

# **Drags, Drugs and Dirt: Abjection and Masculinity in *Marilyn Manson's* music video *(s)Aint***

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## **Abstract:**

Music videos as a medium of popular cultural discourses have become more widespread and acknowledged by the public because of the music industry's emphasis on visual aspect of music and the rise of new media (internet, social media) that are more or less visual-oriented.

The article examines the presence of various types of abjection in the video *(s)Aint* by the artist *Marilyn Manson*, positioned as liminal or threatening to the construction of hegemonic masculinity and its elements: body, heterosexuality and agency. It also highlights the lacking representation of women in the video and the privileging principle of heteronormativity that also creates hegemonic and subordinate forms of heterosexuality (BDSM culture).

**Key words:** rock music, hegemonic masculinity, abject.

## **“Drag”ler, Uyuřturucular ve Kir: Marilyn Manson’un M¼zik Videosu “(s)Aint”de İğrenti ve Erkeklik**

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### **Özet**

Pop¼ler k¼lt¼r söyleminin bir aracı olan m¼zik videoları, m¼zik end¼strisinin m¼ziğın g¼rsel yanı ¼zerindeki etkisi ve hemen hemen g¼rsel odaklı olan yeni medyanın ortaya çıkışı (internet, sosyal medya) sayesinde daha yaygın hale gelmiř ve ve herkes tarafından kabul g¼rmeye bařlamıřtır.

Bu makale, sanatçı *Marilyn Manson*’un *(s) Aint* adlı videosunda yer alan ve bir eřikte olma hali olarak, veya hegemonik erkekliğın ve onun ¼ğelerinin; beden, heteroseks¼ellik ve erkeksi failliğın inřasına y¼nelik bir tehdit olarak konumlanan çeřitli bayağılık biçimlerini ele almaktadır. Aynı zamanda s¼z konusu videoda kadın temsiline eksikliğıne ve heteroseks¼elliğın hegemonik ve madun formlarını (BDSM k¼lt¼r¼) yaratan heteronormativenin ayrıcalıklı kılınmasına dikkati çekmektedir.

**Anahtar s¼zc¼kler:** rock m¼zik, hegemonik erkeklik, iğrenç.

## Introduction

In a discourse of popularity as a world wide recognition, rock music is a popular music<sup>i</sup> genre, *Marilyn Manson* (MM)<sup>ii</sup>, a rock celebrity, and music videos as audio-visual texts also share a certain level of popularity due to their widely circulation via mass media, social media and internet (e.g. *YouTube*). Rock music as a type of popular music is inclined to direct or indirect celebration of masculinity (Frith 234; Cohen 28) that can be seen in the use of instruments – guitar as a phallic symbol, lyrics about themes, related to masculinity – male omnisexual gratification for example, visual style performance – cocksure maleness and in the construction of women as sexual objects, groupies or passive consumers.

The aim of the article is to examine a possibility for deconstruction of hegemonic masculinity (e.g. male body, heterosexuality, heteronormativity, agency) via specific cultural forms of shock rock as a particular rock genre and music video as its medium.

For the analysis of the chosen music video and its embedment in broader cultural context, various theoretical concepts will be employed, such as Mary Douglas' dirt and Julia Kristeva's abjection that can function as a tactic to challenge R.W. Connell's hegemonic masculinity.

## Dirt – Abjection – Body

The definition of dirt according to anthropologist Mary Douglas is that it is "a matter out of place [which] implies two conditions: a set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order" (35). Deriving from this definition, the acknowledgement of something or somebody as dirt or dirty, also constitutes the relation between dominant (proper, clean) and subordinate (improper, dirty), where dirt permanently threatens to pollute or forcefully appropriate the position of the dominant group. Douglas explains that "where there is dirt, there is system [because] dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and

classification of matter" (35), so the existence of dirt depends on the context and is therefore a relative category. Despite its symbolic and linguistic construction, dirt functions on a material level; the direct or physical experience of dirt means that dirt is disgusting, repulsive, repugnant.

The development of concepts of dirt and cleanliness in Western industrialised societies was aligned with the rise of science of hygiene or "germ theory" and its hierarchical framework of hygienic or unhygienic. Yet the perception of dirt is always guided by an emotional (or moral) and physical rationale (Campkin et al. 2) and because ideas of dirt are very pervasive, they dictate what is normal and force an ordering of people down the axis of gender, skin colour, ethnicity, citizenship, class, dis/ability, sexual orientation and identity.

