opposes and is bound to for its existence (Butler 9-38).

The body itself is a pattern of relations and it forms new relations by re-orienting its orientation in space. This re-orientation, while revealing the orientation dynamics of the body, also establishes new relations. The space reveals the technicality of the body through the establishment of new relations between the body and the objects surrounding it. These new relations disorient the body from its ordinary orientation and constitute new spatialities and temporalities.

Relationality defines the status of a network that constitutes a system, the relations between the parts in the network. Being local also means being connected, connecting to a place or making a connection to it. A person can be connected to a place through various interdependencies. These interdependencies subject the subject to the place, as well as establishing its subjection through the place. Subjection and being subjected means being subjected to the network of relationality that makes the place what it is.

## **Temporal Networks**

The 15th İstanbul Biennial was held between September 16 - November 12, 2017 at some of the prominent historical venues and museums of the city, under the conceptual framework of A Good Neighbor, with Elmgreen & Dragset as curators. Exhibiting as part of the biennial at the Pera Museum, Gözde İlkin is an artist who works with found fabric products that are heirlooms from her mother and grandmother such as tablecloths, bedclothes and curtains. She transforms the material with acrylic paint, cutting, burning, and sewing it. İlkin explains that curators Elmgreen & Dragset approached her with reference to her earlier works titled Boys Eating Turkish Delight (2008) and asked her to produce new work around the conceptual framework of neighborhood, home, and belonging.

The concepts of home and family, and other contexts containing them, were the starting point for the work Devrik Ev (Inverted House)” exhibited as part of the biennial. The Inverted House series and İlkin’s previous Lütfen Pisti Boşaltınız (Leave the Dance Floor)” series of works (2010) thematize certain Anatolian rituals and celebration, as well as bearing traces of İlkin’s life, encounters, and family. Lütfen Pisti Boşaltınız was the first series where the artist started working with fabric. The title of the series refers to the common announcement in Anatolian weddings that requests people to “leave the dance floor.” As well as instructing guests to leave the dance floor to the bride and groom, the announcement also carries the meaning of leaving the floor or area to the family.

The work Gezek from this series points to a social mechanism performed by women and men separately. These meetings, still part of Turkish social life, are named “Altın Günü (Gold Day)” in certain regions and refer to social mechanisms where men and women establish and sustain their own separate social networks. Boys Eating Turkish Delight is a work that touches on the themes of hegemonic masculinity, shows

of power among men, sharing, and friendship, which can possibly evoke homosexuality for an outsider's gaze. Taken out of context, the traditional girl-to-girl dances or instances of two men holding hands in Anatolian customs may look like they are representing sex and sexuality, but we witness that these are in fact acts of socialization that enmesh the connections between men and women. In this sense, it is noteworthy that Elmgreen & Dragset have contacted İlkin with reference to these works.

İlkin is somewhat reluctant to refer to the found fabric, covers and pieces of cloth she uses in her works, as material. She says that these items were entrusted to her instead. With the notion of entrustment, she refers to a feeling, memory, and a transfer between generations from grandmother to mother and from mother to daughter. İlkin relates what she remembers of the smell, feel, and usage of these fabrics. İlkin states that a friend brought her certain fabric artifacts that were used in her house which she found when she opened her mother's dowry chest, but that she failed to relate to her friend's materials or create a work of art out of them.

In this transfer from grandmother to İlkin, family photos occupy an almost central place. The motifs and figures in the Leave the Dance Floor series were taken from a family album and were transformed as they were applied on fabric. But the Inverted House series exhibited at the Biennial consists of family photos that have been left out of the family album. While photos in the family album focus on celebration events such as circumcision feasts, weddings, and births, the Inverted House series focuses on left out ones. Among İlkin's reasons for naming the series Inverted House were that the series opens the home, that which is inside the home and belongs to it, to the outside world, taking the insides of the home outside and putting it into international circulation. This also means turning the home and the feeling of belonging inside out. Photos that are in the family album form the family narrative with events such as birth, circumcision, marriage, and reproduction and follow the normative temporality and spatiality of the family: photos that are outside have a time of their own. For these

photos, we can speak of a complicated temporality.

Halberstam states that heteronormativity composes the context through which time and space functions according to certain biopolitical markers such as birth, marriage, family, reproduction, and kinship. These naturalized markers of human life form the basis of biopolitical status of the subject. By heteronormative time what Halberstam means is “temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance” (6). Therefore, İlkin’s family photo album consists primarily in the heteronormative understanding of time and temporality, while the ones which are left out of the album corresponds to times that does not fit in heteronormative time constructs.

Examining the role of family photos in forming the collective memory of the family, İlkin uses family photos that have not been placed in the family album and embroiders them on found fabric, transforming them in the process to create works that refer to scenes the family has left out of their album. Embroidering and sewing together the situations, events, and affects that these photos remind her of, she forms an intercorporeal network of relations. Figures and motifs sewn together and amorphous patterns that blur the boundaries between the bodies ends the interruption and dissociation between the bodies and shows them as mixed in and interspersed with each other. Showing the space occupied by the body as being beyond the skin that delimits the body, the figures form areas where the skin stretches towards the outside and joins the skin of other bodies. This creates an intercorporeal continuity and togetherness. The existence of these bodies in space has been embroidered on the fabric in the light of their relations. The relations in the extended family are reflected on the fabric, cloth pieces and curtains that are used as the canvas, and the networks between the figures are in two tones that are reminiscent of skin color.

Photos that has been left out of the family album construct spaces associated with non-normative elements, situations, and events. They disrupt the family album’s

linear temporality. These photographs complicate the family's relationship to time and temporality, opening the space to non-normative conception of time. Without the biopolitical and normative markers of life, these photos resist and subvert certain narrative characterizations associated with heteronormativity. The photos left out of the album disrupt the normative temporality of the family life. These photos create a temporal dissonance between past, present, and future because they resist being associated with the symbolic ordering of time within the context of heteronormative values. The photos depicting past events propose alternative reimagination of the future. They propose a different understanding of temporality that transform one's relationship with time. They open new and different spaces. For example, military photos usually show highly masculine images, men being tough in their uniforms holding guns. However, the military photo in the "Inverted Home" series depicts two soldiers lying on grass in a relaxed position with their shoulders touching each other's. Men are displayed in a homosocial bonding here. This photo also offers a different understanding of military time. The male homosocial bonding and the way these bodies are depicted in the photo disrupt the heteronormative construction of military space. While the photo that takes place in the family album is the photo of a soldier posing to the photographer with a gun in his hands, standing next to a military building in military uniforms, photos that are left out of the family album are outside the compulsory heterosexuality and normativity.

The power of normative photographs in the family album comes from the performative power of repetition and citation of a previously marked progression of life. These family photos are the marks of a linear and normative narrativization of life. They center family life as optics for understanding the world through heteronormative codes and norms. On the other hand, photos that are left out of the album are mediated in a way that not only subvert the heteronormative markers of life but also question its inherent temporal imperatives. However, these photos do not exactly block the

reference points to events taking place in the family album photos. On the contrary, one witnesses repetitions of some themes as the military photo demonstrates. Yet this kind of depiction questions the essentialist categorizations in the family album and opens these familial themes to different interpretations. The way İlkin uses these photos resists any narrative closure. Through these non-album photos, a different affective structure emerges. These photos go beyond the bounds of heteronormative ordering of life, paving the way for new affinities and affiliations as well as new modes of living and new affective intensities. İlkin's artworks derive their force from producing new times and spaces that are alternative to heteronormative conceptions of spatiality and temporality.

## **Conclusion**

Human life, nature, and art are constituted on various patterns. Even though these patterns may seem independent, they all coexist in interaction. At times, these notions inadvertently give shape and way to and transform one another and incorporate them into their networks. The behavior patterns of the society, and therefore the individual, are determined and shaped by norms, traditions, and rules that form as a result of cultural, religious, and political interactions, which aggregate throughout history. These patterns and relations are society's material and immaterial cultural products. They establish common habits and values, generalized, standardized, and ordered behaviors that serve as a model or guide as to what is acceptable and not acceptable in a society. This includes not only behavioral activities but also the beliefs, meanings, values, and attitudes of a culture. With the diversity, fluidity, and interactions of the established networks, new networks and patterns begin to form. These networks tend to part from the established ecosystem and exist in their own ecosystems or different ones, forming new networks, new connections, and new patterns.

When we step out of the times and spaces that heteronormative relations create

through the concepts of home, family, homeland, and nation, we recognize that other ways and other possibilities of relations are possible. The question of what the time and space of these alternative ways of relation are, and how they can be created, is an important one for imagining and creating new ways of existence and living.

## Chapter 3: Trans-mediated Technologies and Sexualities

### Trans-networks

New media technologies make it possible to think about bodies and organisms not as natural entities but as vital and living signs. The technological inscription of the body in signifying networks transforms our understanding of desire, enabling us to reframe it from a post-biological perspective. This is not an era of mimesis, imitation of life, or mechanical reproducibility; this is one in which biology and cybernetic information unexpectedly recombine to produce a new, simulacral forms of reproduction in which bodies become post-organic signifiers. Concomitant with this transformation through which bodies become coded means of communicating is the reconfiguration of the body as a digital archive or as computational media. The conception of organs as technical instruments proposes a post-biological understanding of the body by disintegrating its whole sensorium and inscribing the body into the networks of signifiers. The non-Darwinian and post-evolutionary branch of structuralism reformulates linguistic theory by incorporating information technologies into understanding signs as technological inscriptions and sense-apparatuses, which in turn, lead to the necessity of rethinking the circulation, economy, and regulation of desire and sexuality not only in terms of post-biological bodies and organisms but also from social, cultural, and political networks approaches.

