
Body (Non-) Presentation in Representing the Body: The Ideological Body in The Paintings of the School of Islamic Art and Thought (*Hozeh Honari* (1979-1992))*

Amir Nasri**
Bahareh Saeedzadeh***

Received: 2018/04/12

Accepted: 2018/11/5

Abstract

The 1979 religious ideological revolution of Iran brought about a double stance towards the body and its pictorial representations, as to drawing a schism between the physiological and the cultural aspects of the body. Studying this schism is important particularly due to its significance in figuring out the features and functions of what in this article will be called “the ideological body”. Based on Hans Belting’s image trilogy and his concept of the “medium” in it, the present paper aims to investigate the schism between the natural and the cultural body as observable in the ideological body in the context of the Iranian contemporary visual culture. It is shown that this schism appears to be emanating from a dual behavior of pictorial mediality (as introduced by Belting), where the two bipolar limits of the mediality continuum herewithin called the “exogenous” vs. “endogenous” mediality come into a conflict. Through this conflict, the cultural [aspect of the] body which in pictorial terms will be defined to be chiefly the creation of exogenous mediality (i. e., the Shiite ideology’s image-making apparatus) receives glorified representations at the cost of the denial and negation or “(non-)presentation” of the physiological [aspect of the] body produced mainly by the endogenous mediality (i. e., the immediate imaging of a “self”/ an individual without the intrusion of any “other”). This schismatic bodily glorification through negation in the post-revolutionary Iranian visual culture is shown to be the most fundamental definitive characteristic of “the ideological body” the features and functions of which will be investigated in this paper in view of the paintings of the School of Islamic Art and Thought (*Hozeh Honari* (1979-1992)).

Keywords: Hans Belting’s image trilogy, ideological body, Iranian contemporary visual culture, *Hozeh Honari* paintings, exogenous vs. endogenous mediality

*. This paper has been extracted from the PhD dissertation of Bahareh Saeedzadeh in the field of Art Studies at Art University of Tehran, under the supervision of Dr. Amir Nasri. The title of the dissertation: Insights into the Function of Liminality in Thinking Critically with Images: A Case Study of Iran-Iraq War Photos

** . Associate Professor of Philosophy of Art, Allameh Tabataba’i University

***. PhD candidate of Art Studies at Art University of Tehran. Email: bahareh.saeedzadeh@gmail.com

1. Introduction

The body is not merely a mimesis or representation of nature and physiological organs; it is rather a bearer and conveyer of meaning, i. e. an embodiment of meaning. When we speak of the body, we must first clarify whether we are dealing with the physiological (natural) body or the cultural body; as, however closely connected, they each lead to different and at times opposing representational approaches. The cultural body can use the components and conventions of the physiological body and at once deny them. And the physiological body does at times disregard the cultural body and its components. The “ideological body” which is an instance of the cultural body is a product of human cultural consciousness, whereas the physiological body is primarily a product of nature independent of human consciousness. Studying body representations in visual culture helps understand to what extent historical and ideological consciousness have contributed to the genesis of the concept of “body”, and how the cultural attitude of each period toward the human subject has been mirrored in the given period’s representations of the body. Therefore, it goes without saying that when referring to the cultural and ideological body in pictures, one cannot ignore its relations to politics, religion and social and cultural factors.

The ideological body can be a living body or a pictorial representation with different features in different spheres of the visual culture. Therefore, it is impossible to enumerate general and extendable characteristics for all representations of

this kind of body. For example, it can have different characteristics in photography than in painting based on the particularities of each of these art forms.

But how is the ideological body generated? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to first decide what ideology and its functions are.

1.1 Ideology

In his *Ideology: An Introduction* (1991), Terry Eagleton asserts that “ideology” has no single and globally adequate definition. (Eagleton, 1991: 1) Making references to different scholars, he offers more than sixteen different definitions for ideology, which can be summarized as follows:

Ideology is the process of producing lexicon, meanings, signs and values serving power-interests and generating political effects, whereby social life is converted to a natural/universal/self-evident and apparently inevitable reality through a series of action-oriented sets of beliefs and forms of thought motivated by the interests of a dominant power who may legitimate itself by promoting such beliefs and denigrating ideas which might challenge it. Ideology is a sort of semiotic closure; the confusion of linguistic and phenomenal reality. It is the conjuncture of discourse and power, at times systematically distorting and obscuring communication. It is the indispensable medium of identity thinking which offers a position for a subject, and in which individuals live out their relations to a social structure and social actors make sense of their world. (Ibid, 1-2, 5-6, 8, 9)

The Ideological Body in the Context of the Contemporary Iranian Visual Culture

Like every other ideological entity, the ideological body, including the sort observable in the contemporary Iranian visual culture, serves power-interests and generates political effects. It is part of the ideology's process of producing lexicon, meanings, signs and values, as it becomes a bearer/receptacle of such signs and values, negating itself and its natural body, like by going to war and losing its physical body, to foreground these signs and values and render them as natural. Therefore, the ideological body is indexical of the ideology and its practices' being converted to a natural reality through a series of action-oriented sets of beliefs and forms of thought, such as the Shiite concepts of martyrdom and sacrifice and the way they can procreate the idea/ideology (as with the Islamic Revolution and the Iran-Iraq war). In this context, the ideological body is an *atemporal/aspatial* figure deeply rooted in Shiite iconography. It is not restricted to physical limits and is further affirmed by the denials and negations inflicted upon the physical body and its *representations*. The physical body is basically there to be negated, denied, concealed and (non-)presented to the benefit of the representation of the impersonal, collective and uniform ideological body; it thus becomes the metaphor or rather the receptacle of the ideology and a key element of its myth-making apparatus, and is bestowed with a sort of vicarious legitimacy earned by its assimilation to the Shiite iconic figures

Through such undertakings, the ideological body embodies the process of identity generation by realizing the conflict between the ideology's image-making apparatus and the immediate medium of picturing a self. (Concepts which will further be elaborated as "exogenous vs. endogenous mediality" in the following sections). The ideological body thus allows for an observation of how the ideology and social structure's relations can be conceptualized with its subjects'/social actors' bodies. The ideology itself is in turn further legitimized by having these bodies negated to represent it.

