

ABJECT WOMEN IN HOLY SPIDER

KUTSAL ÖRÜMCEK FİLMİNDE 'İĞRENÇ' KADINLAR

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Öz

Bu makalede, 2022 yılında yayımlanan Ali Abbasi imzalı *Kutsal Örümcek* filminin feminist yaklaşım ile hazırlanmış bir analizi sunulmaktadır. Kadınların toplumdaki konumu ve rolü, insanlığın en önemli, değışmez problemlerinden biri olmuştur. Bu film ise İran'ın bu sorunla ilgili tartışmaların ve haksız ortamın hissedildiği ülkelerden biri olduğunu yansıtmaktadır. Dini ve milli duyguları sömürülen sıradan bir vatandaşın, şehirdeki tüm hayat kadınlarını öldürmeyi görev edinerek bir seri katile dönüştürülmesini konu alan bu filmde toplumsal açıdan pek çok eleştiri vardır. Bu nedenle, geniş bir bakış açısı ve çeşitli teoriler ile analizlere elverişli bir yapımlan olan *Kutsal Örümcek* ile izleyicinin, toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini, yozlaşmış siyasi ve dini tutumları ve devletlerin manipülasyon olarak kullandığı birçok aygıtın bireyler üzerindeki etkisini sorgulaması bekleniyor. Bu çalışma *Kutsal Örümcek*'teki bu sorunlu konuları Julia Kristeva'nın 'iğrenç varlık' ve Hannah Arendt'in 'kötülüğün sıradanlığı' gibi belirli kavramlar üzerinden incelemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Kutsal Örümcek, İğrenç Nesne, Kötülüğün Sıradanlığı, İranlı kadınlar*

Abstract

This article presents a feminist reading of *Holy Spider* the movie inspired by real life and shot in 2022 under the direction of Ali Abbasi. The position and role of women in society have consistently been one of humanity's most significant strife. This movie reflects the fact that Iran is one of the countries where the discussions and unfair atmosphere about this problem are felt. The movie is about transforming an ordinary citizen whose religious and national feelings are exploited into a serial killer by making it his mission to kill all the prostitutes in the city. Therefore, with *Holy Spider*, a production that lends itself to analysis from a wide range of perspectives and theories, the audience is expected to question gender roles, degenerate political and religious attitudes, and the effects of many devices that states use for manipulation on individuals. This study examines these problematic issues in *Holy Spider* through certain notions such as Julia Kristeva's abjection and Hannah Arendt's banality of evil.

Key Words: *Holy Spider, Abjection, The banality of Evil, women in Iran*

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Individuality is one of the most significant issues facing modern and even postmodern society. Being able to create and stand behind an individual's own identity is one of the biggest struggles because the system does not allow you to be outside the mainstream. The individuals implicated are promptly expelled from society. As Julia Kristeva puts it in the concept of abjection, they become the "opposing figure" that the system wants to destroy. "P: [t]he abject is not an object facing me, which I name or imagine ... The abject has only one quality of the object – that of being opposed to I" (Kristeva 1). At this point, the individual remains between culture/society and his/her individuality and feels compelled to make a choice. Otherwise, just like when a foreign and dangerous substance enters a person's body, the body wants to throw it away, so the person turns into an undesirable 'thing' for society. "In Powers of Horror, Kristeva gives an account of the psychic origins of revulsion where abjection is a process that negotiates the limits in the formation of the subject through the rejection of unwanted things" (qtd. in Arya 48). Individuality and culture are two significant and frequently connected concepts that have been the subject of centuries-long discussion and controversy among philosophers, sociologists, and psychologists. In the most basic sense, a specific group or society's common values, beliefs, traditions, and behaviors are referred to as its culture. It covers a broad variety of social and cultural phenomena, such as traditions, language, customs, and norms. Nevertheless, at this point, a question should be brought to mind; who establishes these traditions and norms and to whom do they appeal? The response to this query illuminates the challenges of being an individual. Contrarily, individuality refers to the traits that set people apart from others and make them special. It comprises unique traits and features that define a human's personality and sense of self. Since it enables people to express themselves and claim their freedom and autonomy, individuality should be perceived as a crucial part of the human experience. The impression of being an individual in cultures, however, is typically the reverse. When a person manifests his/her own free will and difference, he/she is forced to choose between being himself/herself and being included in society. When the person chooses his/her own way of being, this individual has to experience the process of reintegrating into society when he/she feels that he/she is marginalized by vomiting from it and stops being himself/herself. For this purpose, individuals are classified in a variety of ways and exist as representations of marginalized groups rather than as unique individuals, including women, homosexuals, gypsies, and many more who are outside the prevailing ideology that dominates the time and place. These people become the 'others' in society because they are kept out of it on both a physical and psychological level. Any "others" or foreign substance is rejected by society, and it

is eliminated from its system. In this study, the notions of individuality and society will be examined in line with the process of subordination of people, specifically of women, through the concepts of the Banality of Evil by Hannah Arendt and Abjection by Julia Kristeva, by embodying them in the movie *Holy Spider*.

