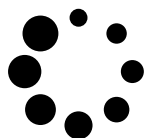


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Embracing
Otherness?

A VR Body Hack by
Morehshin Allahyari

by Manischa Eichwalder Otherness

Strange encounter

Empathy machine

Virtual reality

Uncanny

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Embracing Otherness? A VR Body Hack by Morehshin Allahyari



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Abstract

“Embracing the otherness” is a phrase that is borrowed from Morehshin Allahyari’s virtual reality artwork *She Who Sees the Unknown: Kabous, the Right Witness, and the Left Witness* (2019). In this article, I am using this phrase to question the figuration of self and other as staged by Allahyari in her work. By deploying an overwhelming effect of immersion specific to the technological features of VR, Allahyari establishes a physical as well as an emotional relationship to the other. But instead of encouraging a sense of closeness, which is likely to be connected to the idea of “embracing otherness” as well as to the vision of VR as “empathy machine,” this immersive experience has the opposite effect. I argue that it weirdly plays with the appropriative mechanisms of othering, unsettles the viewer’s sovereignty, and thus initiates a rather “strange encounter.” In this sense, I will examine Allahyari’s use of VR’s immersiveness as a “body hack” and elaborate how I read her artwork as a critical commentary on the debate of the transformative potential of VR as “empathy machine.”

Keywords [Otherness](#) [Strange encounter](#) [Empathy machine](#)
[Virtual reality](#) [Uncanny](#)

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Immersed in the Empathy Machine

The idea of VR as an “empathy machine” seems to be paramount to the discourse surrounding the transformational potential of virtual reality. The central controversy in this vital debate regards the evaluation of VR’s characteristic effect: the experience of presence that can be evoked through the viewer’s apparent full-body immersion in the computer-simulated media reality.¹ In line with developers, enthusiasts promote the promise of VR’s immediacy as an inherently socially beneficial enhancement of the capacities of human perception. According to filmmaker and entrepreneur Chris Milk, probably the most prominent representative of this position: “through this machine we become more compassionate, we become more empathetic, and we become more connected. And ultimately, we become more human.”² With this claim, he frames the presentation of his UN-funded VR project *Clouds Over Sidra* that stands in line with a whole range of globally successful VR projects with documentary aspiration, developed around 2015. These projects place the viewer in a situation of socio-political crisis, a “reality” supposedly different to that of the viewer: the everyday life of a 12-year-old Syrian girl in a Jordanian refugee camp, a violent encounter with the US Border Patrol during an illegal crossing of the Mexican-American border,³ an Ebola hospital in Liberia.⁴ As proof of the effectiveness of his VR, Milk shows a man in suits smiling emotionally from under his VR goggles at the Davos Economic Summit, where the film premiered in 2015: Milk interprets the visibly affective reaction (to whatever is experienced in VR

1 For the discussion from an art and media studies perspective see for example: G. Bollmer, K. Guinness, “Empathy and Nausea: Virtual Reality and Jordan Wolfson’s *Real Violence*,” *Journal of Visual Culture* 19, no. 1 (2020): 28-46, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470412920906261>; A. Pinotti, “Staying here, Being there. Bilocation, Empathy and Self-Empathy in Virtual Reality,” *Bollettino Filosofico* 37 (2022): 142-162, <https://doi.org/10.6093/1593-7178/9657>; C. Stiegler, *The 360° Gaze: Immersion in Media, Society, and Culture* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2021): 35ff.

2 C. Milk, “How Virtual Reality Can Create the Ultimate Empathy Machine,” filmed March 2015 at TED Talk, https://www.ted.com/talks/chris_milk_how_virtual_reality_can_create_the_ultimate_empathy_machine?subtitle=en&lng=de&geo=de, accessed January 1, 2024.

3 A. G. Iñárritu, *Carne y Arena. Virtually Present, Physically Invisible* (2017).

4 C. Milk, *Clouds over Sidra*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mUosdCQsMkM>, accessed February 5, 2024.