The ideological body in this process is merely considered as an instrument of the ideology, a transient receptacle from which many body driven experiences get bracketed away. In Beltingian terms, it can be viewed as an *open* and *transparent* medium, to host, enframe and animate the ideological message in question. (See: Belting: 2005, 313) In this respect, the pictures and the bodies conveying ideological messages could be well replaced by the written slogans communicating such messages. In effect, these messages open the opacity of the medial body (*ibid*) that bears and transmits them, and are animated by being given the life of that body; therefore, there exists a sort of reciprocal transaction in life and legitimacy between these bodies and messages. This reciprocity, or rather dual character of "mediality", which is herewithin referred to as "exogenous vs. endogenous mediality", is the focus of the following section of this paper, but first let us have a brief review on Hans Belting's concept of "mediality."

2. Image/Body Mediality and the Politics of Images

According to Hans Belting's image trilogy, as presented in his 2001 book, *Bild-Anthropologie: Entwürfe für eine Bildwissenschaft*, and his 2005 article titled "Image, Medium, Body: A New Approach to Iconology", pictures are composed of the inseparable tripartite components of "image", "medium" and "body"; where he does not speak of media or bodies "as such", rather for him "medium [...] is to be understood not in the usual sense but in the sense of the agent by which images are transmitted, while body means either the performing or the perceiving body on which images depend no less than their respective media." (Belting, 2005: 302) Belting holds that images do not exist by themselves, they rather "happen" and "take place" via "transmission" and perception and the agents responsible for these transmissions and the creation of image "events" are their media. (Belting, 2005: 302-303) Belting uses the sameness in the German language between the words "picture" and "image" to the benefit of explaining these processes of transmission, where physical and mental images can turn into each other via their media, creating the not clearly distinct "what" and "how" of images. In this regard, Belting states that "Dreams and Icons" are interdependent, and this interaction of mental (and by extension *figurative* and *mythological*) and physical images concerns the politics of images "no less than what the French call the *imaginaire* of a given society." (Belting: 2005, 304)

This research is interested in the

politics of images in the sense mentioned; thus, following Belting in regarding the politics of images as relying on their mediality, (Belting, 2005: 305) it takes a step further and considers mediality as two-fold, through what was above called "endogenous" vs. "exogenous" mediality.

3. Endogenous vs. Exogenous Mediality

As it can further be extrapolated from Belting's image trilogy, this study distinguishes between endogenous and exogenous mediality, where exogenous mediality is considered as being directly controlled by systems of power which use symbolic techniques to "transmit images and imprint them on the collective memory", and endogenous mediality as dealing with the immediate hosting of the individual physical image of a specific body/person. Thus, the product of endogenous mediality is a positive physical image, whereas exogenous mediality can be regarded as the political power's attempts to infiltrate its subjects' physical bodies to find collective vicarious visibility through a society of such infiltrated bodies.

The ideological body can be regarded as the place of conflict between these two kinds of mediality, where the pictorial representation of a society of natural bodies, herewithin called the "receptacle" bodies, gives way to creating the collective (non-) image, i. e. "medium" of the ideological/political power. This (non-)image or rather "medium" is the common denominator down to which all of the receptacle bodies are reduced; namely, the filtering elements that render the receptacle bodies

open and transparent, such as the state of being wounded, decapitated and mutilated in Shiite ideological iconography. The receptacle body is there to be denied, negated, concealed and lost for the affirmation of the medium (or non-image) of the ideology. Ernst Kantorowicz's consideration of "the king's two bodies", which is the focus of his book of the same title, is comparable to this ideological body. He views the concept of the king's body from a theological/mythological perspective, discussing the way political theology can manufacture contemporary myths.¹ This contemporary myth-making apparatus of the political power is part of the function of the exogenous mediality that the present paper introduces based on Belting's image trilogy. It is noteworthy that exogenous mediality has significantly different treatments with the body of the sovereign subject, the king, and that of the non-sovereign receptacle subject, bearing the ideological message. Unlike the transient receptacle body, the king's body [or better yet, his image] is the meeting place between exogenous and endogenous mediality and where they reinforce each other. The sovereign king's political body is the continuation and extension of his physiological body and the king's political power persistently affirms his physiological body well after his demise.

The Ideological Body in the works of the Painters of the School of Islamic Art and Thought ("Hozeh Honari")

In its study of the features and functions of the ideological body in contemporary

Iranian visual culture, the present study has limited its scope only to the works of the painters of the School of Islamic Art and Thought, officially called in the Persian language as "Hozeh Honari".

"Hozeh Honari" is an institution that has been functioning under Iran's Islamic Development Organization ("Saazmsan-e Tabliqat-e Eslami") since 1982, supporting ideological artistic and cultural activities. "Hozeh Honari" was established in about 1979, under the title of "The Center for the Islamic Cultural Movement", and within a few months was retitled as "The School of Islamic Art and Thought".

The 1979 Islamic Revolution of Iran transformed not only the political structures, but also the cultural and artistic infrastructures of the Iranian society and along with this transformation a whole new generation of artists appeared on the Iranian artistic scene who sought to create Islamic artistic and cultural works on the basis of revolutionary ideological instructions as advocated by the state. The chief objective of the founders and artists of "Hozeh Honari" was to follow the guidelines of the Islamic Traditionalist thinkers together with applying some modern techniques to segregate the revolutionary subject from both the Western materialistic representations practiced during the Pahlavi period, and the non-religious treatments of Eastern Marxism.