Julia Kristeva (125) understands dirt (waste or bodily decay/death) as one of the categories of abjection, together with sexual difference and food or bodily incorporation; all three of them serve for the preservation of life and constitute the proper social body to conform to the cultural expectations of the physical body. As Elizabeth Grosz puts it, "the abject is what of the body falls away from it while remaining irreducible to the subject/object and inside/outside oppositions" (192). But with the concept of abject, Kristeva embraces everything that is within prevalent Western discourse construed as Other: unthinkable, preoedipal, semiotic or psychotic and for these reasons, something or somebody that is simultaneously appealing and appalling. Kristeva's concept of abjection can highlight relationships between marginalized or Othered people and their spatial or material contexts (e.g. body odour, living spaces, lifestyle habits, cleaning practices, gender performances, language usage etc.) that constructs them as Othered (Campkin et al. 5). Filth, as Cohen puts it, "represents a cultural location at which the human body, social hierarchy, psychological subjectivity and material objects converge" (viii).

To return to the body, in dichotomous opposition between mind and body, the latter is always considered as Other and this has remained

correlated with an opposition between male and female, with the female regarded as enmeshed in her bodily existence. Other enmeshments into corporeality were also attributed to (1) colonised or non-white bodies, (2) lower classes, (3) mentally impaired and (4) non-heterosexual subjects (e.g. male homosexuality) because they deviate from the standard of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 72) and are regarded as Other bodies.

Besides its Otherness, the body is also leaky in a literal sense and it is a woman who is perceived as lacking in bodily self-containment due to her multiple bodily orifices (Grosz 203). Bodily fluids and secretions are inscribing women's corporeality in a mode of an uncontrolled seepage. Leakiness of the body is a sign of a lack of self-control or control in general, which could be translated into an assumption that the body controls the woman and diminishes her subjectivity (mind, *ratio*). But as Douglas (115) explains it, all borderline positions or bodily orifices are a site for pollution or contamination and as such serves as an opportunity to deconstruct the ideal and unobtainable illusion of the non-leaky ("perfect") bodies (i.e. male body). The male body has remained, as Grosz (198) argues, phenomenologically unanalysed and that is the sole reason for its position as non-leaky.

Non-leaky male corporeality is a part of the hegemonic masculinity, a prevalent ideal of masculinity, most honoured and most wanted, also associated with the following characteristics: physical power (height, weight, muscle mass), virility, wealth or capital (economic, social, cultural, symbolic), emotional self-control with accentuated civil aggression, competitiveness, rationality, instrumentality and emphasized heterosexuality (Connell 76-81). This configurative principle of social reality, which is not permanent, but conditionally chosen from cultural repertoire of masculine behaviours, excludes anyone, who does not at some historical moment or cultural context belong to that model and is consequently subjected to the process of Othering. The principal Othering is directed towards femininity and male homosexuality because hegemonic masculinity as a

dominant postulate strives to differentiate and distance itself from these Othered ("dirty") categories.

The sexual component of hegemonic masculinity consists of heterosexuality because sexuality as a historical and social organization of the erotic (Weeks 17) is, despite of the existence of non-middleclass (i.e. working class), non-white and non-heterosexual sexualities, in its historical core a postulate of middle-class, white and male heterosexuality, where the main dichotomous divide is between heterosexuality and (male) homosexuality. Modern concept of male homosexuality has been constituted as abnormal or Other and as such has been perpetually reaffirming heterosexuality as norm/al. The normalisation of assumed heterosexuality, compulsory heterosexuality (Rich 633) or heteronormativity (Warner 14) strategically erases any sign of effeminacy in male sexuality (e.g. passivity, receptive anal pleasure) by establishing a heterosexual/homosexual hierarchy, but also creates hierarchies among heterosexualities, resulting in hegemonic and subordinate forms of heterosexuality (Seidman in Ingraham 40), such as intergenerational sexuality, BDSM, sexual choices based on class, ethnical and racial diversities (Sedgwick in Angelides 170). All those subordinate sexualities can be characterised as sexual dirt, an idea that will be further discussed.