– presumably the flash of Sidra’s unexpected humanity in the midst of her suffering) as a success in being able to “change people’s minds.”⁵

The criticism of these projects designed to evoke empathy through the assumed experience of other people’s suffering in VR is complex and can probably be grasped most concisely in Lisa Nakamura’s words:

VR’s vast claims to produce this compassion, to function as “empathy machines”, frame racism and toxicity as a problem with a head-mounted solution, rather than as a set of structural relations that require structural solutions.⁶

In her seminal article *Feeling Good About Feeling Bad. Virtuous Virtual Reality and the Automation of Racial Empathy*, Nakamura elaborates on the ideological construction and historical continuities of appropriating other people’s suffering via stigmatized medial representations of marginalized people. She criticizes that the supposed immediacy of our reactions in VR obscures the constructedness of the artifact. This leads to misunderstanding one’s own affective experience of a standardized and one-dimensional representation as the reality of others. She unmasks the promise of a radical change of perspective in VR – to be put in another’s shoes – as an automated “body hack” that “mistakes point of view for embodied experience.”⁷ In projects like *Clouds over Sidra*, the visceral modality of VR is used to direct our focus to a particular message and prevent unwanted distractions that could cast doubt on the authenticity of both what is being represented and our affective reaction to it. Nakamura describes this persuasive VR-strategy as a “body hack” that relieves us of the actual work of feeling and of being responsible for dealing with the (un-)availability of our emotions. As the other “is figured as an emotional resource for white viewers,” these

5 C. Milk, “How Virtual Reality can create the Ultimate Empathy Machine”.

6 L. Nakamura, “Feeling Good about Feeling Bad: Virtuous Virtual Reality and the Automation of Racial Empathy,” *Journal of Visual Cultures* 19, no. 1 (2020): 47-64, 59, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470412920906259>.

7 Ibid.: 56, 60.

“documentary” projects “reproduce racial violence in the name of reducing it.”⁸ Here, we are dealing with a classic (and yet very limitedly transformative) mechanism of othering. In her book *Strange Encounters. Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*, Sara Ahmed describes this mechanism of othering as a “form of *eating* and digestion: the other is valued as that which one is with, but only insofar as it can be taken in by, and incorporated into, [...] the thinking of being.”⁹ In order to prevent this dynamic of “stranger fetishism,” Ahmed calls for an understanding of strangeness as part of the self, rather than projecting it onto the construction of the other. She calls for encounters between self and other that “shift the boundaries of the familiar, of what is already recognisable or known” and are therefore “impossible to grasp in the present.”¹⁰

Allahyari’s Strange Encounter

The artist and activist Morehshin Allahyari develops such “strange encounters” by relying on VR’s capacities to fully immerse the viewer. She plays with the effectiveness of the “body hack” and turns it against VR’s ideological appropriation as “empathy machine.” In a series of works titled *She Who Sees the Unknown* (2016-21), Allahyari develops re-figurations of the other that initially show few parallels to the virtual documentary film projects mentioned above and even seem diametrically opposed to them. While the documentary projects are about experiencing the illusion of the supposed reality of other people in a most realistic way, and about nurturing a personal relationship of sympathy, Allahyari’s re-figurations center mythological figures of female djinn. In Allahyari’s work, the other is not human, but an “extraordinary and supernatural being”¹¹ known from

8 Ibid.: 51.

9 S. Ahmed, *Strange Encounters. Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (New York: Routledge 2000): 139. Ahmed borrows this food metaphor from bell hooks, which she develops in her “Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance,” in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, (Boston: South End Press, 1992): 21-39.

10 Ibid.: 39, 13.

11 See the website of this project, <https://shewhoseestheunknown.com>, accessed January 5, 2024.

(pre-)Islamic culture. It is a monstrous figure characterized precisely by its deviation from the phallogocentric norm of the human.¹² As a representation of our imagination of “the danger of the unknown,”¹³ this figure can neither be located in a reality that is independent of its medial narration nor obviously in an empathetic relationship.¹⁴ In the various parts of her series of works, Allahyari uses these figures to occupy stereotypical narratives of female lust, madness or destructive rage, which she interweaves with historical material about the djinn and fragments from her own diasporic and female-socialized experience. Basically, those works are less about creating an emotional connection with the characters or even about generating knowledge about the reality of others. Rather, they are about dealing with the violent mechanisms and motifs of the projection of otherness, to which both the figure of the djinn and Allahyari’s experiences bear witness.¹⁵ In their fragmentary aesthetics and non-linear narrative style – she works with 3D printing and modeling, video, archival material and her own texts – Allahyari’s multimedia re-figurations can primarily be understood as a cognitive challenge to actively comprehend their ambivalence and to resist the reflex of reducing the other to something that can easily be grasped in its familiarity.¹⁶ However, in one of the works from the series titled *She Who Sees the Unknown: Kabous, the*