In effect, the main concern of many of these painters has been a negative treatment of the body, through what can be called, a "body (non-)presentation" (a term coined by the present authors to refer to their manner of encounter

with the body). This expression aims to communicate the fact that even when not showing the body (negating and denying it), the absent body, can still play its part in communicating the ideological message. Or rather, it is this very absent body that conveys the ideology and animates it. The expression “body (non-)presentation” attempts to imply that the characteristics of the ideological body are not always clearly observable for its viewers and are beyond the outward appearance of the body. With this body, there are always components that cannot be represented merely through regular visual elements, for when dealing with the cultural body in general and the ideological body in particular, one cannot limit oneself to material properties. That is to say, the experience of the cultural body is different from the corporeal experience of flesh and blood. This kind of body is a sign best understood within a context. This context can be based on different components, i. e., religious, political, economic, etc. and each pictorial metaphor can be interpreted on the basis of these components. (See: Mirzoeff, 2002: Chap 1)

In fact, even when all material properties of a natural body are observable in the ideological body, it still cannot be reduced to such properties. Attention to an Ideal Space² in the works of the painters of Hozeh Honari, and their use of earthly (or material) as well as Ideal beauty well reflects the above matter.

A good example can be *The Ascension of Shahid*³ by Mohammad Ali Rajabi (Picture 1), in which the physicality of the figures implies natural bodies, a materiality represented within a totally

Ideal space.⁴ Such an encounter is also observable in *Ascent* painted by Mostafa Goudarzi (Picture 2). The ideological doctrine emphasizes that the body of *shahid* (martyr) is not a physical body. The overall atmosphere of these two works also deals with material properties in non-material space. In these two examples, we are faced with bodies which are extensions of natural bodies. In each of these works, we witness the transfiguration of a physical body into an ideological body. But, what is it that makes us assume these bodies to be ideological ones? Is it just the title of *shahid* (martyr) given to them that renders them as examples of ideological bodies? If merely such titling sufficed for considering these works as comprising ideological bodies, there would then be no need to justify their ideological content by means of visual components. The present paper is, however, chiefly concerned with the visual components rather than the verbal descriptions regarding the concept of the ideological body.

In the two mentioned examples, a sort of “quoting”⁵ has been made by the painters of the established characteristics of Persian Miniature Painting. Persian Miniature Space, at least according to the prevalent interpretations (especially in Hozeh Honari, following the Traditionalists)⁶, is an Ideal space, beyond time and place.⁷ While “Quoting” Tradition, these painters have refashioned the timeless space as temporal, and the Ideal body as material. Without the authorization of the ideology, such alterations would never have been made possible. The ideological body can alter traditional roots to fit its own purposes; roots from which it, at

the same time, receives its legitimacy. Here, the spectator's habit of viewing the paintings of the Persian Miniature as rather unearthly has been used by the two painters in the communication of their ideological message. The materiality of the ideological body gets absorbed into the totality of the immaterial space of the Miniature Painting reinforcing the ideological body's elevation through negation (bringing to mind the Hegelian "Aufhebung"). Here (in Pictures 1 and 2), the attention shifts from the body toward the totality of the space. The body does not convey meaning by itself, and owes its meaning to the space. The exogenous medium of the ideology functions through the "quoting" of the Tradition in creating the space. As it was discussed, this space (created by the exogenous medium) dissolves the material bodies (created by the endogenous medium as natural individual bodies) within itself, bestowing legitimacy upon them, and at the same time infiltrating these bodies and stealing the viewers' attention from them.

Such "quotings" of Tradition are also traceable in the works of some other painters of this school. It seems that Persian Miniature Painting has been a suitable ground for representing a collective body which lacks personal features; a body that is presented in a sort of (non-)presentation, such as the fragmented body, and the fully or partly covered body, for example about the body of a martyr. In this regard, the following paintings are noteworthy: *O Blood of God (Ya Sarallah)* by Nasser Palangi (Picture 3), *Coin-worshipping Rats* by Kazem Chelipa (Picture 4), *Ashura (The Tenth*

Day) by Iraj Eskandari (Picture 5).

In *O Blood of God* (Picture 3), the body's cover strongly indicates ideologically driven concepts, such as: martyrdom, insurrection, innocence, and the like. The series of red thawbs in the background also classically refers to the particular message of the ideological body, i. e., "martyrdom". There may be even no bodies in the background, and covers per se serve as indexical signifiers of the martyrs. This picture tries *not* to display rather than display the body. Not showing a body which is incomplete is regarded as an advantage given to it; like the motif of the headless body frequenting the works of the painters of this period, basically due to the significance the headless body has in the Shiite school in Islam. In such cases, the ideological body seeks legitimation by connecting itself to the conventions of Shiite iconography, receiving/bearing the traces of the Shiite icons, and even becoming a trace, as such. The headless body for its implications of the Battle of Karbala can best represent such ideas. Here again, the components of exogenous mediality, namely: martyrdom, insurrection, innocence, etc.; and its objects and signs, namely: the thawbs, the beheaded/behandedness, the color red, etc. work together to deny and negate the personal and individual presentation of physical bodies that the endogenous mediality naturally seeks to represent. Furthermore, the exogenous mediality tinges the handle of the sword with a shade of green to complete the three colors of the Iranian flag (together with the red of the martyrdom and the white of salvation) on the traditional weapon of the

Shiite warrior, connecting the country to the Shiite origins.

The body such represented is the visual translation of “Every day is Ashura, and every land is Karbala”. Unlike the two earlier examples which dealt with complete bodies, in Picture 3, the body is represented “in pieces”⁸ (beheaded and behanded). The fragmented body here, instead of emphasizing the decay of the body, emphasizes its immortality. The Battle of Karbala has rendered the headless body as the Ideal body in Shiite iconographical tradition. Therefore, in this work too, the ideological body can only be understood based on religious grounds (over and above historical grounds) and seeks legitimation thereof.

In *Coin-worshipping Rats* (Picture 4), the ideological body is represented in a comparison, as opposed to non-ideological bodies. The work’s hierarchical composition separates the two domains (the two bodies). The ideological domain which attempts to reject and conceal the body is placed at the bottom, taking up almost two-thirds of the work’s space. This domain is placed against the space of the top domain. The dynamism it borrows from futurist painting (which was also an ideological art movement) reflects ideological dynamism. Here, not only is the shrouded body of the martyr ideologically validated, but the other components of the picture are also ideologically charged.