Networks of desire are economies that articulate the conditions of contemporary spaces and zones that at once create belonging and vulnerability. The fragmentation of the bodily sensorium by technological organs catalyzes the production of informational excess, simultaneously yielding the exhaustion that results from this process and the endurance that comes from its replication and consumption. Through exploring desire as an intimate connection between its subjects, their economies, and their contexts, I will explore the social reality or lived social relations between those within the same



network of desire and those shared across and between various networks and systems. Networks of desire consist of linkages that suggest the arts of existence enacted by post-biological bodies and reveal the political stakes of everyday existence as a technobiological body. These networks create fragmented objects and bodies that signify not only the ethical conditions of a new biopolitics but also the actual life from which we often turn away from in fear of loss and marginalization. These objects of desire are neither copies nor models of biological forms but rather reflections of the ever-fluctuating relationships between technological networks of desire, their participants, their distribution, and their hierarchy. This new kind of body has the ability to perceive, transcribe, produce, and transmit information about itself as simulacra, that is, this new body is constantly evolving along with technological economies of desire rather than representing a given technology as a prosthetic extension of a body, thus always changing along with exposure to new technologies and media. Networks of desire that consist of biotechnological bodies appear across a myriad of new media forms and draw upon conceptual and artistic understandings of artificial life and genomic art, installation art, tactical media, hactivism, cyborgs, clones, robots, and avatars as well as popular and cultural artifacts that demonstrate the proliferation of streams of information aimed at increasingly specific demographics. This process is one of digital narrowcasting by which multimedia articulations of new media concepts and forms are actualized and distributed across various online platforms like YouTube, Tumblr, Instagram, online exhibitions, and more.

To this end, this chapter engages with networks of desire considered within the framework of trans-networks. These contributions range from aesthetic, social, political, and cultural analyses to conceptual critiques of posthuman subjectivities and identities (gendered, sexualized, racialized, sacralized, and otherwise defined) as they express themselves across different media ecologies.

In this chapter, I will conceptualize Brandon and Ganimet as trans-networks, as

this concept is inextricably tied to the notion of networked subjectivities. Brandon is the title of Cheang's net-art work. It is about a transgender individual named Brandon, who was raped and murdered in a small town in Nebraska. Cheang's net-art depicts Brandon as a trans-network. Ganimet, on the other hand, is a trans-individual currently living in Ankara, Turkey. I will examine Brandon and Ganimet as they stretch across diverse spaces binding different spatialities and forming networks of intercorporeal relations. I will analyze them as mediums consisting of complex webs of interactions bringing diverse and heterogeneous elements together. To this end, I will examine them within the context of the "question of space and movement" (Stryker, Currah, and Moore 12) in addition to transformability and mobility because these concepts refer to trans-networks.

New media technologies have become an apparatus for revealing and generating new ways of interaction between organisms and their environment. This interaction opens up a new conception of subjectivity, conceiving of subjects as networks. New media discloses the notion of trans within the context of networks and webs of interaction. In that sense, net-art, as a branch of the new media art, makes it possible to think of identity through networks, while also subverting a unified, coherent, rational and stable conception of identity. It makes it possible for us to conceptualize identity as multiple, flexible, distributed and heterogeneous. Turkle discusses such a conception of identity through the notions of virtual and cyberspace, and specifies that it was in the light of new technologies that she began to completely understand the theoretical outlook of the post-structuralist conception of identity, which has become apparent since the 1960s and 1970s:

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, I was first exposed to notions of identity and multiplicity ... that each of us is a multiplicity of parts, fragments, and desiring connections ... they presented the world according to such authors as Jacques Lacan, Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari" (645). Turkle states that it was due to new technologies that these theorists' conception of identity and related theories started to

make sense: “When, 20 years later, I used my personal computer and modem to join online communities, I had an experience of this theoretical perspective which brought it shockingly down to earth. (646)

Therefore, the idea of networks is not limited to information and communication technologies here. New media technologies bring forth a new understanding of networks and systems.

My first chapter analyzed the influence of postwar French theory and poststructuralist theory on information and communication technologies, new media technologies, through Lacan’s symbolic apparatus of desire, which, in turn, blurred the boundary between the technological and biological. It is often argued that postwar French theory forgets the biological make-up of bodies, and more importantly, the materiality of the bod, and tends towards the cultural and discursive construction of the body. Clough argues that:

Although the cultural criticisms engaged with poststructuralism usually have been treated as elaborations of the linguistic turn, focusing on the literary or the literalization of philosophical thought, I want to treat them in relationship to becoming of the teletechnological. I want to propose that the development of teletechnology in the late twentieth century not only has drawn cultural criticism to the reconfiguration of the social, the political, and the economic conditions of human agency. The development of teletechnology also has drawn cultural criticism to the deconstruction of the opposition of nature and technology, the human and the machine, the virtual and the real, the living and the inert, thereby giving thought over to the ontologization of agencies other than human agency. (2)

Contemporary technologies prompt us to consider networks and assemblages as systems of organic and inorganic objects, removing the dichotomy between the natural and the biological on the one hand, and the discursive and the cultural on the other, and thus placing human, animal and machine side by side.

In this sense, teletechnology refers not only to an environment or a set of objects, but also to agencies other than human agency, so that the teletechnological joins, if not displaces, what sociologists of western modernity have referred to as the social structural. This displacement demands a rethinking of the determination of human agency that the idea of social structure has implied – that is, the derivation of human agency out of that certain structural configuration of family and national

ideologies, the state and civil society, and the public and private spheres presumed in subject-centered, nation-centric discourses, such as the modern Western discourse of Man. (3)

When we study institutions such as the family, state, religion, school, marriage and military as structural configurations and regard them as the space and place of various ideologies and the ways of living brought about by these spaces and places, we end up not regarding the human as the center or creator of these institutions. To this end, what is the space and place of heteronormativity and how is it constituted?

Heterosexuality is established, normalized and naturalized by means of such practices and institutions as family, state, school, military, marriage, and reproduction. When we look at the situations and practices that normativize sexuality and its acts, we notice that they have spread into every area of life and have formed, shaped, and determined every medium accordingly. Therefore, the notion of heteronormativity encompasses the entirety of the discursive, material, and operational networks of such institutions as marriage, family, military, and nation. In other words, these complex networks contain the ways of relating of bodies as well as the subjects and subjectivities created by these ways of relating.

Heteronormative sexualities that determine the path followed by the processes and spaces of these forms of subjectivation leave no room for a sexuality that does not occur between man and woman, in which sex objects and toys are involved, that which involves more than two people, in which fetish and BDSM fantasies figure, and which can take place in public as well as private spaces. Moreover, they cannot open a space for sexuality and gender beyond the distinction of the homosexual/heterosexual binary.

In addition to being modern constructions, the concepts of heterosexuality and homosexuality approach such issues as sex, gender, and sexuality in the context of identity politics. Identities are reduced to such categories as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and transvestite and identified with performances that these identities are constructed through. The only way to approach sexuality outside the context of identity

politics is to conceive of sexuality as “sexual acts, sensibilities, affects, perceptions”, rather than sexual identities. This approach frees sexuality from regimes of identification and allows it to be examined in different contexts.

As I discussed in the second chapter, Haraway studies the human as a posthuman hybrid. Haraway discusses this notion of the posthuman through sex and gender and proposes the notion of post-gender. Here, I will discuss the notion of transgender by approaching post-gender as embodied hybridity. What I mean by the notion of post-gender here is not to think of the notion of transgender through homosexuality and heterosexuality, but rather to study trans as a concept that goes beyond categories. Concerning this subject, Stryker writes: “We argued that sexual orientation was not the only significant way to differ from heteronormativity – that homo, hetero, and bi in fact depended on similar understandings of ‘man’ and ‘woman,’ which trans problematized” (147).

The word “transgender” appeared in the early 1990s as an umbrella term for all gender anti-normative people, including heterosexuals. The transgender movement is defined as one that established various alliances and affiliations and one whose problems are similar to migrant workers or diasporic communities in society who fight in similar ways, and as being against all kinds of normativity. This has established the concept of transgender as a critical practice that does not allow itself to be merely considered through the duality of homo/hetero. The notion of transgender can in fact be defined as a rebellion against all the distinctions heterosexuality makes against groups who encompass the normative values of heterosexuality but self-define as homosexuals because of their sexual orientation being same-sex. This perspective defines sex and gender only in terms of sexual orientation. However, the concept of transgender goes beyond the homosexual/heterosexual distinction: “Homo is not always the most relevant form against which trans needs to define itself” (149). The word “transgender” has been used with different meanings in different contexts, but my sense of the word

here refers to transing gender. Trans bodies subvert the fixity of sex and gender, transforming gendered and sexed bodies and identities. Transing refers here to incessant acts of undoing any fixations, stabilizations, and normalizations. In this context, I will be referring to decoupling sex and gender from regimes of identification and rejecting identity politics through the notion of transgender. In the sense that I use it here, the concept of trans is not aligned with any identity. As regimes of identification build an alignment between sex, gender and sexual orientation, the notion of trans here makes this alignment impossible.

The dual sex and gender regimes of the heterosexual matrix do not only establish sex and sexuality through identity and identifications in an essentialist manner, but also assume this identity to be natural, stable, and intrinsic. The categorization and experiencing of sexuality through signs of sexual identity encodes and fixes the space and time of sexuality. However, the time and space of pleasure can be varied, transitive, transformative, and fluid. As long as pleasure is experienced as devoid of every identity, sexual or otherwise, we can avoid the dichotomy of the sexual and non-sexual acts of the body. According to Morland, “Sexual acts should be conceived of and experienced not as signs of sexual identity, but as signs of pleasure” (72).