12 See for example: T.T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other. Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009): 236; R. Braidotti, “Mothers, Monsters and Machines,” in R. Braidotti, ed., *Nomadic Subjects. Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994): 75-94.

13 S. Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*: 2, 37, 138.

14 For a detailed analysis of how these supernatural beings are digitally figured in an appealing way see S. Seife, “Rigging Demons,” in J. Rocha, F. Snelting eds., *DATA browser 08. VOLUMETRIC REGIMES: Material Cultures of Quantified Presence* (Open Humanities Press, 2022): 31-55.

15 Allahyari’s practice of re-figuration, of combining fictional as well as factional strands, stands in an intersectional feminist tradition that aims at uncovering the construction of how marginalized individuals become abstracted to figures by highlighting the situatedness of storytelling. See for example: R. Braidotti *Nomadic Subjects*; D. Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 575-599, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066>; S. Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *Small axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1-14, <https://doi.org/10.1215/-12-2-1>.

16 Rosi Braidotti describes this dualistic reflex as the basic structure of our westernized social order, in which otherness must be understood as negativity in order to formulate a discursive norm. See R. Braidotti, “Mothers, Monsters and Machines,” in R. Braidotti, ed., *Nomadic Subjects. Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994): 75-94: 80.

Right Witness, and the Left Witness (2019), Allahyari puts this reflex, so effectively at work in the criticized virtual documentary formats, center stage. Here, she develops her re-figuration in VR and sets up an encounter with the spectator that makes them experience the mechanisms of the “body hack” and the motifs of othering in an intrusive way. To do so, she uses the suggestive potential of VR’s immersiveness, the presence-effect of virtual reality, to, just like in the documentary film projects, overwhelm the viewer, and establish a physical-emotional relationship with the other. In fact, this dominant experience imposes a one-dimensional reading of the figure of the other, which, however, obstructs the anticipated process of understanding the artwork.

Kabous, the Right Witness, and the Left Witness

Besides being a computer-generated VR film and not a 360° video, the formal structure of the 12-minute artwork significantly resembles the equally short documentary projects. An essential parallel that explicitly controls the encounter between self and other is the fact that I cannot move independently in the virtual world. By providing 3DoF instead of 6DoF, I’m only able to look around.¹⁷ Similar to *Clouds over Sidra*, for example, which Lisa Nakamura describes as “VR-as-empathy-machine’s ur-text,”¹⁸ Allahyari’s narrative thus does not develop depending on my own interaction with the virtual world, but instead unfolds over various short scenes that are separated by blackouts.¹⁹ In each scene, the recipient finds themselves in a new place and also in a new situation with the protagonist of the virtual world. Just as in *Clouds over Sidra*, each change

17 The different Degrees of Freedom (DoF) indicate how many independent parameters are given for interacting within a digital 360° environment. 3DoF support rotational movement while 6DoF also include translational movement, that is spatial movement along the axis x, y, z. See for example, “Degrees of Freedom” in XR Wiki: <https://www.xrhub-nue.de/technologie/xr-wiki/>, accessed February 5, 2024.

18 L. Nakamura, “Feeling Good about feeling Bad:” 56.

19 A 2D version of this 360° documentary can be seen here: *Clouds over Sidra* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mUosdCQsMkM>, accessed February 5, 2024.