The shrouded body is a concealed body, a body that has no observable personality, a totality devoid of individuation. We do not see it as possessing body parts; it basically does not have any recognizable body parts. What lends meaning to this

totality is the exogenous medium, the ideological traces distinguishing the body of the martyr, from other bodies. The faceless, de-personified body (such as the headless body or the shrouded body) is significant due to the fact that ideology is not after individuation. Essentially, ideology eliminates individuation by imposing generalized and extendable characteristics, always leading away from what the endogenous medium seeks to create.

In this picture, neither the face of the woman nor those of the soldiers are important. What is important is only the hand that is holding the flag, moving toward the front (the enemy). Body is a tool to conquer the “otherness” an instance of which is represented in the bottom domain.

Like in the top domain which indicates that in the course of movement there only remains a hand from the whole body, the ideological message renders all individuals as one general character type which likens them all. An example of such character type settings and the dividing of people into the dual categories of black (wrongdoing) and white (righteous) is clearly observable in Picture 4. Ideological judgment knows no moderation and works with polar extremes, the ideological body is also either black or white. No unbiased body can be placed within the realm of ideology.

Unlike Pictures 3 and 4 in which the ideological body is covered, in *Ashura* (Picture 5) we have the total absence of bodies. Imam Hussein’s wounded horse in the desert, the empty coffin, the picture of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution of



Iran and the covered grave are all manifest examples of absent bodies extensively highlighted by the dominant ideology. Here the body's (non-)presence consolidates its instrumentality, as ideology refrains from working with ever-present entities; ideology rather speaks of ambiguous and paradoxical *atemporal/achronological* and *aspacial* situations. The absent entity represented in this painting can signify such paradoxes. The ideological discourse makes use of traces to refer to the presence of things which are now absent. The strongly emphasized mausoleums, rituals and the like are exponents of this kind of presence of the absent.

In summary thus far, as to these three paintings, we observed four different encounters with the ideological body:

28

The first one dealt with the covering or absence of a body part;

The second one with a body part down to which the whole body is reduced;

The third one with the total absence of the body;

And the fourth with the fragmented body, or the body "in pieces".

In all the above examples, the traces of ideological symbols are clearly discernible; the body (present or absent) bears such traces and seeks legitimation from them.

References to The Battle of Karbala and its connections with the body of the martyr, war, space and time are at the service of the ideological body.⁹ And references to the Verses of Qur'an or Arabic scripture are attempts made to legitimize the ideological body. In his painting called *Sacrifice* (Picture 6), Kazem Chelipa uses such an effect. The form of the painting's

margins and their bearing of Qur'anic Verses try to inject the ideology into the painting's space. In this painting, like the work of Palangi (Picture 3), we witness the concurrence of the redness of martyrdom with the whiteness of salvation. The use of prevalent religious symbols such as the headless body, the white horse (Compare Picture 5), the Muslim soldiers and the application of a hierarchical composition (Compare Picture 4) are policies to endow the body with ideological significance. This painting deals with different states of body representations (from the soldier's full body to the headless bodies, the fetus and the body of the woman). It portrays an Ideal example of the martyr in the center of the composition riding a white horse, with an army of headless martyrs in the background and a hand stretched out toward the sky. Also at the bottom of the composition, there are bodies at different critical states of existence, such as the body of the soldier, the fetus and the crucified bodies. The red fetus is an extension of the reproductive role of the woman and interestingly it resembles a tulip that is the classical symbol of martyrdom, implying that all who are born of this blood (signified by the color red) and spirit are to offer their lives to the ideology to reach salvation (signified by the color white). The painter's explicit referral to the womb of the woman at the focal center of the composition and its giving birth to all these sacrificing bodies are manifest references to the receptacle/bearer role the body carries out for the ideology. Here the body of the woman seems to be the converging point of the roles all these body states play for the

ideology. Hence, due to the mentioned role of these represented bodies as receptacles and bearers of the ideological message, even the male ideological body can curiously be conceived through the exogenous medium to assume female characteristics in the sense presented in this painting.

Aside from the reproductive role in most of the works of this period, the role of the woman is minimized to mourning (See: Pictures 1, 4 and 6); the body of the woman is mostly absent, and if present it only has a subsidiary role, that is the traditional role of the woman in the traditional society. Therefore, the ideological body in these works is always a male body or a body assisting the male, or at times assuming their roles, since the ideological female body must not be the object of the male gaze, and has got to be kept away from all such regards. In effect, as *Sacrifice* by Chelipa (Picture 6) represents it, the ideological female body is basically the receptacle and bearer of the body either before birth or after the termination of earthly life. With the body of the martyr in the arms of the woman and its obvious associations with the scene of the mourning of the Virgin Mary over the lifeless Body of Christ (Pieta), *Sacrifice* conjointly presents the reproductive and the mourning functions of the ideological female body. In this painting the woman is offering the body of a martyr to the spectators without directly looking at them. In none of these paintings (1, 4 and 6), does the woman have a direct look at the spectators. This kind of vague look is only intended at representing the female-kind in general and does not give the

woman any personal identity.