Furthermore, this restrictive structure of the system, established for everyone, undoubtedly works mostly on women. The subjugation of women is arguably the most pervasive and deeply ingrained form of discrimination in human history. Considering this fact, it can be understood that women can easily come to the abject position. One of the most evident examples that make this concept comprehensible is a movie which was directed by Ali Abbasi in 2022. *Holy Spider* distinctly unveils what it means to look disgusting in public. In fact, it is practicable to contemplate this movie in two dimensions, because in order to declare any segment of society abject, certain devices of the system must be used systematically. At the end of this scrutinizing process, Hannah Arendt's concept of the banality of evil which was a new perspective on evil can be reached.

This idea of evil was almost entirely new. Before the Enlightenment, most theological and philosophical thinking about the nature of evil rested on the assumption that evil deeds are the product of strong passions, pride, ambition, envy, and hatred. (...) "We have a sense of evil," Susan Sontag has said, but we no longer have "the religious or philosophical language to talk intelligently about evil." (Miller 54)

Through the studies of Hannah Arendt, who theorize a new understanding that changed the perception of evil by examining Nazi Germany during and after the World War II, the apparatuses that have perpetuated evil in society can be revealed. On the whole, Julia Kristeva and Hannah Arendt will be the most notable contributors to this study's concentration on examining all forms of systematized violence against women through *Holy Spider* from a feminist standpoint. Therefore, during the study, the concepts of Abjection and the Banality of Evil will be handled and a film analysis will be made in light of them.

The world-renowned philosopher, literary critic, and psychologist Julia Kristeva's origin come from both French and Bulgaria. Her contributions to feminist theory significantly impacted the fields of political philosophy and semiotics. However, the term 'abjection' describes the mental response when encountering something that is both appalling and inspiring like illness or putrefaction. Kristeva discusses this notion in her book *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* in which she analyzes how the literary and cultural representations of abjection shape our understandings. From the standpoint of Kristeva, abject occurrences may test and shatter our

sense of identity, pushing us to face our mortality and the limitations of our bodies and brains. In addition to disgust, revulsion, and terror, abjection can also be a reaction to something that is viewed as contaminating or polluting. "Abjection is above all ambiguity. Because, while releasing a hold, it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it (...) on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger" (Kristeva 18). It is ordinary for a person who is detached or disconnected from a place, a formation, or a situation to feel himself/herself on slippery and uncertain ground all the time. Naturally, the person tries to escape from this atmosphere where he feels himself in danger. Yet, the question here is how and by whom have our perceptions been formed. Nevertheless, the feeling and the need for severance can be interpreted as abjection in a sense.

Nonetheless, to examine the separation of individuals from society, it is necessary to look at the point where Kristeva considers the abjection begins. At that point, the developmental stages of an individual are essential because Kristeva presents a new approach based on Lacan's theory. Jacques Lacan, a French psychiatrist, is well known for his contributions to the field of psychoanalysis and for his considerable revisions of Sigmund Freud's writings. Genuinely, it can be argued that the idea that brings Lacan and Kristeva together at a common point is that individuals perceive the world through the 'I' and 'The other' dichotomy. Notwithstanding, the periods they consider to be the beginning of this distinction differ. According to Lacan's theory, there are three orders or dimensions in the psyche: the 'Symbolic', the 'Imaginary', and the 'Real' (qtd. in Cain et. al 1281). Firstly, the Imaginary is the stage in which the baby, who thinks he/she is whole with the world when he is born, realizes his/her reflection in the mirror and recognizes that he/she is actually a separate entity from the world. From this moment on, the world reconstitutes for the baby as 'I' and 'The Others'. The child, who at this point feels disconnected from the others, then starts his/her journey toward becoming an individual at the symbolic stage, when he/she engages with language and culture.