of position in the artwork goes hand in hand with a new chapter in the story, which is narrated by the protagonist in a voiceover. Access to what is happening in the virtual world is thus decisively influenced by the framing of the relation between the allocation of a physical position of the viewer and the disembodied narration of the voiceover. The more homogeneous the sensomotoric interplay of these narrative elements, the more immersive the experience, the more striking the illusion of a real encounter,²⁰ and the more effective the “body hack”. In *Clouds over Sidra*, this function is used to convey the impression of authenticity and to develop the greatest possible closeness between the recipient and the other person. The viewer is placed at eye level with the protagonist in the middle of various everyday situations in the Jordanian refugee camp, whereby the impression of spatial co-presence is created. Through Sidra’s off-screen narration, this impression of physical closeness is enriched by emotional closeness. Her intimate thoughts, wishes, hopes, and fears in connection with the physical placement in her supposed reality create a seamless narrative that is perceived as a physically, emotionally, and cognitively affecting experience that “cannot be doubted once it is felt.”²¹ Allahyari, however, does not build a seamless narrative, but one that must be doubted in order to somehow make sense. This is because she creates a conflict between the experience of the spectator’s own embodied affectedness and the disembodied off-screen narrative. She uses VR’s effect of full-body immersion to keep the recipient away from these intimate insights into another lived reality and instead keeps them busy with a surprisingly allusive representation of the other.

20 See T. Fuchs, “Der Schein des Anderen. Empathie und Virtualität,” in T. Breyer, ed., *Grenzen der Empathie. Philosophische, psychologische und Anthropologische Perspektiven* (Paderborn: Brill Fink, 2013): 261-281, 276.

21 L. Nakamura, “Feeling Good about Feeling Bad:” 53.

(M)Other/Monster

Allahyari's VR film is embedded in a spatial installation in the exhibition space that is reminiscent of a sparsely furnished bedroom that creates the impression of being invited into a private situation. Here, the recipient is asked to lie down on the bed and put on the head mounted display. Lying in this position, the freedom of movement is severely restricted and the field of vision in VR is limited to a radius of 180°. Thus, Allahyari initially places the viewer physically in a precarious position and harnesses this passivity for the various scenic repositionings in the virtual world. In this restricted position, the encounter with an other at eye level does not seem very likely. This is being utilized dramatically right at the beginning of the VR. The VR starts with a blackout while the artist begins to speak in a slightly distorted voice off-screen:

She who saw all things in the broad-boned earth and beyond, and knew what was to be known. She who had seen what there was, and had embraced the "otherness".

This introduction is a recurring element in the series *She Who Sees the Unknown*, in which the supernatural features of the figuration are invoked. It is reminiscent of a popular English translation of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, which locates me mentally in a mythological setting of symbolic imagery rather than in a literal context.²² But this cognitive alignment to the story changes abruptly with my bodily immersion in the virtual world. A few seconds after the voiceover begins, a large room appears around me. I am lying in its center on the floor and I'm looking up into its high, vaulted ceiling. Before I am able to orient myself in the situation, a djinn appears above me at a distance of approximately five meters. Meanwhile, from off-screen:

²² See R. Temple, *He Who Saw Everything. A verse translation of Gilgamesh* (London: Rider, 1991).

Her name is Kabous. Made of smokeless fire, She is the jinn of horror and nightmare. Accompanied by the right and the left witness she enters, she enters to hold you down in your sleep.

Barely noticeable and within a few seconds, the stiff, human-sized figure approaches me until its glowing red eyes are only a few centimeters away from my face. Intuitively, I turn my head away to escape this sudden physical intrusion, until a few seconds later a next blackout relieves me from my helpless reaction to the terrifyingly awkward encounter with the djinn. In this subject-centered interplay of language and visual space, Allahyari conjures up the threatening monstrosity of the mythological figure. Through the physically, emotionally, and cognitively immersive experience of immediately being affected by this figure, its monstrosity appears as undeniable. This uncanny encounter with the djinn, the intense experience of her menace, triggers an effective uncertainty of my own sovereignty which initially makes me focus on clarifying the unsettling relationship between Kabous and myself. But in the following scene, the djinn above me has disappeared. I find myself in a narrow, dark niche and this time I directly try to orient myself to be prepared for my next encounter with the uncanny djinn. To my left, the niche opens up into a large, wide room. There I see Kabous, accompanied by two other djinn, the Right Witness and the Left Witness, who are hovering over a central pool of water motionless. Meanwhile, I hear the voice of an elderly woman, Allahyari's mother, reading from her diary in Persian. According to the English subtitles, it is an entry from 1984 in which she talks about her concern for her unborn child. Being completely absorbed by the aftermath of my disturbing experience with the djinn, whose overwhelming appearance involved me in my immediate surroundings in a quite literal sense, this short text escapes my attention. I only notice fragments of it, which seem to have nothing to do with my encounter with the djinn and therefore do not convey any meaning. After another blackout, I land on the edge of the pool and am once again in close proximity to the djinn, who are still