### **Marilyn Manson as Other(ed)**

As already briefly mentioned, the construction of Other represents someone who is different or uneven to us, a dichotomous opposite and therefore a bearer of negative traits because they represent the deviance from anything that is central, safe, normal and conventional (Pickering 204).

Here are some informations about *Marilyn Manson* (MM) and his work that could define him as Other(ed) according to the popular music standards. MM is the frontman and band founder of an American rock band by the same name, formed in late 1980's that are mostly known for

their shock value lyrics, videos and performances. The appearance and artistic agency of MM are deliberately designed to offend contemporary social sensibilities of the American culture (Bostic et al. 54). To begin with, his portmanteau name is constituted from names of two American cultural icons – *Marilyn Monroe* and *Charles Manson*. The former functions as a historically and world wide acknowledged symbol for femininity and sexuality while the latter has become an American cultural symbol for serial killing. The merging of two incompatible symbols together (sexuality and death) can also be defined as cultural dirt.

As it is common in a shock rock tradition<sup>iii</sup>, his appearance and stage performance are the combination of elements that create discomfort: androgynous black clothing, ghoulish appearance and heavy make-up (white foundation, black eyeliner, lipstick, contact lenses), stage props (blood, fire, chainsaws, animals, cages), stage attitude (antireligious with acts of Bible burning, anti-moral by nude self-exposure, Chapman 336) and rageful and provocative lyrics and videos. Naming of his albums also depict his assertive stance against conservative American culture: *Portrait of an American Family* (1994), *Smells Like Children* (1995), *Antichrist Superstar* (1996), *Mechanical Animals* (1998), *Holy Wood (In the Shadow of the Valley of Death)* (2000), *The Golden Age of Grotesque* (2003), *Eat Me, Drink Me* (2007), *The High End of Low* (2009) and *Born Villain* (2012). The visual aspect of his music (album covers, videos) are inspired with the art of grotesque and abject that serves as an expression of his artistic nonconformity to an average taste of normalcy, particularly present in the popular music industry and broader Western culture.

All those elements are part of his stage or media persona (a fantasied alter ego, Bostic et al. 54) that has positioned him as a different type of Other, as an Antihero. The cultural trope of Antihero that is most appealing to youngsters and most appalling to their parents and adults, can also be regarded as a generational abject or an unbridgable disparity between their world views. His self-proclamation of being an Antihero led in a right-wing conservative notion, which is an influential

political opinion maker in the American society, to the media demonization of his stage persona. He is therefore considered as a "body without a (*Christian*) soul", something that is easily translated into, what would Kristeva called it, a corpse or absolute object (126). That conception of him is deliberately magnified by his appearance, which resembles the corpse or non-human entity – white foundation for face make-up, black wardrobe, tall and sleek posture.

Due to his complex Antihero pop status, he can be labelled as a pop abjection or dirt so does the chosen video (*s*)*Aint* because it was banned due to the inappropriate content. At this point there are two positions of abjection – MM's rock status and banned music video and as it was previously outlined, the idea of abject or dirt functions as a disorder or challenge to the system, in this case to the system of hegemonic masculinity.

### Music Video as a Representational Medium

**M**usic video as a crossover video form between advertising commercial and film has, as any other cultural text, polysemious nature and can be used as a subversive reading against the dominant culture of representations or meanings (Shuker 167). Every text is already an interpretation of a specific discourse or discursive formations because nothing exists in a social or cultural vacuum; music video as a chosen medium therefore to some extent naturalises and generates specific interpretations of a social reality – social meanings, identities, power distribution, which supports existing social structures and hierarchy. According to Prince (Gabor 282), a film can occupy a stance of an ideological support (i.e. the film supports and promotes the dominant ideology), ideological critique (i.e. the film offers a critical view of the established values) or ideological incoherence (i.e. the film offers an ideological mix to produce an ambiguous product that would attract as many members of the targeted audience as possible while offending as few as possible). Due to some similarities between film and music video, we can assume that a music video is a political text



and therefore a bearer of a certain ideological stance. In a case of music video (*s*)*Aint*, it is the combination of critique and incoherence that brands it as ambivalent because of the ontological nature of music video and the specific content of it.