Stryker, Currah and Moore discuss the relationality of the notion of trans with other concepts by using the word with a hyphen (trans-). As such, trans- introduces a mobility, change and transformation to the concepts it is added to, rather than expressing a fixed and bounded thing. This mobility and transformation introduces transitivity and changeability, as in the word transform, from one form to another. My use of trans here is also based on this transformability. The word trans can transform the concepts it is added to. That it constitutes transformability through these concepts displaces the fixedness and stability of concepts and mobilizes them. Trans, the way I use it here, and specifically in this chapter, corresponds to an outlook beyond identities. As such, the concepts of change and mobility are brought in opposition to the fixating

nature of identities. What I do here is approach the notion of trans as a “question of space and movement” and “critical crossings of territories” (12). In other words, I aim to illustrate the relation of trans to the concepts of embodiment and place as I discuss it in the context of sex and gender. As I mobilize the concept in this context, I will be pointing to a transitivity between identities. My goal will be to think of trans as a movement beyond identities, rather than as a displacement between identities. The fact that the term trans signifies a movement and mobility will also reveal the changing and transforming nature of being a trans individual.

Stryker, Currah, and Moore state that “trans- likewise names the body’s orientation in space and time” (13). Re-orienting the body through time and space necessitates the re-scripting and discursive re-establishment of these bodily acts. Transing the sexual orientations of bodies through the reconfiguration of the biopolitical and biotechnological markers of sex and gender and, more importantly, through reinscribing the spatial and temporal coordinates of bodies transforms the already sexed bodies and gendered spaces and specific kinds of orientations that are inherent in these spaces. As Lacan discusses the overlap of biological networks and networks of signification via the symbolic apparatus of desire, heteronormativity assigns specific bodily zones to specific sexual functions and acts, therefore establishing and fixing the heterosexual organs of sexuality.

When the notion of trans is studied as a mobility in terms of moving through space and time and criss-crossing all boundaries and borders, we witness “transembodiment as technical capacities of all the bodies” (Gill and Peterson 402). To expand further on this statement, trans is a movement that connects different spaces and times and creates new relations through these spatialities and temporalities of self.

The identificatory mechanisms of heteronormative regimes constitute and determine the technologies of self. Transformation, as the name implies, refers to the change, deformation, and malleability of the body through certain techniques and

technologies. Transing the geosignifiers of bodily zones, with certain meanings attached to these zones, refers to the transing of the familiar landscape of the body. This is disruptive of the alignment between bodily zones and the meanings readily associated with these zones. Transing these categorizations leads to the refiguring of the sexual orientation of the body in space and to the re-writing or re-inscription of sexed bodies and gendered spaces. The reconfiguration of marked spaces means creating new forms of embodiment for already gendered spaces through the reconfiguration of bodily orientations in space. This means the transformation of the already determined coordinates of the body through different bodily techniques so that body's orientation is not marked with previously gendered markers.

Because trans-bodies challenge gender identity and thus the gender/sex binary, they undo the cultural constitution and production of femininity and masculinity. When we approach performativity as beyond representation and identity, we also question the notion of gender identity. Butler has opposed the definition of gay and lesbian sexuality over identity through the notions of gender and performativity. In her theory based on Foucault's notion of the networks of power relationalities and the repressive hypothesis, Butler opposes the heterosexuality/homosexuality duality through the concepts of parody, drag, reiteration, and performativity. This is also an opposition to such categories of identification as gay and lesbian. According to the outlook that renders heterosexuality as natural and original, homosexuality is an inferior copy, with the subject constituted by performing this compulsory heterosexuality through reiteration. The subject is not an entity that realizes this performance; it is an entity that is subjectified through this performance. In other words, the subject is that which is constituted through these performances (Butler xii – xxx). With parodic repetition and drag, the notion that heterosexuality is original and natural is refuted. Parodic repetition illustrates that heterosexuality, which is assumed to be original, is actually constituted through reiterative acts and performances, and that this constitution itself forms the



dynamics of heterosexuality. Therefore, parody and drag exhibit the notion of original parody. The iterability of the norms of sex, gender and sexuality subvert the normative linkages and illustrate that the performativity of gender. It exhibits gender as a performance. In other words, the performative structure of being gendered is revealed. It is only through these performances that the subject can become a gendered subject (169 -185). Gender is constituted through the performances of the body where the body is a material and discursive site. The relationship and alignments between body, embodiment, and gender, or what it is that is embodied, and how this embodiment is performed, are all important questions for our inquiry.

I will analyze Cheang's net-art Brandon according to the questions raised above. Brandon's subjectivity is generated by the interactive performance of diverse and heterogeneous elements such as images, texts, codes, and data. Brandon is divided into five interfaces, one of which describes Brandon as a recombinant social body made up of different and distributed bodily parts. These interfaces bring forth the question of mediation, with Brandon's presence being multi-mediated. Other than these questions that I will examine while analyzing Brandon, I will also touch upon the question of embodiment and materiality in new media aesthetics. Brandon is an interactive artwork that takes place between computer and user-participant. The interaction between them leads one to question the interaction between actual and virtual spaces. The virtualization of actual spaces and actualization of virtual spaces generate heterotopic spaces.

While Ganimet can be considered as a contrasting singular case, I conceive of Ganimet as a trans-network that has brought together many experiences of becoming trans. Rather than conceptualizing her as a single individual in relation with her milieu, I define Ganimet herself as a medium. As with Brandon, I name this networked subjectivity trans. As I study Ganimet as a trans-network, I will be approaching this self-performing medium as a complex system. Ganimet is constituted by an entangling

mesh of interrelated situations.

I will be examining Ganimet's life through interrelationships between place, embodiment, subjectivity, and affect through her blog, writings, and Facebook page. As such, I will be studying Ganimet in relation to transaesthetics by studying her as an embodied trans-archive of feelings, emotions, sensations, and affects. Ganimet's trans subjectivity challenges heteronormative conceptions of space and place. I will examine Ganimet as someone who subverts the ways in which heteronormative culture operates and establishes new ways of relating. I will be studying her life as a transaesthetic life in this sense. In other words, I will be looking at the discursive-material networks in Ganimet's life.

## **Brandon**

Brandon, the first web-based or net-art work to be accepted into the permanent collection of the Guggenheim Museum, is a work executed by Shu Lea Cheang in 1998-1999 as a "one year narrative project in installments" (Brandon, [www.guggenheim.org](http://www.guggenheim.org)). The work is named after Brandon Teena, a transgender person who was raped and murdered in a small town in Nebraska in 1993 for passing as a male while having female anatomical features. Cheang defines Brandon as a "multi-artist, multi-site, multi-institution collaboration" ([www.guggenheim.org](http://www.guggenheim.org)).

Brandon begins with gender morphing images which function as symbolic markers of femininity and masculinity. Right from the beginning, we understand that the artwork will be about sex and gender. Brandon's life and death, chosen as the topic of this artwork, also make one think that it will be about a trans performance, a performance of transition from something into something else.

Brandon brings technology and sexuality together through the notion of gender identity. Cheang examines gender identity through utilizing and exploring the possibilities of the medium of the Internet. The idea of fragmented self is inherent in

the internet's networks. These trans-networks that Brandon inhabits display Brandon's subjectivity in terms of networks. Through this net-art work, Brandon becomes a networked subjectivity. Brandon is networked between user-participants and the artwork itself. This networked environment brings actual and virtual spaces together, blurring the boundaries between the two as well as between online and offline spaces.

Cheang's artwork is one of the earliest net-art works that questions the possibilities of internet within the context of sex and gender. Virtual and cyberspace allow not only engaging with the new possibilities of the medium itself, but also transform our conception of identity and subjectivity. Brandon becomes the site where different and diverse signs and images randomly come together to open up a space for new understandings of sex and gender. Brandon does not perform himself, but what we call Brandon is itself a performance of text, data, and images. This interactive performance makes one examine gender and subjectivity as performances. Through Brandon, one encounters the performative possibilities of gender making processes.

Brandon conceived of as a site disrupts the Internet as the space and place of heteronormativity. Brandon undoes naturalized heteronormativity through transgendered performances of text, code, data, and image. Going between web pages creates links that constitutes Brandon as a virtual and actual interactive performance. Brandon becomes a hybrid combination of diverse images and texts as appropriate to landscape of the Internet. Cheang uses the Internet to undo Brandon's cultural and gendered production. For this to take place, the artwork needs to disrupt gendered spaces and propose that one's gender, race, culture, and body can be changed. The Internet proposes a medium for this change to occur. Brandon puts forward the idea that all bodily alterations are possible.

Brandon consists of five interfaces: Bigdoll, Roadtrip, Mooplay, Panopticon and Theatrum Anatomic. Even though the programming language of the interfaces is predetermined, user-participants have the opportunity to transform the work through

live chat, pop-up windows, actual and virtual performances, add-ons, and plug-ins. Brandon has a parallel and non-linear structure so that user-participants can change the flow and progress of the work through their participation. This creates a user participant mechanism in which the viewers are not passive spectators but active agents who can change and regenerate the artwork. Here, we speak of a complex work of net-art as such: “Overall, the site encompassed 82 pages and popup windows, and featured a wealth of historic and current personae, stories, court cases, and avatars surrounding LGBTQ discourse, as well as chat logs and other traces of Brandon’s live events between 1998 and 1999” ([www.guggenheim.org](http://www.guggenheim.org)).