floating motionless in the steam of the water. This time, Allahyari speaks from off-screen about a memory of her grandmother in English. Due to the potentially threatening proximity to the djinn and my strange position lying on the edge of the pool, again I am mainly concerned with my bodily alignment. I intuitively try to establish a safe distance to the djinn. Once again, the majority of what is being said and its actual context escapes my awareness. However, an almost incidental remark from within the voiceover leaks through as an important information that helps me to contextualize my immediate surroundings. Allahyari recalls an encounter between her grandmother and a djinn in a hamam the evening before Iraqi troops bombed her hometown.

Absurdly, this genuinely disturbing information has an immediately calming effect on me, which helps to better orient myself in the virtual world: Finally, I realize that I am in a hamam and that the experience of Kabous' menacing character is not a mistake I somehow could have avoided but that it must be an integral part of the story. Since the djinn is described in Allahyari's voiceover as the vanguard of a deeply threatening situation, the relationship between me and Kabous, my experienced impression of her menace, is kept in suspense with her symbolic meaning. However, Kabous' uncanniness loses its potency through this cognitive access, which, in a Freudian sense, enables me to examine the confusion I experienced between my actual reality and the media reality and to redraw a distinction.²³ Relieve comes with this realization that Kabous as a symbol of threat "takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes,"²⁴ and I no longer need to keep her at bay. Thus, a diffuse feeling of connection to the djinn gradually develops – we are together in the here and now. In contrast,

23 Sigmund Freud's conception of the uncanny provides an illuminating framework to analyze the encounter between self and other in Allahyari's work. The experience, I'm describing as a "body hack" has the effect of a profound "ego-disturbance" (236), that is most effective in immersive fiction and is thus "not submitted to reality testing" (249). S. Freud, "The Uncanny," in J. Strachey, ed., *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works by Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 17 (1917-1919), (London: The Hogarth Press, 1953-1974): 218-253.

24 Ibid.: 244.

on an auditive level a figuration develops between mother, daughter and grandmother, whose relationship largely eludes my current perception, but intervenes in this sense of togetherness in a *weird* way. To grasp these nuances of the phenomenon of the uncanny with Mark Fisher, this dynamic can be described as if through the diary entries and Allahyari's memory, an outside that is inaccessible to me breaks into this world, allowing me to understand the inside as such – my presence with the djinn in the hamam. At the same time, I realize how my own focus on this inside has a limiting effect, which prevents me from grasping and understanding the outside.²⁵ So while I perceived Kabous as the threatening other at the moment of the uncanny encounter, the *eerie* absence of her uncanniness in the following brings me closer to the djinn and thus creates a precarious sense of “we.” Against this sense of togetherness, the figuration around mother/daughter/grandmother appears as truly other, eluding my emotional and intellectual appropriation.

During most of the VR film, which flashes by incredibly quickly, I cannot get hold of, nor can I make sense of these shifting dynamics caused by the play of closeness and distance. I am mainly preoccupied with my own dismay and with regaining self-confidence. This insecurity is repeatedly triggered by the various changes of my position and the constant reorientation towards the djinn. But now, that I finally get an idea of how to relate my bodily involvement to the off-screen narration, this constellation suddenly dissolves. Significantly, this is related to the increasing dissolution of spatial three-dimensionality at the end of the VR film and the vanishing impression of physical co-presence with the djinn. In this scene, I suddenly find myself at the ceiling above the central pool of water. For the first time I am placed in a position that is contradictory to my physical position of lying down and looking up. This inconsistency between my bodily orientation and my location within the visual world is reinforced by the appearance of