The noteworthy point in Lacan's approach is his emphasis on significant impressions of socio-ideological underpinnings in shaping the "self" as far as any belief in unity and solidarity of subjects has been put into question. The interanimation of individuals to one another is manifested in linguistic communication in which individuals are "the slaves of language", or in David Lodge's terms, 'language, the signifying chain, has a life of its own which cannot be securely anchored to a world of things' in such a definition, the subject is not anything but a 'linguistic construct.' (Mostafaei 430)

It should be indicated that according to Lacan, the process of creating the individual and bringing individuality to the fore is governed by language. Language affects the culture in which language takes place, and culture affects people. When a person realizes the social norms and the father, that is the authority, he/she has to start forming his/her own self and find a place for himself first in the family and then in society. Throughout this process, he is guided and manipulated by language. It should be noted that Lacan's idea of the real alludes to a sophisticated field of psychoanalysis that reflects both of the previous stages and determines human experience and identity. "Once the real has become the focus of attention, Lacan begins to reflect on its relationship not only to the symbolic but to the imaginary as well" (Julien xvii). To recapitulate, the person's separation from the world starts at the mirror stage, and when he encounters the culture and language and learns Miller the hierarchical structure, there is a total disengagement as defined by Lacan, who considers the developmental phases of the individual and puts out theories. It is apparent that he has distinct ideas from Kristeva about the transition phase of an individual to the cultural sphere in which the society is located. As Lacan stated language shapes the human psyche, and learning a language is a crucial step in the individual's evolution. (qtd. in Muller 39) He also argued that the human psyche is characterized by a fundamental sense of lack or incompleteness, which he referred to as the "mirror stage." As mentioned before, in this stage, the infant first notices its own image in a mirror and starts to think of itself as a distinct, cohesive being. By learning the language, the individual who transitions to "the symbolic order", in other words, the stage of the father, tries to find the missing piece, to be complete with the whole that he has broken until he/she dies. "The fact that we have here a plurality of subjects can, of course, in no way constitute an objection to those who are long accustomed to the perspectives summarized by my formulation: the unconscious is the Other's discourse." (Lacan 16) While from a Lacanian perspective, language is the factor that separates us from the Other and directs us in our unconscious with the desire to integrate with it, Kristeva argues that forms of expression and awareness developed before language.

In consonance with Kristeva, the first break occurs between the baby and the mother at birth, and this develops the baby's awareness of being apart. Moreover, Kristeva, unlike Lacan, claims that it is this pre-linguistic period where meaning is formed and supports this argument with the concept of semiotic chora, which she coined. "Kristeva designates such early relating as organized through the semiotic chora, by which she means body, ego, sensory, rhythmic communication between mother and child, also seen as the originary site of meaning." (Van 575) As far as she is concerned, the semiotic chora, the earliest stage in a human's psychosexual development, is placed in the pre-linguistic, maternal space. "Consequently, abjection is in a way

regressive to the pre-Symbolic stage since it “draws me toward the place where meaning collapses” and where the thetic position for the language acquisition has not yet been established” (Cořkun 8). It is connected to the mother-child bond and the birthing process and is a place of potentiality and creativity that exists beyond language and symbolic order. “We recall that the abject is not equivalent to but “jettisoned from” the mother's body.” (Beardsworth 133) The first time an individual experiences a “detachment” is separation from the mother, and thus the system in which the non-belonging is removed begins.

Any subsequent ‘abjections’ must therefore be understood as repetitions that contain within an echo of this earlier cathartic event – the first and primary abject(ion) – birth and the human infant’s separation from the maternal body/home. For Kristeva, abjection is thus always a reminder (and the irreducible remainder) of this primary repudiation of the maternal. (Tyler 80)

It can be suggested that it is the stage where the person determines his/her own limits, determines the ‘others’, and wants to throw them out of his/her system. Kristeva argues that the semiotic chora is an integral element of the human experience and is vital for the development of subjectivity and identity. The semiotic chora, according to her, is a source of vigor and desire that may upend and subvert the symbolic order. (Cořkun 8) From this first moment of rupture, it is understood that both the baby and the mother are abjected during birth. “In the course of arguing that the semiotic contests the universality of the Symbolic, Kristeva makes several theoretical moves that generally consolidate the power of the Symbolic and paternal authority. She defends a maternal instinct as a pre-discursive biological necessity, thereby naturalizing a specific cultural configuration of maternity” (Butler 162). The idea presented by Kristeva also advances feminism. Combining Kristeva’s psychoanalytic theory with feminism is substantial for this study because individuals need to separate from their mothers to realize themselves, and then throw out everything that is disgusting, and women are the abominations society wants to expel.