Certain links in this web-based artwork died and some pages needed updating. In 2016-2017, the Guggenheim’s CCBA (Conserving Computer-Based Art) initiative restored the pages, data, images, texts and links that were no longer accessible without changing the original code. With restoration, the project became a trans-archive of Brandon’s transgender states of being. The renewal and restoration has made this archive one that functions not in the past but in the present. This web-based project seems to function accordance with the logic of creating an archive of feelings right from the moment it is conceived of as a work of net-art. Brandon, as an archive of itself, is created by the artwork and user-participants and can be considered as an interactive multi-modal archive. However, in order to be a living archive, it needs constant updating, otherwise links get broken and pages become inaccessible. Brandon exists in a web space, space that Cheang indicates “no one ... can claim to have viewed the entirety.” Each interface inhabits different spaces, spaces “to be occupied by various narratives and inhabitants” ([www.guggenheim.org](http://www.guggenheim.org)).

The exhibition at Guggenheim Soho, the *Theatrum Anatomicum* installation at Waag Society, and the actual/virtual court room scenes realized in collaboration with the Harvard Law School place Brandon at the intersection of actual and virtual spaces as well as online and offline spaces. At the Harvard Law School, Brandon was

developed with five actors and six scholars holding test trials titled Would the Jurors Please Stand Up? Crime and Punishment as Net Spectacle. Another installation that brought virtual and actual spaces together is called Digi Gender Social Body: Under the Knife, Under the Spell of Anesthesia.

The Bigdoll interface, titled “recombinant social body” is “designed as random retrieval of 50 images”, and the interface “invites artists’ upload for ever-recombinant bigdoll construct”. We can see a total of 20 images at a time. The images are juxtaposed and overlapping, and we see different image combinations every time. Among the images that form the recombinant body are images of nipples, dildo penises, wristbands, candles, three different images of a person wearing a suit, hands, a tattooed arm, and the words “Exposure”, “Swap”, and “She’s a He” ([www.guggenheim.org](http://www.guggenheim.org)). The combination formed by these individual images coming together bears a quality of randomness. This random combination forms an image that will come together time after time and be recombined repeatedly. The juxtaposition and overlapping of the images forms a heterogeneous composition. As I discussed in chapter two, the juxtaposition and overlapping of these images bring different spaces together, forming heterotopic combinations and spaces. In this heterotopic space, sexual associations of the body parts and words such as “She’s a He” determine the framework of the artwork named after the murdered trans individual Brandon as networks of trans images. As such, this artwork allows user-participants to view the images they see as parts and fragments of Brandon’s life. As the sexual imagery in this web-based artwork exists in virtual or cyber-space, it brings sexuality together with technology and constitutes Brandon’s body as a techno-sexual body. This techno-sexual space presents the body as embodied and material form and image. Therefore, Brandon’s body is constituted over technological networks of cyberspace.

The techno-sexual reproduction of Brandon’s life and body consists primarily in the discursive-material networks of signification in Cheang’s work of net-art. On the

one hand, the convergence between technology and gender, alluding to techno-sexual production of bodies, speaks to networked subjectivities. On the other hand, this networked subjectivity is trans. With Brandon, we are talking about a transgender network. This network is constituted by the authors of the net-art work and its user-participants. This new kind of techno-biological body transmits information about itself as code, syntax, information, and discursive and non-discursive modes of communication.

The theme of biodigital modulations of sex and desire entail the reformulation of sexual reproduction within the technological regime of signs, shifting the emphasis away from the reproductive capacities of the biological body to the technological generation of affective information and erotic recombination of mutant species, bodies, identities, and sexes. This system becomes a biotechnological network through Brandon's life and existence and Brandon becomes a multi-mediated network of subjectivity. Brandon's subjectivity is constituted by interrelated and interactive performance of the disparate and heterogeneous components or parts of systems and networks. Brandon refers here to endlessly shifting recombinant body made up of interrelated technologies, objects, images, and texts. Brandon consists of a constellation of many bodies and his life is inherent in these varying and various constellations of relationalities.

The second interface is the Roadtrip interface developed in 1997 with Jordy Jones, Susan Stryker, and Kimberly Saree Tomes with Javascript by Cherise Fong and Linda Tauscher. They develop four episodes prototypes. The first episode is titled "Herculine Barbin" named after a 19th century hermaphrodite who committed suicide and whose memoir was published by Foucault. This episode is about Barbin and Brandon falling in love with each other and their intertwined bodies being uplifted by a spaceship. The second episode is called "Jack Bee Garland," who is "under a hypnotic spell imposed by her husband". This episode presupposes a meeting between Brandon

and Jack Bee Garland while “Susan takes up Lacan’s *Ecrit*, schemal in ‘A Problem Preliminary to any Possible Treatment of Psychosis’” (<http://brandon.guggenheim.org>). Third episode is called “VX”, a symbol for Venus Extravaganza who was in Livingston’s documentary Paris is Burning. In this episode, Bradon meets Venus Extravaganza and gets murdered in a hotel in Manhattan in 1989. Venus Extravaganza hosts an online sex channel and Brandon logs on and chats. The Fourth episode is titled “Down South”. It is about “Annie Lee Grant/James McHarris of Kosciusko, Mississippi, who works men’s jobs--as a short-order cook, a cab driver, a filling station attendant, a preacher” (<http://brandon.guggenheim.org>).

The third interface, a rescrambled narrative, is titled Mooplay: “The narratives, submitted by commissioned writers, are rescrambled when one clicks on a designated line ... Names of assumed characters launch a java applet chatbox and trigger display of random images. At the same time, the characters join the chat with the net public in non-related manner. The ever re-combinant streams of narratives provide a textual social space to review gender-coded chat environments on the net.” Commissioned writers upload texts for the user-participants to rescramble, so the content of texts change each time the texts are rescrambled, paving the way for many different random versions of similar texts. Another multi-author space, the fourth interface, is called Panopticon. It refers to Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon principle, with the all seeing eye at the center. It is designed here as a gym with a new high technology surveillance apparatus built in. Half hospital, half prison, this structure holds sexual deviants. The fifth interface is called “Theatrum Anatomicum.” The interface consists of two actual installments: Digi Gender Social Body: Under the Knife, Under the Spell of Anesthesia and Would the Jurors Please Stand Up? Crime and Punishment as Net Spectacle (<http://brandon.guggenheim.org>). The former was exhibited at Waag’s Theatrum Anatomicum. The Theatrum Anatomicum is the site where the bodies of criminals were dissected during and after the 17th century, available for viewing not only by

students of medicine but also passers-by on the street. Where once flesh used to be seen, in Cheang's work, we see a digital image projected on the table. With its utilization of both virtual and actual space, and bringing the two into interaction, this installment is a significant part of the Brandon project. In Cheang's work of net-art, Brandon exists not only in virtual space, but also in actual, physical space.

As a system of interrelated elements, Brandon raises important questions concerning the role of embodiment and materiality in new media aesthetics. Because the duality of virtual information and actual bodies has been central to digital media and information technologies, much of the debate revolves here around the themes of disembodiment and dematerialization. The information/materiality, body/machine, virtual/actual, and body/code dualities are contradicted by major new media thinkers, all of whom emphasize the role of the body, materiality, affect, and sensation in new media aesthetics. By theorizing digital aesthetics as an embodied aesthetic form, these theorists incorporate the material body back into the digital code, thereby conceptualizing information aesthetics in terms of its materiality. From this perspective, virtual information becomes inscribed in biological bodies, virtualizing the actual bodies by extending them into technological mediums. At the same time, however, the virtual information becomes actualized through its materialization in technological mediums, which manifest themselves at the systems level. This complex interweaving of the virtual information and actual bodies simultaneously transforms the actual and the virtual through the virtualization of the actual or the actualization of the virtual. As a hybrid of virtual and actual spaces, this web-based work of art occupies a heterotopic space. As I extensively analyzed in my second chapter, the overlap of many and different spaces create a heterotopic space. There are many other spaces in the space of Cheang's net-art.

I argue that the subversion of the dualities of information/materiality, body/machine, virtuality/actuality, bodies/codes, and biological/technological does not



lie in identifying interaction as something that takes place between two things. If what is at stake here is the seamless integration of the virtual information and actual bodies and the subversion of their distinction/duality, then the starting point of this kind of analysis should be the point where there is no distinction between them. Medium is that point of contact or the interface where interior is already exterior, information is already material, and actual is already virtual. In order to begin with the notion of interaction, one needs to begin thinking with the notion of medium, the interface of the biological and technological systems. Simply for the reason that interaction takes place in mediums, or rather, what is interactive is the medium itself. If a medium is the interface or the point of contact between information and materiality, then the augmented transposition of the actual bodies and the digital codes, through which the interaction between the information and materiality constantly transforms itself, is nothing other than the constant transformation of the medium itself. What determines the form of the interaction between them is the act of mediation of the medium with itself. Thus, mediation as transformation is the precondition for the emergence of information and materiality.

By emphasizing the complex interplay between information and materiality, Murray, Munster, Hayles, and Hansen discuss the convergences between the biological and the technological as well as between the actual bodies (materiality) and the virtual codes (information) and argue for the inherent materiality of information. There are convergences as well as divergences between digital codes and the actual bodies. The complex interplay between information and materiality erases the separation between the two through the augmented transposition of the virtual and actual. The interaction between the virtual and the actual is marked by continuities and discontinuities, resulting from the gaps, relays, delays, noises, and failures in the transmission of information. The notion of affection occupies an important place in new media aesthetics. Through exploring the relationship between digital images and the affective

participation of the user, Hansen discusses the ways in which digital aesthetics are contingent upon the materialization bodily information.