According to the examples studied, about the overall characteristics of the body in the works of the *Hozeh Honari* painters, it could be asserted that the representation of the body in their works is similar to the general structure of ideology. Just as ideology deals with generalizations, general entities and extensions, the ideological body borrows the same characteristics. Hence, the representation of such a body is not interested in any individuating characterizations. This body does not signify any particular character; it rather schematizes a “character type” in which personal physiognomies are unimportant. This is observable in classical representations of the ideal body in the visual arts. For example in traditional Christian iconography, the body of the Virgin is assumed as such an Ideal body; a body incomparable to other earthly bodies. Even the bodies of angels and the saints do not have earthly characteristics. (Mirzoeff, 2002: 15)

In picturing the ideological body, the general bearer role of the body is important and not its details. This manner of general rendering is clearly observable in the body of the martyr which is merely seen as a life offered to the ideology. In the works of Palangi (Pictures 3 and 7) and Chelipa (Pictures 4 and 6) we are dealing with bodies with general characteristics, bodies which are concealed from us and can belong to anybody and at once belong to nobody in particular; as ideology is a collective language and individual volition has no place in it, these bodies are at the service of a general decision. And a general entity has only a general face. Thus, the

ideological body conceals rather than reveals its parts and characteristics, and shows itself as a general body. Such a body regards the painting surface as an arena or a theater stage and displays itself for the spectators. It, therefore, has important “theatrical”¹⁰ features, and assumes the presence and regard of spectators before it. A good instance of such theatricality is *Sacrifice* (Picture 6) by Chelipa. All the elements of the scene are carefully placed to be viewed by the spectators. They cannot be components independent of the attention of the painting’s spectators; they rather find meaning through that attention. In this picture and in pictures 4 and 5, the space within the work finds meaning for its interaction with the space without. Visual components are not meaningful by and within themselves, as the ideological body is not independent of the spectator/ beholder’s attention. Such a body cannot essentially exist on the surface of the painting as an independent entity. Under such conditions, the body is not “absorbed” in itself; rather it plays a role attending to another body that is looking at it, i. e., the beholder. In this situation, the painting surface alone does not bestow meaning upon the body; rather the exogenous mediality, that is the contents’ presence over an extended range of space-time, along with the generalized ideological concepts and traces conveyed by the painting space lend it meaning. The difference between the body of the martyr and that of a dead person is here noteworthy. What bestows holiness upon the body of the martyr is the ideological grounds this body is placed in. Summarily, the body of the martyr, by itself and per se, is a picture

in the real world; in better terms, it is an “auto-icon”. What makes the body of the martyr an “auto-icon” is the beholder’s *looking* at it. Thus, the ideological body cannot be considered an independent body, and becomes meaningful when looked at by the beholders. *O Blood of God* (Picture 3) by Palangi displays no direct look at its spectators, yet demands their attention toward itself. In this process of demanding the attention, all the components of the stage are deliberately and consciously before the spectators. The ideological message has created this consciousness. Such a message exposes the ideological body to judgment. This is a didactic message by which the spectators are to be convinced beyond judgment. In such works, every message conveyed by the picture or the body assumes such a function.

In a considerable number of the works by the painters of this period, the ideological body is placed in an *Other* space, referred to as the “Ideal Space”. This “Ideal Space” is a “heterotopia” for the body, a place beyond the reach of the spectator, a *No-where*. The ideological body uses this space to keep itself away from the real world and accentuate its distinction from it. *The Ascension of Shahid* by Mohammad Ali Rajabi (Picture 1) and *Where is the Sanctuary?* by Palangi (picture 7), both reflect such a space. Both of these works deal with another world in which the body becomes meaningful and which is distinct from the actual world we live in.

Paintings depicting such a space (a space borrowed from Miniature Painting) regard themselves as being rooted in the

Tradition and seek to convince the spectator about the importance and value of their represented concepts. Such rendering of space places the ideological body within history and accounts for its distancing from a totally contemporary meaning. The ideological body is placed in a heterotopia different from our place and beyond our reach, and chronologically speaking, it has its roots in the past, and promises in the future, i. e., in the corporeal and spiritual pleasures of the afterlife. The *aspacial*, *atemporal* and non-personal qualities of the contents of the paintings enhance their applicability to whatever the ideology may deem appropriate. The ideological body is therefore not a normal natural body, and is represented in an “other place” and an “other time”. In pictures 1 and 2, the visual elements refer to a space beyond the frame of the painting. Such an approach to the body is totally different from Hossein Khosrowjerdi’s view as portrayed in his work *Shahid (The Martyr)* (Pictures 8 & 9).

In these paintings, the body of the martyr is not in an “other place” to be legitimized therein, and instead of underscoring the metaphysical characteristics of the body of the martyr, his physical characteristics are emphasized. The presence of blood in these works is not compatible with the ideal representation of the blood of the martyr in the previous works. Despite these differences, the ideological body still does not reveal itself to the spectator here. This body, as in the other works, has no clear individual characteristics and can belong to anybody. In Khosrowjerdi’s work, the body is removed from the “Other place” and brought to a “real space” (Picture 8);

a city space tangible to all the spectators. Such a transition entails the passage of the picture from an “Other time” to the real time, as well.

During this period, the painters of *Hozeh Honari* demonstrated different attitudes in their renderings of the space in which they placed the ideological body, swaying between the “real place” (Khosrowjerdi) and the “Other place” (Rajabi, Palangi, Chelipa, and many other painters). Bringing up the “Other place” is the result of ideological promises; the promise of a place which is like no other place and the realization of which would be in the future. The slogans of the time also promised the realization of such a place in the (near) future, and its portrayal in the works of these painters reflects such beliefs. Just as the ideology demanded an *other* body as an extension of the natural body through which to have its doctrines realized, it also needed an *other* place, distinct from the living place of the natural body to be compatible with the general spirit of the ideology and its doctrines. Thus, an Ideal approach to the body, place and time is characteristic of the ideological view. Ideological instructions cross the frameworks of body, time and place, and their propositions lack particular provisions and seem absolute and unquestionable; they appear as having existed since always and reappeared anew now. It is in such a belief that the body of the martyr is represented as an Ideal “witness”, transcending the borders of time and space and being predisposed to no corruption. Even a severed limb from such a body is timeless and does not go through decay.

The Account of Martyrdom by Jalal Motevalli (Picture 10) represents the persistence of this body through time. Essentially, the passage of time or time-inflicted decay are foreign to this “timeless” attitude, as the views based on physical time are unable to explain the eternal presence of the body of the martyr. In this painting, despite the representation of the ideological body in an Ideal space (of both time and place), the body is portrayed in pieces (See: *The Headless Body*, Pictures 3 and 6). As it was pointed out, these bodies are closely associated with the Shiite ideology and iconography, in which the mutilated body is an implication of an Ideal body and its state of being decay-proof.