One of the factors that will enable *Holy Spider* to be evaluated with a conscious eye is Hannah Arendt’s discourses on evil. Hannah Arendt is a political philosopher and theorist who was born in Germany. She is acclaimed for her studies on the nature of authority, power, and totalitarianism. Arendt is best recognized for her writings on the characteristics of authority, the risks of totalitarianism, and the nature of power. In her book “The Origins of Totalitarianism,” (1951) she examined the rise of totalitarian regimes in the 20th century, arguing that they were characterized by complete control over the lives of their citizens and the use of propaganda, fear, and brutality

to maintain power. As she covered the trial of Adolf Eichmann, a senior Nazi official accused of crimes against humanity, Arendt also became interested in the idea of “the banality of evil.” Eichmann, according to Arendt, was a “desk murderer” who carried out Nazi state commands without questioning their moral ramifications rather than a monster. (qtd. in Milchman 215) Political theory, philosophy, and history have all benefited greatly from Arendt’s work, and her ideas are still being researched and discussed today. However, the concept of the “banality of evil” relates to the notion that regular people are capable of carrying out terrible deeds, not because they are naturally wicked or sadistic, but rather because they are mindlessly behaving in conformity with the social norms and ideals of their community or obeying instructions. “Arendt strongly implies that the essence of totalitarianism is bureaucratization, or that there is a high degree of correlation between the two, even though in the 20th century the democracies have become increasingly bureaucratic states without embracing totalitarianism” (qtd. in Miller 5). Arendt directs the arrows of criticism not at individuals but at systems.

In the second place, social norms are the unspoken expectations and laws that direct how people behave in a given society. They can differ greatly from one civilization to the next and are influenced by cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors. Social norms play an important role in maintaining social order and controlling behavior since they typically carry significant moral and cultural weight. The product of which system these norms are affects the behavior of individuals in that society. If we bring this concept to a common point with the film, it can be said that the most standard and developing problem all over the world is related to gender roles. Women's place in society and their ability to exist as an individual are among the situations that the patriarchal system most hinders. People who grew up with patriarchal opinions also develop false beliefs about the secondary position of women and criticize them, regardless of whether they are men or women. As for feminism, it is a social, political, and intellectual movement that seeks to advance the rights and status of women. It involves a critique of how women have been historically marginalized and oppressed, and it seeks to challenge the social norms, institutions, and practices that have contributed to this marginalization. Social norms may have a significant influence in determining gender roles and expectations, and they frequently contribute to maintaining gender inequity and discrimination against women, according to feminism. In other words, expanding on the impact of social norms on gender roles and expectations, feminism asserts that these norms are not merely personal beliefs but are deeply rooted in the socially constructed rules of behavior assigned to each sex. “A starting point might be agreeing on the fact that many social norms are gender norms. People do not simply hold beliefs about what is expected from them, they hold beliefs about what

is expected from them because of their sex and socially constructed rules of behaviour assigned to that sex” (Cislaghi and Heise 415). In brief, it is undeniable that socially constructed beliefs and thought systems affect the perception of different genders in society and the roles assigned to these sexes. Ultimately, starting from Arendt's theory, it can be understood that even ordinary and good men who grow up in such a hierarchical environment between men and women are expected to persecute women by making evil commonplace.

Holy Spider can be discussed from two basic points. Kristeva’s concept of abject from a feminist perspective is the first subsidiary element. Nevertheless, it would be conducive to start by providing details on Iran to highlight the unjust conditions of women in the world. In point of fact, it is a nation with a diversely rich history and culture.

Hedayat approached Iranian culture and folklore from nationalist and modernist perspectives. In his view, Iranian culture comprised two distinctive elements: non-Iranian and Iranian. Islamic cultural elements were treated as ‘alien’, irrational, and anti-modern, whereas the cultural elements remaining from the pre-Islamic period were taken as ‘genuine culture’, suited to a modern society based on European civilization. (qtd. in Fazeli 3)