New media technologies extended the boundaries of physical and material culture. Internet generated global interconnectivity contributed to a greater understanding of interrelatedness and interactivity. Specifically, the Internet proposed a new way of thinking in networks and thereby transformed our perception of things, objects, and bodies. Cheang's net-art provides a computer-mediated environment where virtual and actual spaces coexist, extending one another and bringing into question the body's relationship to virtual and cyber spaces.

The user participant and the artwork, both human and non-human agencies, operate together, endlessly reconstructing, affecting, and giving way to configurations of new environments. Both agencies respond to their environment and continuously reconstruct the networked environment that exists in between actual and virtual spaces. The configuration of the environment constitutes or determines the state of the interaction between actual and virtual spaces. As configurations take place regardless of time and distance, time can function in real time or asynchronously, while location does not matter. Multiple possibilities of spatio-temporal configurations exist together.

Human-computer interaction generates new understandings of time, space, connectivity, and interactivity. New media technologies bring dispersed geographical locations together, generating a new conception of space. It contributes to new understandings of spaces and places and opens the possibility of considering how one's experience of space can be different and how this is related to one's conception of the body. The Internet reconfigures the relationship between body, space, and place.

Cheang's fusion of art and technology transforms the passive spectator or audience into an active agent who creates the artwork together with the artwork itself. What is thus aesthetic is not the artwork anymore but rather the mutual exchange between the user participant and the artwork. New media technologies and aesthetics

bring forth new ways of understanding or, at the very least, a more nuanced understanding of identity and subjectivity.

Burnham argues that the use of computers in the art scene stimulates a new relationship between the observer and the observed. In that sense, computers have the potential to achieve the human-machine symbiotic intelligence by integrating the participant and the artwork:

The computer's most profound aesthetic implication is that we are being forced to dismiss the classical view of art and reality which insists that man stand outside of reality in order to observe it ... It may be that the computer will negate the need for such an illusion by fusing both the observer and observed, 'inside' and 'outside'. (31)

Burnham's vision of art endorses deploying art objects as vital and living systems, which can exchange information with the user-participants. This networked environment between the artwork and participant would merge the two systems (human and machine). The machine and human coupling is conceived here in terms of systems and networks, attributing intelligence to the environment rather than the single and discrete artifacts. The interaction between the two is played out in the systemic level, constituting the machine as the extension of human and the human as the extension of machine. This stresses the importance of the circuits between the human and the technological, generating the concept of networked environments and subjectivities. What is at stake here is neither the human nor the machine, but rather the technological system, which is constructed by the recursive feedback loops between the two. With representational models, the assumption is that the feedback loop and structural and dynamic coupling with the environment is not a necessary component for the development of complexity. All of the prescribed conditions are generated by the designer during the initial implementation of the model. However, the investigation of the dynamics of complex systems clearly demonstrate that complexity results from the embodied interaction with the environment. Johnston writes, "Note that feedback and

self-regulation ... are always understood by the cyberneticists in terms of pure physical embodiment and performance, not symbol making and representation” (30). Therefore, that which creates complexity is not the inner-workings or operations of an isolated machine, but its interaction with the environment: “The machines, or automata, that most interested the cybernetics were those that were self-regulating and that maintained their stability and autonomy through feedback loops with the environment” (26).

New media aesthetics is the aesthetics of information and communication technologies. These new systems create interactive and networked environments. Galloway argues that “the act of going from one website to another” generates a navigation process that “produces virtual maps.” Concerning artworks, user participant’s interactions with an artwork determine the interaction between the actual and virtual realms. By being part of the artwork, the user participant virtualizes her embodied presence while the artwork becomes actualized through its embodiment by the user. This immersive environment determines the interaction between the actual and the virtual realms. The context through which interaction takes place becomes the content of the interaction between the artwork and user-participant. The medium where the interaction takes place opens up its mediated-ness to the user participant, who reconstructs the artwork through her participation.

Conceiving of mediums as systems and networks shifts our understanding of things because it is no longer possible to consider physical artifacts, objects, and tools as stable and concrete things that circulate amongst different mediums. Instead, the act of circulation itself constitutes the identity of things as mediums. In other words, something becomes identical with itself by becoming the medium that constructs relationalities amongst the parts and elements of different systems. Describing things as contextual relationalities is anchored in describing them as acts that link discrete and dynamic components or parts together.

I will not approach Brandon’s life as an individual life. To consider Brandon’s

life as the individual story of a person would be to disregard the social, cultural, sexual and economic networks that make Brandon who he is. Brandon's circumstances are determined by the very medium that Brandon exists in. Therefore, what makes Brandon trans is that he is the production of many diverse networks. What took Brandon to death as a trans individual is the fact that the small town he lived in brought together certain conditions and that a transgender person cannot survive under these conditions. Under these conditions, Brandon cannot continue his life as a man without a penis. The fact that he is transgender is perceived as an insult to others' conception of masculinity. His performance of masculinity without a penis and with a vagina turns the conception of masculinity of those who murdered him upside down. The failure of Brandon's performance is because he has fulfilled this performance more successfully than a biological man and his success is a threat to a certain conception of masculinity. We cannot know whether Brandon identifies himself with the masculinity constituted through such a performance, just as we do not know whether he defines himself as a trans man from such a position. The commentary on the media about Brandon after his death, the film Boys Don't Cry, the documentary The Brandon Teena Story, Cheang's net-art project named after Brandon, and all that has been written about Brandon bring together parts of Brandon. These parts are juxtaposed without constituting a whole and describe the transgender subjectivity that Brandon inhabited.

Brandon as subject transforms into a trans network through the artworks' interfaces. The Internet becomes the surface on which this trans network is performed. With the participation of user-participants, Brandon becomes a network. This interactive performance is one of the constituting elements of Brandon, which is not only a performance written by multiple authors but also one that is written by multiple participants. Actually, what we refer to as Brandon here is this networked performance. Brandon\_himself is a performance that consists of electronically mediated text, images, data and video on the internet.

Brandon is put in circulation through the interfaces and is constituted and becomes himself through the interfaces produced by this work of net-art. As a work of net-art, Brandon inhabits these networks as these networks construct Brandon. The life and death of Brandon has happened because he has embodied a transgender state of sexuality. Brandon has been ascribed a gendered identity. The deceased person is not any person, but a transgender individual and his relationality and actions have shaped accordingly. Brandon's milieu has been more instrumental than himself in the constitution of Brandon. Transgender is a sign of this constitution and this constitution itself is a performance. Brandon has developed into a transgender performance in accordance with the medium he has existed in and became himself through the performance of the techniques he has developed.

Brandon symbolizes a complex network of relationships. This network defines the space in which Brandon exists. This complex network of relationships performs itself through Brandon's life and body, and this performance forms the basis for Brandon's selfhood. Certain images, texts and codes are circulated and reproduced through Brandon. As the relationship of space to performance locates Brandon in certain spaces, Brandon, on the other hand, opens new forms of space and existence. Brandon performs in virtual and actual spaces.

Being transgender, Brandon subverts the naturalized sexuality determined by norms, and excludes the control and production mechanisms of power dictated by normative sexuality. By subverting the notions of masculinity and femininity determined through heteronormative codes, Brandon turns the codes of power that determine sexuality upside down. He blurs the boundaries between masculinity and femininity and opens them to discussion, rendering the heteronormative order dysfunctional. Acts, signs, and symbols culturally attached to masculinity and naturalized as such are made visible through Brandon. When his milieu expects such a performance from him, Brandon's performance fails, and it is therefore revealed that

masculinity is a performance. Through this performance that renders the heteronormative order visible, the performativity of heteronormativity is revealed, and the so-called naturalness of this order is turned upside down. The heteronormative order is inevitably considered together with the networks of power and the performative structure of networks of power are revealed through his performances.

The word “embody” when talking about a work of net-art that exists in virtual space may be seen as contradictory. But when we consider how virtual space is embodied by user participants, we can see that new media art also opens a space for material embodiments. An embodiment that happens through virtual space refers to divided, shattered, and scattered subjectivizations rather than a coherent, unified, rational, and indivisible conception of the subject. Upon recognizing this network of relationality in virtual and actual space as constituted by the juxtaposition of fragmentary, non-linear stories and images brought together online by multiple participants, we recognize that Brandon is the performance of this fragmentation and disunity.

The Brandon portrayed by Cheang in her net-art work does not resemble the Brandon portrayed in the films Boys Don't Cry and The Brandon Teena Story. In these films, Brandon is marked by the fact that he has been murdered, and it is through this marking that Brandon becomes transgender. Every element that refers to Brandon's life defines him as an individual who has been murdered because of his transgender identity. The fact that he is transgender, that he passes as male in a small town, and that he possesses female genitalia labels and marks Brandon's life with the transgender identity, rape, and murder. It is as if rape and murder were the inevitable markers of trans lives. The media, the commentary on Brandon and the films about him constitute these markers and revolve around them. Transgender, rape, and death are brought together as if they were the inevitable narrative markers of Brandon and those who have lived and will live before and after him. It feels as if the next transgender film will

be made through the repetition of these very markers. In the media and in the films about him, Brandon's status as a transgender person who has been murdered is taken as the main marker of his life and Brandon is regarded as an individual realizing this performance. The performance of the state of being a murdered transgender person is and will be just another repetition of the repeating transgender narratives.