32

In these works, the mutilated body conveys a message that cannot be conveyed through the representation of the body in full. The body represents itself at this state by not revealing itself as a whole unit belonging to an individual/ a person. In representing such a body, the body parts’ being covered or missing, and even the body’s absence from the view of the spectators are legitimizing components.

The body obtains its legitimacy from (non-)presentation rather than presentation. This body (non-)presentation has a social function; the society’s religious instructions prefer this concealed or fragmented body over the complete and whole body. But the incompleteness of the body does not indicate any decay; the ideological body like the cultural body continues to move on its path free from any harm, even after the decay of the natural body. Here, it can be stated following the footsteps of Ernst Kantorowicz that

the martyr has two bodies: The natural or the material body that decays and the enduring ideological body that obtains its persistence and legitimacy from the ideology. This body continues to live after the death of the natural body¹¹ by means of the ideological propaganda. Therefore, the medium that animates and offers sense and meaning to these body representations is the exogenous medium, i. e., the image making apparatus of the ideology, over and above the endogenous mediality of the immediate bodily hosting of the picture contents with natural expectations.

Interestingly, even documentary pictures of the bodies of the martyrs are basically the ones that emphasize a kind of intactness of the body on account of the passage of some years. Attention to the undecayed body of the martyr is a continuation of the same tradition with the body of saints. The representation of the ideological body in general is that of a decay-proof mythological body, i. e., a holy body or the body of a hero. However, here the cultural characteristics of the hero are emphasized instead of its physical and material characteristics. The natural characteristics of the hero belong to his natural and decayable body represented by the endogenous medium; the ideological body, however, transcends its natural aspect as it is animated by an *other* medium, i. e., the exogenous medium of the ideology. The ideology awards that extended life to this body at the cost of the loss and the negation inflicted upon the given body’s natural aspect. Therefore, the ideology introduces a schism into the body through the dual behavior of mediality discussed in this

article, dividing it into natural versus ideological (mythological) aspects, where the natural aspect can be represented through the endogenous mediality, but is negated by the exogenous mediality to the benefit of creating the collective body of the ideology; a body that is not subject to decay, pain or death, as such afflictions belong to the natural body. Thus, the painters of *Hozeh Honari* do not pay much attention to the representation of the physical pain and suffering of the body to glorify the war, overlooking its casualties; and in case the suffering body is ever represented, it is due to its promotional and propaganda value, indicating how the suffering is nothing in face of the grandeur of the cause for which it is tolerated.

In paintings such as *O Blood of God* (Picture 3) and *Sacrifice* (Picture 6) the represented bodies' encounter with suffering is not passive; rather the body is suffering quite actively, striving for the survival of the word of the ideology. Therefore, the suffering body's flesh becomes the word of the ideology, its very building block.

In Christian art, due to the importance of the body of Jesus Christ, as the Word having become flesh, Christ's body is represented not as a natural body, but as an eternal and symbolic one, (Belting, 2001: 85) continuing to live well after the death on the cross. Hence, in the Christian tradition, the body is suffering but not decaying. Essentially the decay of the body in these situations is against its all-out "witnessing" presence. The body's role as witness here does not indicate any material characteristics. In fact, through the Christian tradition, it had

been emphasized early on that this body is offered to be destroyed.¹² The ideological body has the same function, as it displays the characteristics of a witness and present body without the presence of physical characteristics and embodied perception.

In the tradition of Christian iconography, such a body was a political and religious metaphor for the fulfillment of the Word of God. In the works of the painters of *Hozeh Honari* also, the body is regarded as a metaphor; aspiring to show us concurrently, the presence and absence of the body and its closeness and remoteness. The body of the martyr, thus, must not seem like the kind of body the spectators are faced with in their daily encounters, and at once it must not seem distant to them. This brings about a kind of wavering encounter with the presentation of the body; as it seeks to show the body and at the same time conceal it; through a practice of body (non-)presentation in representing the body.

5. Conclusion

As to the mentioned characteristics of the ideological body and its representation in the works of the painters of *Hozeh Honari*, one general attribute can be underlined, i. e., the ideological body involves a kind of "body (non-) presentation". "Body (non-)presentation" is an expression coined by the authors of the present article indicating the paradoxical and schismatic state of the body in the works of *Hozeh Honari* painters, where the body is both summoned for its bearing of the ideological message and denied of its presence and individuality. Thus, the individual characteristics of such a

body are transfigured into the general and uniform essence of the ideology, being its word, or message.

The approach of *Hozeh Honari* painters to the body as an ideological body is not parallel to that of the modern and contemporary arts. Their approach to the body is rather closer to that of the Medieval Christian iconography (considering their particularities and differences arisen from their different theological grounds). Both of these traditions deal with an undecaying, eternal and symbolic body that is an ever-present witness to the realization of the Idea it stands for (without any bodily experience, of course). This body is a political and religious metaphor for the understanding and interpretation of the existing orders and even changing them.

34 This reduction of the body to a working metaphor can be explained by a dual and schismatic understanding of the Beltingian image mediality, through what is called in this paper as exogenous vs. endogenous mediality referring to the image making apparatus of the ideology and the immediate natural bodily hosting of the subjects, respectively. The exogenous mediality of the ideology creates its collective image, i. e., “the ideological body”, by negation, concealing, fragmentation, and reduction of the natural individual body representations. This ideological body, according to a Beltingian tripartite understanding of images, is the synthetic product of the conflict between the mentioned exogenous and endogenous medialities. It is an open and transparent medium allowing for a closer inspection of the way images and ideas are animated.