### **Dirt as a Tactic of Gender Subversion in (*s*)*Aint***

For the forthcoming analysis to be as intelligible as possible, here's a quick description of the music video and its visual signifiers, important for this case study: mood of the video, the narrative structure, the degree of realism or fantasy of the settings in the video, theme of the video, the importance of performance, modes of sexuality and the prevalent symbols in the video (Shuker 168-169).

The mood of the video is dark, murky, almost like a delirium or nightmare and could be categorised as an on-edge-of-the-consciousness episode of a drug deprived and hallucinating person, so the narrative of the video is non-linear and incoherent (e.g. switching back and forth from one scene to another, camera angles are crooked). The setting in the video is realistic, a hotel room or perhaps a drug addict's living space, where the activities and mental states, linked with a drug abuse are the central theme. The main protagonist and performer is MM, who is more or less passive (i.e. laying on the bed or in the bath tub, cutting himself on the chest with a razor blade, crammed on the couch while waiting for the drug dealer to come).

Due to the scenes of nudity, drug use and self-harm, the video was banned by the label and could only be purchased on DVD or directly from MM's website at its time of release in 2003. Now it is easily available on his *YouTube* channel. The scenes of nudity include a dreamlike sex acts with a drag queen, MM's masturbation while the drag queen, wearing a white wedding dress, presumably exposes their genitalia to MM, an image of a woman in bondage (there's a glimpse of cunnilingus and shaved labia majora) and a homoerotic threesome petting with the drag queen, the drug dealer and MM. Beside the general

murkiness of the video there is also an ongoing presence of the colour red (MM's red fingernails, red lipstick on people's mouth, blood from his chest wounds or nose, red book cover of the Holy Bible) and material filth (piles of decaying food leftovers, blood crusts on MM's face).

It is the presence of dirt or object in this particular video that can be loosely divided and categorised into: (1) directorial, (2) spatial, (3) bodily, (4) psychosomatic, (5) social, (6) gender and (7) sexual and function as a subversive tactic towards the system of hegemonic masculinity. While these categories of dirt frequently overlap, the article presents a separate discussion of these elements to create a clearer understanding of them.

The first type of dirt, named as directorial dirt, is linked with the person who directed the video and that is *Asia Argento*, the daughter of the Italian filmmaker *Dario Argento*, known for his horror genre *giallo*, which significantly influenced modern horror movies. Horror movies are, according to Barbara Creed (10), an illustration of the abjection, constituted from the body (corpses, mutilated bodies, bodily wastes), border (human – nonhuman, man – woman, proper body – object body) and construction of maternal figure as threatening. The chosen director of the video is therefore connected with the concept of object through father's creativity and kinship ties.

The spatial dirt is depended on the the location of the video which is a murky hotel room, filled with material dirt (e.g. food leftovers, unclean rooms) and darkness. The hotel room is not despite all the comfort it has a place that could be called a home because it is anonymous, neutral, transitional, borderless and uncertain. Home, on contrary, is personal, permanent, certain and with boundaries. It embodies safety (physical, emotional, material), individuation (home as an extension of a person's body), privacy (control over one's self, things and information) and preservation (construction and reconstruction of one's self (Young 151-154) and is constructed as an opposite to the uncertainties and dangers of the street, foreign territories, others or even from oneself.

The protagonist in the video, placed into a hotel room, is unsafe (i.e. lack of self-agency, passive stance to life, acts of self-harming: cutting, drug abuse) and does not control his body, space and people around him (hotel room as a borderless space, open to anyone). Home represents the affinity between the material house and the body, which in this case does not exist, because there is no home or normally functioning body. This could be read reciprocally: a body is dysfunctional because there is no home or there is no home because the body does not function. Home can also be viewed as a substitute womb (Young 124), but the dark hotel room is just a distorted or abject version of the safe space.

The bodily dirt is embedded in a forementioned premise about body as being entity of dirt despite the societal processes of civility and discipline of the body. But it is the female body that is prone to be defined as dirty, so an illusion of a proper or unleaky body is something only men can obtain. The body of MM in this video is deliberately dirty; it is bloody due to the self-harm and drug use, covered with vomit and inactive. This deliberate body stance can be read as a tactic of feminisation, grotesqueness and genderfuck or perhaps, as Kristeva would put it, a fantasied return to preoedipal or semiotic phase (86). The idea of a grotesque body originates from notes by Rabelais (Burkitt 45) and his informal discourse of carnival, markets and people. Carnival imaginary is limitless, open and subversive to a formal language and modes of the human conduct. Representations of the grotesque body (i.e. improper or disproportional body shapes) are focused on lower parts of the body (bowels, buttocks, anus, genitalia) or body cavities (mouth, ears, nose, navel, penis) and are intentionally uninhibited – visible, exposed, emphasised (Burkitt 47).