25 M. Fisher, *The Weird and The Eerie* (London: Repeater Books, 2017): 11 ff.

the three djinn, who are now also detached from their previous location and appear in front of me, one after another. This dissolution of the relation between me and the djinn provides and elusive insight into the off-screen figuration as well as into Allahyari's perspective on the djinn. From off-screen, Allahyari directly turns towards the djinn and, to my surprise, addresses them as figures of trust. She moans to the two witnesses about her mental suffering caused by the violence of war and describes how the relationship to her mother and grandmother is shaped by an "extreme form of separation anxiety." As her references to the djinn seem to have nothing to do with my previous understanding of them being an effective symbol of threat, but rather serve as a motif to address her own anxieties, I feel exposed in my own literal affectedness that distracted me from engaging with this multi-layered story. Moreover, she addresses Kabous as her unborn "beloved child," whom she will not give birth to "in blood and flesh": "to not be born in blood and flesh is to be protected. To not be born in blood and flesh is a form of becoming [...]." As if this contrast between the characterization of Kabous as a bearer of hope and my own experience of her threatening character were not already great enough to demonstrate the incompatibility of my position within this re-figuration, Kabous herself appears as the "beloved child" at the end of the VR work. Just like in the introduction, an amorphic voice is audible and the visual space slowly changes from a simulation of spatial features to a bright void with a portal-like sphere in far distance.

to heal my mother, our mother's mothers ... to become other, and alter our daughters ... Birth justice: to choose when, where, how and what to birth, what to birth. The ultimate extent of power is this union. Only in the future you will know ... the only future you will know.

With this abstract poetic outlook at the end of the VR, a completely new dimension is added to this re-figuration, which intensifies my dissatisfaction with my imposed

lack of independence. Why is otherness here associated with healing in such a remarkable clarity, when I have experienced this otherness at the beginning in an equally remarkable clarity, but on the contrary, as wounding? Why am I so occupied by Kabous' uncanniness and thus distracted from cognitively comprehending this multi-layered story, even though this would be the more appropriate way to understand Allahyari's ambivalent re-figuration of (m)other/monster in all its complexity?

By using the "body hack" to provoke feelings of insecurity and to thereby obstruct my access to the re-figuration of the other, I argue that Allahyari's message can be understood as a critical commentary on the debate about "empathy machine." She exposes the effectiveness of VR's immersive modality and at the same time prevents me from "embracing the otherness" within this simulated encounter. With this "body hack," Allahyari stages an encounter between self and other that initially conveys a very limited, one-dimensional, and at the same time medially enforced understanding of the other. In the moment of maximal immersion into the virtual world, the figure of the other explicitly appears as threatening. In the moment of minimal immersion into the virtual, while feeling completely disintegrated into the story, the figure of the other is given the opposite meaning. However, beyond this opposing attribution of those distinct but quite narrow characteristics of this figure, a re-figuration of the truly other develops around the traumatic reality of Allahyari, her mother and her grandmother. The way Allahyari uses the immersiveness of the medium and plays with the most obvious appearance of the djinn, she saves this real otherness from being incorporated into the viewer's own imaginary world. I thus understand the "body hack" in Allahyari's artwork as an effective strategy to expose the hegemonic violence of history and storytelling, that casts marginalized people as a figure of

the other and replaces their reality with our fantasy of it. In this way, Allahyari uses the presence-effect of VR to build a narrative that can be understood as a:

“recombinant narrative,” which “loops the strands” of incommensurate accounts and which weaves present, past, and future in retelling [the others] story.²⁶

Allahyari provides contradictory readings of the other. Overtly present is the other as a figure of the danger of the unknown, as effective threat to one’s own self-confidence. The other as a figure of hope points at a future, unimaginable for the viewer’s reality. Looking at your affectedness by these figures of otherness, you realize that your very own insecurity has dominated the entire situation and has precluded engaging with the actual re-figuration of otherness. Therefore, I understand Allahyari’s play with the “body hack” as the initiation of a “strange encounter.” It shows how uncertainty about the self and the other not only needs to be acknowledged but to be realized to prevent the mode of othering and to deal with the impossibility of grasping the reality of others in the current moment of encounter.²⁷

²⁶ S. Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts, :” 12.

²⁷ See S. Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*: 4-8, 13, 142 ff.

AN-ICONOLOGY

History, Theory, and Practices of Environmental Images



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