In this context, it is important that the site of the artwork is the internet. As Brandon is constituted in net space, Brandon also brings spaces together, enabling various spaces to exist together in an interrelated way. The constant renewal and transformation of these connections determines the constitutive dynamics of Brandon's net subjectivity. The fact that these networks make Brandon who he is are in constant change and transformation enables the artwork to exist in an open and fluid space. As a result, Brandon constitutes himself through open, fluid, and trans networks. Another property that makes this artwork fluid and open is that it is interactive through the participation of user participants. The way user participants map various media networks through Brandon and the way Brandon is constituted in an embodied and processual way through these affective maps marks the importance of interactivity for this artwork. Brandon becoming a sketch of complex systems is contingent upon the performativity of media networks. Brandon becomes data, text, links, and images and morphs into something in and through this performance. The dynamism, flexibility and openness enabled by the internet allows Brandon to be constituted on such a basis and enables it to be transformed. Brandon functions as the framing device for the basis on which it is constituted and which it constitutes. This framing device brings many relationalities together and allows them to interact with each other. This interactivity determines which techniques and practices of engagement the participants will be using.

What truly interests me in this study is the fact that Brandon is a heterogeneous composition and network that brings many relations and relationalities together. In



other words, what interests me is the fact that Brandon himself is a network and that what is transgender is this network rather than Brandon being a transgender individual.

This conceptualization is in line with the notion of trans in the sense that I use it. As I specified in the Introduction, I use the word trans across a broad spectrum. My use of this notion, similar to Stryker, Currah and Moore's conception, is to connect the word trans- with a hyphen and see it as a concept that can be a prefix to anything. Here the notion of trans is predicated on the prepositions such as through, out, over, and across, meaning marking or crossing out, border-crossing, movement in space and time, and transforming. As Stryker, Currah, and Moore emphasize, I don't "want to perpetuate a minoritizing or ghettoizing use of 'transgender' to delimit and contain the relationship of trans-conceptual operations to gender statuses and practices in a way that rendered them the exclusive property of a tiny class of marginalized individuals" (11). By transgender, what I mean here is the following:

Rather than seeing genders as classes or categories that by definition contain only one kind of thing (which raises unavoidable questions about the masked rules and normativities that constitute qualifications for categorical membership), we understand genders as potentially porous and permeable spatial territories (arguable numbering more than two), each capable of supporting rich and rapidly proliferating ecologies of embodied difference. (12)

In this sense, Cheang's work of net-art helps us understand the conception of an open, fluid, dynamic, flexible, permeable, and porous space, and it helps one understand the notion of transgender as it is constituted through such a space. In this sense, Brandon does not symbolize an indivisible, fixed, and stable identity, but symbolizes a constantly transforming, flexible, and permeable network that brings heterogenous parts and elements together. Cheang's work makes it impossible to assume any category or identity for Brandon.

## **Ganimet**

Similar to Brandon, I also consider Ganimet as a medium that consists of complex webs of interactions and networks. Ganimet's trans-subjectivity rejects the identity politics' fixed and stable categorizations and she opens a space for considering subjects as networks made up of diverse and heterogeneous parts and elements. From this perspective, I consider both Brandon and Ganimet as trans-networks.

As a trans-network herself, Ganimet denaturalizes heteronormativity's inherent assumptions and categorizations. Ganimet disrupts any alignment between sex, gender, and sexual orientation. The way in which she experiences her sexuality is outside the spaces and places of heteronormativity. To this end, I will engage with parts and bits of Ganimet's life as she constantly transgresses anything normative.

How does one become a trans woman? Thinking of this question through the concepts of orientation and space, we witness that the states and conditions of being a trans woman comprise a more complicated technique of orientation than a change of sex and sexual orientation. Studying the relationship between bodily orientation and sexuality, Ahmed speaks of spatial images such as "straight", "bent", "deviation" etc. Ahmed foregrounds the question of orientation in the question of sexual orientation. Towards whom, what, where, and how we become sexually oriented is one of her questions. How is trans medium constituted in this sense, or how can a given medium be made trans? How can the sexed and gendered orientation of the body be transformed, and how can the body be re-oriented?

How does Ganimet, who speaks of the states of being trans in her writing, create the states and conditions of being a trans woman, and what are the daily life practices that are relevant to this? What does Ganimet's trans-embodied experience of life reveal about being trans? I will examine these questions through Ganimet's life as her life encompasses trans-archive of feelings, affects, sensations, and thoughts.

What does it mean to deviate? What exactly does it mean for deviation to deviate from the temporal and spatial signs of a heteronormative order and not to identify with these signs? According to Halberstam, to deviate from heteronormativity means to disrupt the constitutive dynamics of conditions such as birth, marriage, family, reproduction, and death that are the temporal and spatial signs of heteronormativity, to overcome the regulation of sexuality through these conditions, and to live in the context enabled by this transgression. This has to do with the modification of bodily orientations and the body finding new ways of relating to itself and its surroundings. Explaining that she is a sex worker working on the streets for a dime, Ganimet embodies the material conditions of living and working in the slums and, as such, embodies the subcultural elements of the slums as well. Put differently, Ganimet embodies the affective dimension of subcultural practices.

To understand the sensations, affects, and perceptions that the cultural conditions of sexuality create in trans-bodies, we need to look at how Ganimet, who states that she is selling her body for a dime on the street, situates and shapes her sexuality within certain subcultural practices. It is crucial to understand the environment in which Ganimet performs sex work, who the people that come to her as clients are, and what the framework is in which these sexual practices are situated. These practices reveal the constitutional techniques of her trans-subjectivity. The following section examines a trans-woman's life as a sex worker and transvestite and how this life reflects the experience of being a trans person in all its aspects. I have accessed these texts through her blogs, essays, and Facebook.

If we consider Ganimet's state of being trans aesthetically in the context of modes of being and living, what are the bodily and material codes that can be associated with trans-aesthetics? What I mean by trans-aesthetic is the courage to step outside experiencing feelings, sensations, and affects as categories of identity and to be able to let oneself go within sensations and affects that can transform at any moment. In

this sense, Ganimet steps outside the technologies of representation that comply with identity politics. Ganimet makes visible the technologies of self that the state, power, and authority constitute by subverting them.

Rubin's sexual hierarchy argues that at the very bottom of the hierarchy, in the most humiliated sexuality, lies the pedophilic relationship between different generations. What follows this, the second most humiliated form of sexuality, is the sexuality of transsexuals and transvestites, which usually includes sex work. When sex objects, toys, and objects of fetish come in, the act is treated as even more inferior. This entire hierarchy has in fact been shaped according to situations that stray the furthest from the most commonly accepted. The most accepted and affirmed sexuality is that which happens between a married woman and man, a monogamous, reproduction-oriented sexuality that occurs in the private space of the bedroom, mostly in the missionary position, without any additional objects. In such sexuality, no tools are utilized towards fulfilling fantasies and desires (Rubin 143-178). The further a form of sexuality strays from this kind of sexuality, the more inferior it is. Transgender people are among those at the very bottom of this hierarchy. The relations between bodies that remain outside heteronormative sexuality and the various practices of pleasure that these relationships include are deemed inferior, disgusting, and shameful.

Ganimet is a 50-year-old middle-class, Sunni Muslim, Turkish transvestite or trans woman, born to a Kemalist and Republican family who studied French Language and Literature at Erzurum Atatürk University upon her father's request. Having made a living with sex work in the slums most of her life, Ganimet is opposed to all identity politics. She includes such identities as 'Turk' and 'Muslim' in her self-description only because she is aware of how difficult it is to be truly freed of them.

Raised by her family "with great hope" and sent to university, Ganimet (named Mustafa back then) hated her penis since the age of six and attempted to rip it off from her body with a fishing line, always imagining that a vagina would come out from

under it. In primary school, she looked at the vagina of her closest girlfriend all the time and imagined she might have one herself one day. Ganimet says that she tried to be a good child for her family, yet she has been excluded from her parents' social circle because of her femininity. Trying to correct their son, the family was unaware that Ganimet was prostituting in a neighborhood close to their house at the time and that she spent most of her time there. Ganimet explains that this was possible because her father always had high ambitions for her, and, because of her class origins and education, her father could not even imagine that Ganimet could go to that neighborhood. Ganimet spent her time prostituting in the slums back then, as she does today (Ganimet, [www.pembehayat.org](http://www.pembehayat.org))

Ganimet says that she had her first BDSM experience with a general manager living in the TRT housing buildings (lojman). The man's fantasy was that he takes off his own clothes and put them in a parcel, and for Ganimet to take off her own clothes slowly and put them on him. After taking her wig off and putting it on him, Ganimet took off her clothes and underwear one by one and put them on the client. After being dressed, the man took a cleaning cloth and started doing cleaning, went to the kitchen and cooked, and performed other duties that are typically identified as the work of a housewife. Once done working, he took off the clothes and handed them to Ganimet and put his own clothes back on (Ganimet [www.5harfliler.com](http://www.5harfliler.com)). The fact that a general manager for a state institution like TRT calls a transvestite to the institution's dedicated housing buildings and enacts the fantasy of being a woman for the night enables us to rethink the content of official ideology.

The Turkish word "lojman" (en. lodging building) is based on the French word "logement", which means a residential unit provided by an institution to its workers free of charge or for low rent. The lodging model of residential housing in Turkey was instituted after Ankara became the capital in 1923 to provide accommodation to the rapidly growing civil servant families. In this period, state-sponsored industrialization

was accelerating. In the industrializing Anatolian cities, it was the bureaucrats, civil servants, and workers laboring in industrial organizations that determined the new ways of housing and settlement. The lodging buildings were a result of statist industrialization policies. In the 1930-1950 period, a statist economy was dominant. In this period, many textile, heavy industry, mining industry, cellulose, ceramics, glass, and chemical factories were built. Planned in the neighborhood scale, these factories were the important industrial complexes of the period, outfitted with management buildings, housing units, and social service buildings, and they were a model of modernization for the areas in which they were established. These industrial neighborhoods included worker homes, separate worker buildings for men and women, primary schools, wholesale markets, kindergartens, playgrounds, sports facilities, and facilities where workers can eat and recreate together.