A man's body is grotesque, when it is feminised (Creed 57) and MM's grotesqueness lies in a notion of genderfuck or feminisation of his male (although slender and non-muscular) body; he is wearing make-up, carries himself as emotionally shattered (e.g. anxiety, self-harm), his passivity is visible in his constant waiting and occupying small amounts of space around him (e.g. squeezing himself into a bathtub, kneeling by

the toilet). The last activity is something that is culturally imposed on women's bodies. Grotesque bodies are connected with the concept of a carnival, so his grotesqueness can be read as an opening (to be uninhibited or uncivilized) of the (male) body. By wearing makeup and being passively emotional, he is acting carnivalesque or genderfucking with the normal, civilized and self-disciplined male body.

On the other hand, every body is at some point of life course open, uninhibited or uncivilized. It is the gender undifferentiated infant phase or as Kristeva (90-101) called it, a semiotic state that is characterised with socially allowed infant's wallowing in his/her own bodily wastes (excrement, vomit, saliva) and by being indecent, fleshy, ambiguous, chaotic, emotional, instinctual and subjected to maternal authority. On that terms can MM's bodily behaviours and expressions be also read as an attempt of a comeback to the childlike phase, for example blood crusts on his face can be a metaphor for remains of the child's attempt to eat food, adult bloody nose for a child's nose full of phlegm, his unsexualised naked body for a childlike image of the human body, his passive demeanour as a subjection to maternal authority, dirty hotel room as a sign of impossible comeback to the mother's womb. MM's representations of himself as a grotesque or childlike body (the semiotic) do challenge the corporeal component of gender order of the hegemonic masculinity – the perfect male body that is, as Grosz puts it, "sealed-up and impermeable" (201).

Another level of challenging the sealed-up and impermeable male mind is connected with so called psychosomatic dirt, the dysfunctional position between body and mind, manifested as mental health issues (e.g. eating disorders, panic attacks, phobias). To further the concept of MM's mind as also being a part of psychosomatic genderfuck, he is engaging in activity of self-cutting. Self-cutting is a part of self-harming body practices and it is a gendered, white, classist and ageist activity; most of the self-mutilators are white, middle-class girls or young women of above average intelligence who initially began mutilating themselves in middle to late adolescence (Hewitt 55). Self-harm is, as Hewitt writes, "an attempt to reintegrate the self from fragmented state of

depersonalisation and gain attention from a social milieu from which individual feels alienated" (55). The main purpose of self-harm is to create connectedness with others and to intensify the awareness of body limits and boundaries and to overcome them, together with the space of alienation between self or the body and others or environment.

Self-cutting as a deliberate bodily superficial self-injury uses instead of words the body to communicate with others and to express the inexpressible. But self-mutilation is a solitary activity, private and impulsive. A person wants to be heard yet silences herself/himself, therefore cutting can be defined as an abject activity between speech and silence. It also revolves around body and blood as an abject substance and retains itself on the border between the person's body and inanimate surroundings. This behaviour provides the participants the internal sense of self-control as a compensation for the lack of control of their external circumstances that are for women mostly linked with the desire and need to fit into the tight cultural modules of emphasized femininity (mother – wife – homemaker). Cutting can be understood as women's carving themselves into those moduls or as a protest against those constructions of femininity, so once again, the activity possesses the liminal or abject trait with political undertones.

MM's self-cutting in the video with razor blade on his chest is another method to contest the notion of perfect male body and behaviours related to it. Blood is a symbol of life and energy and can be interpreted as (1) a resistance against an imposed masculinity, which denies any option for emotional and mental weakness or corporeal openness for men, (2) a testimony that body can never be proper or clean, (3) a proclamation of the priority of the body over subjectivity, (4) a further genderfuck of MM's body – blood as a woman's signifier for menstruation and childbirth, prevalent red colour in the video (red lipstick, red fingernails, red book cover of the Holy Bible) and (5) a way to cohere the drug addict's self with other parts of self, due to his role of a drug addict in the video.