Endnotes

1. See also: Kahn, V. (2009). Political Theology and Fiction in *The King's Two Bodies*. Representations, 106(1), 77-101.
2. This is the expression used in Traditionalist (Perennial philosophy) writings on visual arts, such as those by Titus Burckhardt.
3. Shahid or Shaheed originates from the Qur'anic Arabic word meaning “witness” and it is also used to denote a “martyr”.
4. Here the paradoxical character of this sort of representation and the possibility of such an understanding can be pointed out. However it is beyond the scope of the present article.
5. The term “Quoting” has been borrowed from Mieke Bal who in turn has taken the concept from Jacques Derrida's idea of “citationality”. In her book *Quoting Caravaggio*, Bal refers to the contemporary allusions made by the artists to the work of Caravaggio in particular, and Baroque art in general, to discuss how the later quotings effect the understanding of earlier pictures.
6. See: Nasr, S. H. (1990). *Islamic art and spirituality*. Suny Press: New York.
7. During the years 1982-1997, the Traditionalist view (that of Titus Burckhardt, Frithjof Schuon, Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Ananda Coomaraswamy) was the predominant view among the *Hozeh Honari* artists. Their understanding of Persian Miniature Painting as influenced by the dominant view of the period was shaped by the Traditionalist doctrine.
8. See: Nochlin, L. (2001). *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity*. New York: Thames & Hudson.
9. In the visual art works of 1982-1992, Arabic scripture for its allusions to the Verses of Qur'an has always bestowed legitimacy upon pictures, an effect which can be regarded as having a sort of ideological function.
10. See: Fried, M. (1980). *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the*

Age of Diderot. Berkeley: University of California Press.

11. In his book *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*, Ernst Kantorowicz, quotes Edmund Plowden as stating: "the King has in him two Bodies, viz., a Body natural, and a Body politic. His Body natural (if it be considered in itself) is a Body mortal, subject to all Infirmities that come by Nature or Accident, to the Imbecility of Infancy or old Age, and to the like Defects that happen to the natural Bodies of other People. But his Body politic is a Body that cannot be seen or handled, consisting of Policy and Government, and constituted for the Direction of the People, and the Management of the public weal, and this Body is utterly void of Infancy, and old Age, and other natural Defects and Imbecilities, which the Body natural is subject to, and for this Cause, what the King does in his Body politic, cannot be invalidated or frustrated by any Disability in his natural Body." (Kantorowicz, 1953: 7, [Edmund Plowden, Commentaries or Reports (London, 1816), 212a.]

12. Origen, an early Christian theologian, has stated that this body is to be destroyed. (Origen as quoted by Mirzoeff (Mirzoeff, 2002: 1)) his words are understandable in the context of Christ's Incarnation and Crucifixion.

References

Bal, M. (1999). *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary art, preposterous history*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

Belting, H. (2001). *Bild-anthropologie*. Fink Verlag: München.

Belting, H. (2005) "Image, Medium, Body: A New Approach to Iconology". In *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Winter 2005), p. 302-319.

Eagleton, T. (1991). *Ideology: An Introduction*. Verso: London.

Fried, M. (1980). *Absorption and*

Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot. University of California Press: Berkeley.

Kahn, V. (2009). "Political Theology and Fiction in *The King's Two Bodies*". *Representations*, 106(1), 77-101.

Kantorowicz, E. (1957). *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*. Princeton University Press: Princeton.

Mirzoeff, N. (2002). *Bodyscape: Art, Modernity and Ideal Figure*. Routledge: London and New York.

Nasr, S. H. (1990). *Islamic art and spirituality*. Suny Press: New York.

Nochlin, L. (2001). *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity*. Thames and Hudson: New York.

Picture source

Goudarzi (Dibaj), M. (1387). *Committed Social-Religious Art in Iran*. Iranian Academy of the Arts: Tehran.

Internet Source

<http://www.hozehonari.com/Page/6295/Default.aspx>



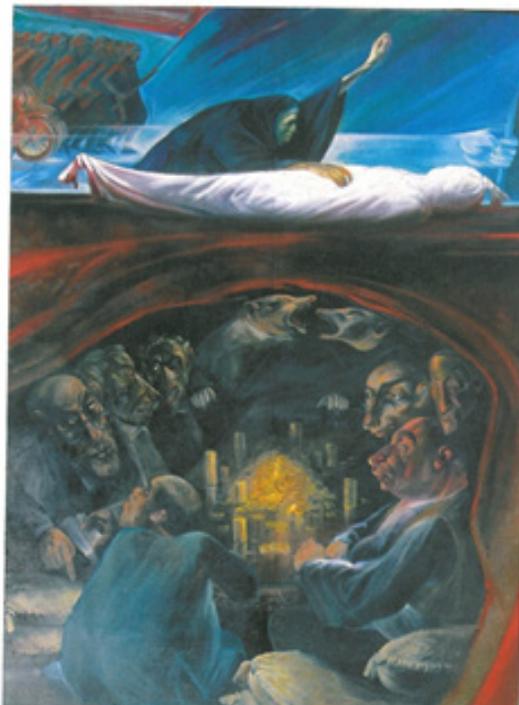
Picture 1: *The Ascension of Shahid* (1988), by Mohammad Ali Rajabi. Oil on canvas. 180×126 cm.



Picture 2: *Ascent* (1985), by Mostafa Goudarzi. Oil on canvas. 150×100 cm



Picture 3: *O Blood of God (Ya Sarallah)* (1981), by Nasser Palangi. Oil on canvas. 300×100 cm.



Picture 4: *Coin-worshipping Rats* (1984), by Kazem Chelipa. Oil on canvas. 250x200 cm.



Picture 5: *Ashura (The Tenth Day)* (1990), by Iraj Eskandari. Oil on canvas. 110×150 cm.