Lodging housing was assigned to workers based on their status, the importance of their duty for the institution, and their experience. Life in lodging buildings was and still is subject to a set of rules and regulations. The hour of day when the trash is to be taken out, garden arrangements, car parking, the use of noise-making household appliances such as washing machines and vacuum cleaners during home rest hours and compliance with rules of public decency have been announced in writing. Non-residents entering a lodging building must go through security and announce who they are visiting and who they are. The people living in the lodging buildings work in the same institution, usually during the same hours, so they see each other regularly throughout the day and can often comment positively and negatively about each other. Therefore, people feel they are constantly under control and surveillance. A certain form of lodging building resident arises, comprised of people whom punish those who do not obey these unwritten rules and, moreover, whom think and react similarly and somehow always reach consensus. They establish a separate world of their own, and if you live with them, you have no choice but agree to their rules. Here, space directs, and

shapes lives and living preferences.

Another example Ganimet cites is G., whom she refers to as her “regular slave.” Ganimet put on various women’s clothes with G., whom she says was a necrophile. After taking an anesthetic used by veterinary physicians to put horses to sleep, containing ketamine, which anaesthetizes the body, Ganimet slept in bed as if dead and during this temporary death of her bodily sensations, G. made love to her. G. also acted as Ganimet’s slave when Ganimet’s visitors came and mostly sat in the kitchen. In the living room, a slave like G. can only sit on the carpet. This way, when the guests arrive, she can avoid sitting on the same level as Ganimet and making eye contact. Being unable to explain this form of relationship to anybody, G. is confined to sitting in the kitchen most of the time ([www.pembhayat.org](http://www.pembhayat.org)). Ganimet also had another BDSM relationship with a close friend. Ganimet explains that she was a beautiful trans woman from a fantastic place and, in the master-slave relationship, the slave asked to be sworn and yelled at, being forced to get in bed and asked Ganimet to kick her in the stomach. After a violent session of beating and humiliation, the person experienced a cathartic sense of relief and cried ([www.pembhayat.org](http://www.pembhayat.org)).

BDSM critiques the regulatory norms, codes of behaviors, and the heteronormative dynamics of sex, sexuality, and gender. The racialized, nationalized, sexualized, and gendered relations are critiqued by BDSM practices. These citations are enacted through the idea of play. In BDSM, you basically play or act out what you cite from everyday life of sexuality. Weiss talks about a scene that she encountered in San Francisco at “Byzantine Bazaar and Slave Auction” as follows:

a young African American woman ... was led up to the stage by ... a white man who held the leash attached to her collar. ... the man explained that he needed to tell us, the audience, a few things about his slave... As he spoke, he yanked up her dress to display her shaved genitals ... Turning her back around, he said she was very submissive and guaranteed to make us happy. (3-4)

This scene may be disturbing to some because of its explicit references to racism

and master/slave relationship. Within the concept of sexuality, this master/slave relationship has racial dynamics that are sexualized. What is being eroticized and sexualized here are racial dynamics. This scene reveals the racialization of sexuality as well as the sexualization of race. It makes the viewer question the sexual dynamics of master/slave relationship.

In this sense, BDSM has a relation to heterosexuality, therefore heteronormativity. BDSM practices put heteronormative sexualities within quotation marks. Scenes performed or played out in BDSM are the suppressed scenes of a heteronormative sexuality, lived or unlived. These scenes are constructed before play and are enacted consensually within BDSM ethics with a play partner. When we study these enactments and plays, we see them referring to dynamics of heteronormative sexuality. Califia “points to this contrast through the contrast she establishes between subcultural sadomasochism and institutionalized heterosexuality” (71). By referring to institutionalized heterosexuality, BDSM reveals the foundational dynamics of heteronormativity. Of course, we should not view BDSM as a monolithic practice. I do not mean to argue that every BDSM practice and experience subverts heteronormativity. For example, the sex negative BDSM dungeons where it is determined beforehand which act is sexual and what is not come to mind. In these dungeons, the forbidding of sex concerns penetration while other sexual acts are allowed.

The life and language of the streets, determined by subcultural practices in the slums, contributes to the construction and production of the trans-body. In this sense, certain streets have been designated with certain trans techniques, and have differentiated from other streets in terms of medium and ecosystem. The language and place of the street is determined by the dynamics between the trans people selling their bodies and the clients paying for them. While the more slender and younger ones, such as blondes and those with large breasts, manage to attract wealthier clients, those who



do not carry these traits, as Ganimet says, are forced to find clients for a pittance on the most uncanny and darkest corners of the streets. Trans bodies constitute and determine what kind of neighborhood they live in and sell their bodies. These bodies transform their neighborhood in the process of constituting it as a trans place. The everyday practices of trans individuals reveal the techniques of surviving and living in a place. As a marginalized community, their bodies mark and get marked by the conditions in which they are living. In bodies' constitution of a place lies the discursive and material negotiations between them, other neighborhoods, other residents, and finally the state. Family is considered as a very important place where such discursive and material negotiations take place. Sexuality and gender are themes where trans subjects have strong disagreements between themselves and their families.

In her essay titled Penisimin Katilleri (The Murderers of my Penis), Ganimet calls for her penis to be left alone by everyone, including her family. As her older brother asked her to get her "dick" removed and become a real woman, her mother acted as the custodian of her "dick," asking Ganimet not to have it removed no matter what. While her brother makes it a condition for her penis to be removed to introduce Ganimet to his own family, for her mother, Ganimet's dick is "Turkish, Muslim, Sunni, a soldier, hard-working and honest" ([www.pembehayat.org](http://www.pembehayat.org)). Yet her penis, always bothered by her family, as well as at times by friends and acquaintances, is just there all the time, oblivious to all these opinions. Ganimet says that this organ "never gets aroused by any form of heterosexual relationship," and instead has been "dancing to all sorts of wrong things". In other words, she states that rhythm of the movement of Ganimet's dick is very different from her brother's ([www.pembehayat.org](http://www.pembehayat.org)).

Ganimet reports that in addition to the tyranny that her family, mother, brother, and relatives build over her "dick", her transsexual friends who have undergone surgery also told her to "get her dick removed and look like a woman".

These friends added right afterwards: “Be true to the color of your ID”. In Turkey, women’s ID cards are pink in color, whereas men’s are blue. Ganimet has the appearance of a woman but must carry a blue ID card due to her “dick”. This is where the color of her ID card begins to matter.

Ganimet explains that transsexuals who have undergone the operation to have their penis removed try to set themselves apart from those who have not and post their photos “as real woman” on Facebook with their husband as soon as they get the operation. The most important sign of the transition from man to woman is that they show their newly created “pussies” to everyone for them to see how they look. Ganimet explains that such friends are unable to leave her “dick” alone, that it is only gays, lesbians, and trans men who can. Ganimet finishes her essay by stating that her penis, which takes up so much of the essay, is only the size of a finger (www.pembehayat.org). She jokingly adds that her penis, which the state, family, and friends never leave alone is of a barely recognizable size, almost invisible if she were to put on a little more weight. Her penis takes up so much space in everyone’s life because it symbolizes the phallogentric hegemony.

The boundaries of the body are those situated between the inside and outside of the body. This boundary separates me and that which is not me, but this differentiation is not a total enclosure. The boundary establishes permeability and transitivity between the inside and the outside. The notions of inside and outside draw the borders of the body by constantly changing place. We can state that the surfaces and holes of the body represent permeability and transitivity:

The construction of stable bodily lines depends on the fixedness of the sites of bodily permeability and impermeability. In both homosexual and heterosexual contexts, sexual practices that open certain surfaces and holes to erotic signification and close others redraw the boundaries of the body towards new cultural lines. (Butler 219)

Butler also quotes Foucault on the surfaces and holes of the body: “Why are the

ends of the body are particularly regarded as being charged with power and danger” (218)? While Butler quotes Foucault on the limits of the body, its inside and outside, Lacan, as I mentioned in my first chapter, asks: “Why are the so-called erogenous zones recognized only in those points that are differentiated by us for their rim-like structure” (168)? Lacan asks here why the organs other than the mouth are not determined as the organ-instrument of oral drive. He then indicates that the mouth is the organ where the distinction between inside and outside gets blurred. The mouth takes what is inside out and what is outside in. It is the site where this exchange takes place. It is also an erotic organ because it is a hole. As an organ-instrument that connects inside and outside, the mouth is a biotechnological organ where the bodily drives and oral drive are coded techno-sexually.