The latter (the drug addiction) is part of the notion that there are individuals or social groups, considered and treated as social dirt. Goffman (1970) calls them social deviants, although in his conception the social deviancy is more of an act of self-agency or choice than ascribed position due to the lack of favourable economic, social, racial, gender and sexual conditions. The drug addict in this video is a social deviant as Goffman defines it; an individual

"[...] who act irregularly and somewhat rebelliously in connexion with our basic institutions — the amity, the age-grade system, the stereotyped role-division between the sexes, legitimate full-time employment involving maintenance of a single governmentally ratified personal identity, and segregation by class and race" (1970).

As already mentioned in the description of the video, is MM in a role of a drug addict, waiting for his drug dealer to come, but is meanwhile falling into nightmarish delirium.

The male drug addict is a representation of an economic, gender and body failures. The economic facet is shown in his unacceptance of capitalistic work ethics (i.e. rational instrumentality, discipline of the body and the mind, compartment of working and leisure time), the gender aspect in his abandonment of the masculine agency (i.e. passivity, uninvolved in the controlling of space around him, lack of self-discipline, narcissism, self-appointed leisure time) and body failure is evident in his lack of hygienical customs and new openings of the male body via drug consumption. The heroin injections through veins and cocaine inhalations through nose are not so common modes of the opening of the (male) body; the injection pierces skin or the outer covering of human body and nose rarely functions as input body part.

Drug consumption can be interpreted as a food abjection; it is appealing (the sense of being high and bodiless) and appalling (the addiction, the decay of the body, sickness) consumption, that creates a different type of dependence for a person to survive. MM's addiction delirium can also be identified as a liminal or abject state of mind, a state

that is neither awoken or asleep. Another signifier of MM's Antihero status ("body without a soul") is evident in his act of cocaine inhalation; the powder is distributed and then inhaled on the red cover of the Holy Bible, something that can be read as a blasphemy or antireligious act.

The next one is the concept of gender dirt that has been gradually developed through other types of dirt: bodily, social and psychosomatic. It is apparent by now that in this music video, MM is constantly undoing gender (i.e. hegemonic masculinity) by being passive, body-centric, anti-instrumental, socially deviant and engaging in feminine activity of self-harm.

The focus so far has been mostly on MM, but for this analysis, representations of other people and their contexts in a video narrative are also needed and important. One of them is a drag queen and following our discourse of abjection and Newton's writing that "[a drag] is a double inversion that says, appearance is an illusion, [...] my outside appearance is feminine, but my body is masculine, yet my inside essence is feminine," (Butler 137), a drag queen can easily be subjected to Othering. The representation of a drag queen is not pathologised, ridiculed, demonised or similarly Othered due to their gender expression, but they are submitted to the same socio-economic Othering as MM and other male participants (i.e. drug dealer). It is the power dynamics between the drag queen and MM that defines the drag queen's position as an equal or even dominant to MM. The sexual relationship is embedded in a narrative of dirt and power. The drag queen is dressed in a filthy wedding dress, their posture is dominant and masculine, attitude authoritarian. MM, on the contrary, is mostly nude, appears physically weak and submissive to them. The dress is a key power signifier and MM can be read as an unfit bridegroom – sick, passive, addicted and unable to fulfill one of the key social roles of hegemonic masculinity – to be someone's man or husband.

The last type in the classification of dirt is sexual dirt with already discussed sexual relationship between the drag queen and MM, which is one of three sexual relations, occurring in the video. The sexual dirt

challenges a hierarchical system of sexual value or sex hierarchy (although Rubin employs the syntagm "sex hierarchy", it will be understood as "sexual hierarchy"), where the top erotic position occupies marital, monogamous and reproductive heterosexuality (Rubin 151). Sex hierarchy changes discursively and materially, so some of the practices and identities, previously stigmatised, were gradually depathologised, decriminalised and therefore relatively normalised (e.g. masturbation, interracial relations, homosexuality). But some are still positioned lower in the hierarchy: trans\* people, BDSM (bondage/discipline, domination/submission, sadomasochism, fetishism) members, sex workers, promiscuous people, polyamorous and intergenerational relations (e.g. older woman – younger man).