Specifically, Hedayat’s approach to Iranian culture and folklore from nationalist and modernist perspectives is reflective of a broader understanding of Iran’s complex history and the dichotomy between non-Iranian and Iranian elements. It is commonly known that Iran has a lengthy history, thus the civilizations that often originated there, which have experienced various periods, are typically split into two. At that point, it is common to observe traces of Islamic comprehension as an essential determinant in this distinguishing process. Before the Islamic period, Iran was a highly developed country in fields such as literature, art, and architecture, which hosted various ethnic origins and civilizations and therefore had a rich culture. Law and education became dependent on religion in Iran, which underwent a radical change with the spread of Islam in the 7th century. Accordingly, social norms inevitably began to change, and ethics started to form once more. Women were the most affected group by this new and oppressive system, in which Islam was used as just a cover. With the more conservative approach being used, women’s freedom to behave and think as they pleased in terms of clothes and lifestyle was curtailed. In such a system, the family, as the smallest structure of the society and the place in which people learn and embrace their roles in the community, turned into an institution that ensures the continuity of the system and gained importance. Normally, gender roles are one of the established norms that first appear in the family

and society and are determined with the sharpest lines. On the other hand, women in Iran also have a complex and diverse history. While Iranian women have experienced several obstacles and discrimination, they have also significantly influenced the nation's political, social, and cultural life. Women are officially granted certain rights and are shielded from discrimination in contemporary Iran. Nonetheless, females still deal with a variety of issues, including discrimination and gender-based violence, and they are less likely than men to be employed or represented in politics. Notwithstanding these obstacles, women in Iran have a strong presence in many sectors of society, including the sciences, the arts, and education. Women have always played an important role in various social and political movements, which are also substantial for gender roles. It's crucial to remember that depending on elements like socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and geography, the experiences and difficulties experienced by women in Iran might differ greatly.

Similarly, there is not a very optimistic atmosphere in the movie. Ali Abbasi directs his attention to the most marginalized group, even though women from all walks of society remain in the background. The audience witnesses Iranian society through the lives of prostitutes. The fact that the movie is inspired by an event that actually happened can also be a factor that increases its effect. The film is about a serial killer who killed 16 prostitutes between 2000 and 2001 and takes on the mission of purifying the streets by himself. It could be argued that viewing the movie from a broader perspective assists the audience to realize that these issues are not unique to Iran. Their attitude toward prostitutes is among the clearest illustrations of this fact. Prostitution is the practice of engaging in sexual activity in exchange for payment. It is a controversial and often stigmatized issue, and the legal responses to it vary around the world but the social responses don't make much of a difference. Prostitution is prohibited in certain nations while it is permitted and controlled in others. Prostitution may be a valid kind of employment for people who desire to engage in it, according to those who support legalizing it. They argue that it may be controlled to protect the rights of sex workers. On the contrary, prostitution, according to those opposed to legalization, should be illegal because it exploits women and is violent toward them. In addition to these opposing views, the reasons for being a prostitute should be questioned. The number of people who do this by seeing it as a profession and enjoying it is almost non-existent. An answer should be sought to the question of what the process that leads a woman to become a prostitute consists of. Systemic inequities including poverty, limited access to education and employment opportunities, and others can abuse women and make them more vulnerable to being drawn into the sex business. Moreover, after being directed to this, their rights are not protected in any way and they are not treated as human beings. Therefore, they have to live in danger and poor-quality

conditions in many respects. Regardless of its legal status, prostitution is commonly associated with negative social and health consequences, including an increased risk of violence, mental health problems, HIV infection, and other STDs. The best approaches to dealing with these problems and assisting persons working in the sex business are still up for dispute. *Holy Spider* is a film that heavily criticizes this unfair and uncertain system and the unchangeable fate of prostitutes. In such a system, it is not surprising that prostitutes look like disgusting parts of society and they want to be pushed out of society and even killed. Prostitutes are the most abject figures.