In her essay Erkekliğin ve Kadınlığın Olmadığı Bir Yer Mümkün (It is Possible to Have a Place Where Masculinity and Femininity Do not Exist), Ganimet tells of her sexual experience of Bologna, Italy and states that people there have long given up manhood and womanhood and their organs, that sexual orientation does not matter, and that people have discovered all sorts of different ways of making love: “I don’t understand why we are recreating the manhood and the womanhood that rejected us.” As a “woman with a dick” in her own terms, who rejects gender binarism and self-defines as a person who does not fit either gender, Ganimet comments from beyond this dichotomy: “I can be a man with my pussy... And haven’t I proven to you that I can be a woman with my dick?” She declares that she can be both a woman and a man with the following words:

You said I had a dick, and no breasts, so I couldn’t be a woman, but here, I am. Didn’t I prostitute as a woman? Didn’t I snicker as I slept with your heterosexual men with my dick? Why do you care what part of my body I use as I make love?  
(www.5harfliler.com)

In another essay Özürden Ötedir Varoşun Yolu (You Don’t Apologize for Your Existence in Ghettos), she confronts the people who monopolize writing, producing,

politics, knowledge, and thought. Here Ganimet addresses the people who do not allow her to speak and write because she lacks the cultural capital of the intellectuals and the means of communication brought about by such capital, “After every essay I publish, I am asked by a displeased group to publish a retraction.” Constantly asked to apologize to certain groups for expressing herself, Ganimet writes, “I will never understand why you expect an apology for me. I can apologize if needed... I’m a bad transvestite who has been condemned to being made to apologize to the police, the judge, my family, and my school.” Saying that she uses the language of the streets, Ganimet sets herself apart from this class of people. She states that “the problems I understand are those that concern the streets.” Actually, “the ones about the corners of the street where the most stinking, darkest business takes place.” She writes that she does not attend the commissions and councils of the intellectuals because “she is not a good-looking, white, clean, and fragrant trans woman” ([www.pembehayat.org](http://www.pembehayat.org)).

Some of Ganimet’s essays include parts written against groups who oppress and censor her and constantly ask her to apologize and publish retractions. Ganimet believes the reason why she is constantly censored by certain groups is her essay in which she spoke of the little known and unspoken problems about trans operations and the discrimination between the operated and non-operated among trans people. This discrimination is based on those whom have a vagina and those who do not. Wanting to have her penis removed and become a bride, Ganimet explains that she found a new state of being a woman or being a woman as a trans, for which having a vagina or breasts are not necessary conditions. As she openly declares that bodies who get vaginas or penises through transition surgery have serious problems regarding the use of these organs, she speaks of the existence of people who are trying to prove that the operations are perfect or obligatory. This distinction between trans women who have vaginas and who do not is in fact situated within the hierarchical rules of being a trans person. Being accepted as a trans person is subject to a set of hierarchical rules. In

houses where trans people live together, those who have beards and have a masculine appearance are at the bottom of the hierarchy. These individuals serve the residents of the house as servants and cleaners. At the next stage, as they begin to get rid of their beard and bodily hair, they transition from housework to errands such as going to the grocery store. Those who grow breasts through hormone therapy climb up the hierarchy. What they need to do to be a complete trans individual is get an operation to have their penis removed and a vagina constructed in its place. The discrimination established through this hierarchy divides trans individuals into two groups: those who have vaginas and those who do not.

Ganimet is not opposed to those trans people who get the operation, and supports them on an emotional level, but believes that one becomes a woman by saying “I am a woman” and that a vagina is not a requirement for being one. Ganimet emphasizes that the operation is not requisite for being a trans woman. If having a vagina is the one and only requirement for being a trans woman, then we are talking about a codified set of organs. The reason that the vagina and breasts are selected as the organs of sexuality and this codification is considered a natural and biological one is that the discursive geography of the body is constituted in this way under the guise of naturalness.

The sex work performed in the dangerous, uncanny corners of streets economically and culturally produces and determines the relation of trans bodies to public spaces such as the undersides of bridges, highways, the woods, and cars. Being a trans-woman, it is nearly impossible to find a job other than sex work in Turkey. Because sex work is almost a necessary condition for being a trans woman in Turkey, it is important for us to look at how Ganimet brings herself to being through sex work. If sex work requires labor, how does the fact that this labor is sex affect Ganimet’s body? Put otherwise, how does it determine her relationship with her body? The question of with whom, under what conditions, where and how sex work is performed is an

important one.

Considering Ganimet's age and recognizability, the reason she is still working out on the streets rather than at home is that she is a 50 year-old woman who does not have breasts and has a penis. Given this deficiency in her bodily organs and the fact that her age is rather advanced for what she does, she struggles to make a living. For her, BDSM is a source of income. As BDSM includes the most embarrassing and taboo of desires, Ganimet's availability for fulfilling them increases her prices.

In defining herself as the "queen of monstrosity", Ganimet reclaims the word "monster," which is generally used pejoratively. Stryker similarly reclaims this term, stating: "I am a transsexual, therefore I am a monster." Referring to sphinx-like creatures, Stryker declares, "I whose flesh has become an assemblage of incongruous anatomical parts" (240). This creates constantly changing and transforming assemblages, blurring the boundaries between the organic and the inorganic, or the natural and the unnatural. Fusing sexuality with sex reassignment surgery, synthetic molecules, hormones, chemicals, and medical-industrial pharmaceutical complexes creates techno-sexual bodies. These technologies of the self-constitute the subject technosexually, creating sexed and gendered identities which situate the transsexual somewhere between the human, animal, and cyborg, thus creating hybrid bodies. This state of hybridity stigmatizes the transsexual as alien and as abject. Identifying with this body codified as alien and abject means to affirm and reclaim it. The transsexual occupies diverse and varying subject positions, continuously moving between and in-between them. By embodying these various positions, the transsexual subject is constituted or specified as gendered.

As defined by Kristeva, the abject is a scary and monstrous thing, causing transgressions, mixtures, and dissociations that bring into question the fixed, stable, categorical, natural state of the boundaries that separate one from the other. As a thing,

it is not an object distinct from the subject, and not the subject itself. Rather, it is a thing that stands at the threshold of the sense of repulsion and distaste that renders the boundary between the subject and the object ambivalent. Ganimet is a transvestite who renders herself as the other by affirming the senses of repulsion projected on her by others and embodying this monstrosity and freakishness. She reclaims her own monstrosity by doing everything that others find repulsive and wrong through this othering.

Intercorporeality can be defined as the space or spaces where the space occupied by a body and another body intersect. If we assume that the body is formed intracorporeally, the tendencies of my body are shaped through those of another body and find their form. The boundary between me and the other is beyond the space physically occupied by the body, and the body exists in a space that is distinct from this physical space. The body has an existence beyond the skin, where the boundaries of the physical body begin and end. In this sense, the sense of repulsion corresponds to the becoming visible of the boundaries of the body and their disappearance. As Kristeva argues, repulsion is an emotion that renders boundaries ambivalent while determining the boundaries of the body. By rendering the boundaries ambivalent, the sense of repulsion makes possible an intertwining, or the experience of a lack of boundaries enabled by this intertwining. The body has encountered the boundaries of other bodies through its own boundaries. The anxiety of the loss of boundaries creates a sense of turning to oneself at the same time. As well as separating the inside from the outside, repulsion also reveals that the inside cannot be separated from the outside through stable and clear-cut rules. The anxiety and repulsion that arises from the contagiousness of bodies reveals the permeability of boundaries. With the anxiety of intertwining, the body remains distant to the boundaries of the other body.

Finally, to talk about how the notion of family functions in trans-networks, I will return here to Ganimet's conception of family. Her conception of family is very

different compared to the fixed, unchanging, inherited family adorned with surrounding relatives. On a trans scale, family is experienced very differently. Some trans women have wives coming from the heterosexual family structure. In the eyes of their wives, these trans women are men and sometimes they continue enacting the role of a husband. In other cases, trans women find non-official husbands to whom they exhibit their femininity. There are also trans individuals who have children to whom they act as fathers. Some of them are trans women and they can be sold as women by their newly found and non-official husbands, experiencing the identity of a prostitute. Identities are not only multiple and intertwined as in these examples but can also be changing. They may break up with their husbands and find new ones. When outside the heterosexual family structure, they can acquire daughters and sons along with their husbands. As they set up a life that is in complete contrast with the notions of a natural and biological child, they can still maintain a very traditional, conservative family structure. In this non-traditional family life, their husbands, daughters or sons are not fixed and stable. And finally, they can pimp and sell the daughters they acquire as trans women. To help their adopted daughters survive as trans people, they teach them sex work and how to be trans. In other words, they can simultaneously act as wife, mother, woman, prostitute, pimp, father and husband. This is how Ganimet performs her life.

### **Conclusion**

Both Brandon and Ganimet highlight the confluence of the notions of trans-networks and networked subjectivities, which bring diverse and multiple parts and elements together, forming complex and aesthetic networks of interactions. My conception of Brandon and Ganimet as trans-networks demonstrate subjects and subjectivities as networks themselves. The idea of Brandon and Ganimet being trans-networks disrupts the stable, coherent, and unified conception of identity and replaces this conception with fragmented, dispersed, fluid, and flexible subjectivities.

New media technologies and its philosophy stand here in relationship to



fragmented and diverse subjectivities. New media philosophy can be coalesced into the emergence of a new understanding, which one might call the idea of networks and systems. Considering identity in terms of networked subjectivities opens a space for reconsidering anything normative.

New media technologies emphasize the convergence of the biological and the technological, alluding to human being as a biotechnological entity made up of various networks and systems. Trans-networks correspond to continuously changing and transforming dynamic connections. The human being conceived of as a biotechnological hybrid questions the existence and presence of anything biological and natural. It subverts anything normalized within the identificatory regimes of the heteronormative matrix of sex and gender. Both Brandon and Ganimet's lives, alluding specific transgender performances, disrupt heteronormativity and its institutions, situations, and ideas such as family, marriage, reproduction, state, military, and nationalism.

I analyze Brandon and Ganimet as their lives make any alignment between sex, gender, and sexual orientation impossible. Brandon and Ganimet constantly recreate the state and conditions of being trans through relearning various complicated techniques of bodily orientations. New media technologies transform the aesthetic stakes of life by opening new spaces of creation, disruption, subversion, and exploration. It is through these aesthetic spaces and aesthetic performances that I examine Brandon and Ganimet as trans-networks here.

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