All those currently low-placed sexualities are depended on the concept of heteronormativity, which besides creating a homosexual/heterosexual dichotomy, also establishes hierarchies among heterosexualities (e.g. BDSM heterosexual sex vs. conventional heterosexual sex) and causes constructions of sexual dirt. In the video (s)Aint are representations of three types of sexual dirt: relationship between the drag queen and MM, homoerotic threesome and an image of a woman in bondage. The relationship between the drag queen and MM is sexual, but not power equal; MM is the submissive one, a passive, incoherent subject. There are scenes of sex between them, masturbation, hand sex, yet the identity of the drag queen is ambiguous; in some scenes there is a man, in others a woman which could be a visual confirmation of the forementioned definition by Newton what the drag queen is. The homoerotic threesome formed from the drag queen, the drug dealer and MM includes a brief mouth caressing of the upper body (face, neck) and those representations of sexual behaviour, identities and corporeality do challenge paradigm of male heterosexuality, but it is the homosocial setting of the video that is problematic. There is only one image of a woman in bondage (i.e. placed into a BDSM context).

In the recent years, mainstream culture had been pervaded with one dominant and monolithic representation of BDSM subculture and that is the one of a woman in bondageiv. But not any woman, a woman



who is young, beautiful, thin and white with shaved pubic area. This is the encountering of the social abjections in a form of ageism, lookism, thin and white privilege, body image and the cultural undesirability of body hair.

The consensual bondage (for any gender) as a state of being restrained with rope, handcuffs, gags, blindfolds or scarves within erotic context is just one segment of the BDSM culture, but the main component are the ongoing consent (i.e. usage of safe words at any moment, regardless of expectations or interpretations on the part of either party, the act can and will end, which allows them more negotiating space for receiving pleasure) and safe environments (clubs, parties, home).

The woman in bondage (young, white, beautiful, thin and without any pubic hair) in the video is placed into an unsafe environment (hotel room as a transitional public space) and unknown context (a lingering image of her, without beginning or end) which insinuates the lack or dismissal of an ongoing consent, a key factor for BDSM. She is exposed as a sexual object without any agency for a male gaze only, something that is aligned with the misogynistic notion of the female body as an object (to be looked at, examined, objectified) and an object (to be disciplined or a site for fantasy and fetishisation, to be shown as a spectacle). Another dimension of her sexual objectification can be traced down to a feminist-vegetarian theory by Carol A. Adams. She argues that (1) women and animals in patriarchal societies are constructed as meat, (2) meat-eating as a dietary activity is a signifier and amplifier of hegemonic masculinity and (3) on the grounds of gender and species inequalities, both are consumed or annihilated by society; animals as inanimate objects with no power (a piece of food) and women as an animate objectified subjects with minor power (Adams 103).

Those are crucial points where video fails in an attempt to challenge the standard of hegemonic masculinity despite the presence of various abjections that do so. The video narrative, constructed as a liminal and dreamlike episode and MM's position as a genderfuck

Antihero do not, for example, include male fantasies of men in bondage, sexual practice of pegging, male submissiveness to women or deconstruction of conventional beauty standards, emphasised femininity and female sexuality.

### Lyrics of the Othered (*s*)*Aint*

The music video also consists of song lyrics or an audio part, but because there is not much referential codependency or correlation between audio and visual elements, the textual analysis of the lyrics is separated from the visual component of the video and will be interpreted in a context of before mentioned MM's media persona as Othered artist.

Art or poetic language, as it is articulated in Julia Kristeva's work, derives from the margins of the Symbolic order and it is defined by characteristics, such are maternal, ambiguous, chaotic, disorderly, impure. The poetic language is capable of breaking through the conventional social meaning and is, according to Kristeva (76), the only method to change established meanings about language. Yet the semiotic (i.e. revolutionary-maternal) as a source of poetic language is only allowed to male avantgarde artists, something that can be ascribed to MM.

MM's artistic persona and expression as Othered can also be traced in lyrics of the video (*s*)*Aint*. As it is evident from the title, an abbreviated "s" from the word "saint" connotes his affirmation as an abject persona within pop cultural realm and music industry. This confirmation is multiplied in a repetitive chorus: "*Hold the S because I am an AINT*". Another cue of his Otherness can be located in the next verse: "*I don't care if your world is ending today because I wasn't invited to it anyway*". The syntagm "*your world*" can be interpreted more widely, as mainstream culture, where he as an Othered media persona shares a status of an abject – he is belonging to the music industry, but only on the grounds of his visual, musical and artistic Otherness.