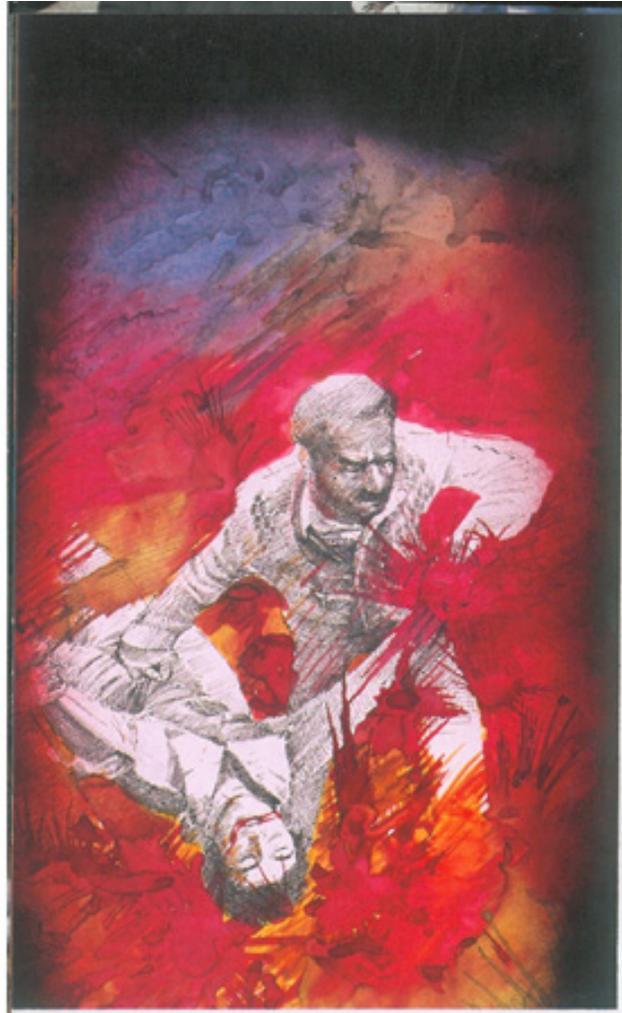
Picture 6: *Sacrifice* (1981), by Kazem Chelipa. Oil on canvas. 300×200 cm.



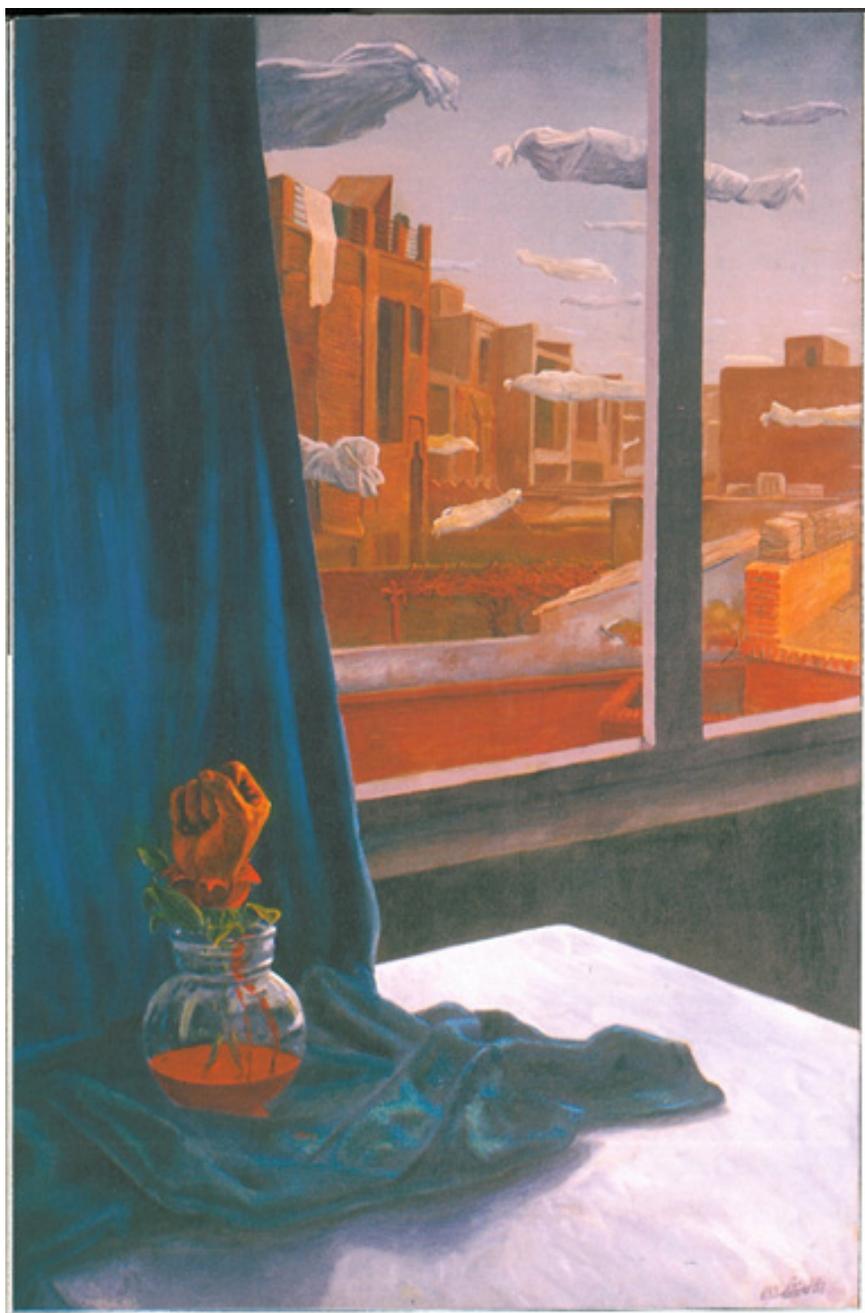
Picture 7: *Where is the Sanctuary?* (1987), by Nasser Palangi. Oil on canvas. 290×190 cm.



Picture 8: *Shahid (The Martyr)* (1980), by Hossein Khosrowjerdi. Oil on canvas. 200×170 cm.



Picture 9: *Shahid (The Martyr)* (1981) by Hossein Khosrowjerdi. Gouache. 50×33 cm.



Picture 10: *The Account of Martyrdom* (1979), by Jalal Motevalli. Oil on canvas. 120×90 cm.