The visual aspect of his persona is described almost self-deprecatingly in the following verse: "*I'm [...] a death's head on a mopstick [...]*", a visual idea that resembles the image of the corpse or an absolute abject.

Another dimension of dirt can also be traced down in the usage of profane language in MM's lyrics. Words, such as "fucking" or "bitch", are words of obscenity that challenge notions of semantic properness or "purity". Yet the connotation of the word "bitch", employed as a slur against women and amplified with the visual image of the immobile woman in bondage, is still embedded into a misogynistic notion of femininity and therefore does not function as a term of gender deconstruction or empowerment.

The verse "*But now I'm not an artist I'm a fucking work of art*" comprises his overall comprehension of himself as a part of the music industry that emphasises the importance of performance over substance or essence. MM is Othered on the grounds of his media persona and self-Othered because of his possible discontent with the lack of the artistry in music industry.

## Conclusion

The decision for an in-depth analysis of music video (*s*)*Aint* has been made because of MM's self-chosen position as Other(ed) persona in music industry and the ban of the video due to the explicit content ("dirt"), reasons that were credible enough to reconsider them as a threat to the assumptions about hegemonic masculinity. Various types of dirt or "a matter out of place" (Douglas 35), identified as material, spatial and symbolic dirt, were employed as a subversive tactic within the text (i.e. music video) to challenge or deconstruct that paradigm.

The abjection of MM as an rock celebrity is evident in his Antihero persona, resemblant to the corpse or absolute abject and his fascination with grotesque as an artistic expression of the abject. The results of the

chosen music video analysis predicate with following conclusions about gender and sexuality:

- the identified dirt as a part of genderfuck narrative in a chosen video did challenge the hegemonic masculinity as a gender standard on several levels: male body, male agency and male heterosexuality. MM is changing his body boundaries (self-cutting, drug abuse, vomiting), his body posture (passive, naked, drug addicted, wearing make-up), agency (not implemental, anti-capitalist, leisured) and sexuality (sexual activity with the drag queen and homoerotic petting with other men) and
- the one-woman representation (i.e. woman in bondage) reaffirmed the notion of hegemonic masculinity on behalf of the unchallenged gender stereotype, related to women as absent or objectified in music videos. The objectification of women that are narrowly carved into a heteronormative model of youth, beauty, thinness and whiteness and the simplistic appropriation of subordinate heterosexualities (BDSM culture in this case study) function as a particular amplifier of hegemonic masculinity via the construction of emphasised femininity.

But to fully deconstruct the notion of hegemonic masculinity, the challenge should not be confined only to the one-gender realm (e.g. male homosocial setting) as it is in this music video, but the subversion should also spread to the paradigm of femininity, women's subjectivity and sexuality. In this particular video, the subversion of hegemonic masculinity did happen and yet the new genderfuck masculinity is still positioned as dominant gender concept in relation to the subordinate femininity because it employs the symbol of emphasized femininity (i.e. an image of the woman as passive beautiful object in bondage without BDSM context) as a convenient tool to preserve its primary position. To solely challenge hegemonic masculinity without inclusion of subverted femininities, only conveys that rock music still does not acknowledge the existence of plural identities of women, however abjectly this may sound.

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- i Popular music as a part of popular culture defies precise and straightforward definition, so the loose yet sufficient criterion for our analysis is going to be employed – the meaning of adjective "popular". This term indicates that something – a person, a product, a practice or a belief – is commonly liked or approved of by a large audience or the general public (Shuker 3); but in this case the verbs "approved" or "liked" will be altered with "globally recognized".
  - ii When referring to Marilyn Manson, it is not the band at large that is being discussed, but their frontman, Marilyn Manson or Brian Hugh Warner.
  - iii The forefathers of shock rock are Alice Cooper and Ozzy Osbourne from the band Black Sabbath.
  - iv If you google with search words "bondage, discipline", the majority of images will be the ones of women in bondage, mostly taken out of context and sometimes conflated or even substituted with images of violence against women.
  - v BDSM culture also includes power exchange, pain/sensation play, leather-sex, role-playing and fetish within sexual or erotic context (Williams and Storm 2).

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