At the beginning of the movie, the audience watches the difficulties of a prostitute in one night and realizes how hard it is economically and socially for a prostitute to live in a society like this. During the night that ends with her death, the woman is abused and earns very little in return. She uses drugs like other prostitutes in order to escape the weight of having to make a living in this way and being seen as a “despicable” being. Thus, she tries to make herself more bearable by escaping from the realities of life for a short time. Yet throughout the film, the accused party by the director is not the prostitutes, but the circumstances and people who made them this way. Prostitutes, on the contrary, are among the victims of this system because even if they pass away, it won't matter. The fact that the problem is seen not in the social structure but in these “worthless” people is an indicator of why the murders are not pursued. “They're all similar. They are addicted to drugs and prostitution. Moreover, this woman was pregnant. He had swelling in his stomach. Really disgusting (...) Selling herself with a baby in her belly.” (*Holy Spider* 51.11) These words of the police, who spoke about the body of a prostitute found, are like a summary of the perception in society. These women are not known even by their names. They don't have a self, they're like a disgusting and harmful mass, all alike. Moreover, they do not even feel sorry for a woman who was killed with a baby in her stomach, because she is a prostitute and she should disappear from their point of view. They are abjects that should be removed from society, just as harmful and excess things should be removed from the body through feces and sweat or by vomiting. The point to be discussed here is that they are not dealing with the real problem. As if this way of life and death is the choice of these women, only they are defamed because it is easiest to scapegoat them by accusing them of immorality. On the other hand, examining the social, religious, or political reasons that make them this way and deprive them of their right to live and be accepted humanely, and the correction of corrupt structures threatens the patriarchal system they have established. However, this hypocritical structure is questioned and criticized in many scenes of the movie. For instance, throughout the film, the audiences observe these ladies being disparaged by both men and women, but no one brings up a different way of living. No institution or person offers a solution other than

selling their bodies to these women, who are in financial impossibility because they have not received an education, do not have a profession and it is very difficult to stay as a woman in business life.

It is seen that the concept of morality is reduced only to the sexual life of women. Whereas, men are rarely questioned. If prostitution is a crime, why aren't the men who are with them blamed? While the women in the movie are not at all happy to do this job, the men who are with them feel no shame. It is reasonable that the woman who bows respectfully becomes upset when one of the prostitutes hears the call to prayer as she is leaving the house to engage in prostitution. In addition, the way religion is reflected and its use as a tool of oppression is also emphasized. In fact, it is understood that not only does the protagonist take on the role of "hero" under the guise of religious values, but also that people are more successful and acceptable by gaining a religious appearance in their business lives. For example, religious figures in the house of a man who had sexual intercourse with a prostitute are shown. This is certainly not such an arbitrary emphasis. It can be understood that religion has turned into one of the devices used to suppress, humiliate and ignore women in the hands of the patriarchal system. At this point, it is possible to emphasize a connection because the fact that a man who has sexual intercourse with a prostitute appears to be a religious person in front of the public does not only demonstrate the hypocrisy in society. On the stage, the two most important ways to be more prominent in a patriarchal and religious-led system are to use religion and humiliate women. In other words, the humiliation of women and the exploitation of religious feelings are actually turned into weapons that serve the same purpose in such countries. Another highlight there is the appearance of the man's award in one of the frames on the wall. The fact that someone who is successful in the business world, who is respected by society, is with one of the women that society almost wants to throw up, will not take anything away from him. Once more, there is hypocrisy. This man does not become an abject, he just becomes a sinner, a seduced man. The tempting female stereotype, which has been used since the story of Adam and Eve, becomes the sole responsible for the events.

In addition to these, another example of hypocrisy and unreliability is that those who marginalize these women for being prostitutes do not accept a strong, determined, and successful journalist like Arzu Rahimi who beats the air as a woman journalist in the male world among them. She is an idealistic and brave woman who comes to the city to find the perpetrator of the women's murders that are covered up in the city. Indeed, she is an "honorable" woman. However, this time, the problem is that she is outside the social norms and she tries to blend into society by entering the male domain. In other words, desire is also an abject figure because it disrupts the order and

threatens the integrity of the social structure. As a matter of fact, Rahimi also represents the difficulties experienced by women trying to take part in the business world. The importance and value of women, which are not understood at home and in society, are also ignored in business life. Rahimi is belittled, ostracized, and even harassed by her male colleagues, but she still does not give up and acts brave enough to risk her life, solving the case and getting the culprit caught. Despite this, even her name is not mentioned in the success achieved and is left in the background. In short, the character of Rahimi is important in terms of understanding that all women, except the docile, devoted housewife model desired by the patriarchal system, are seen as abject. However, the real emphasis is on the most “despicable” ones. In fact, this emphasis may have been made on the appearance of prostitutes in the film, because they are neglected, and not very beautiful-looking, and this may be a symbol of their being seen as “disgusting, to get rid of”. Normally, the fact that they appear in this state and that they live in inadequate and bad living conditions is also distorted in the face of the audience in this way. However, Saeed’s relaxed and careless demeanor when he is caught is because he knows that he will not be punished for killing worthless prostitutes. There is serious sociological and political criticism here. As a matter of fact, Saeed, who was declared a hero of the people, proudly takes the blame in court.

Nevertheless, the last part that can be brought to the fore through abjection is that among the prostitutes Saeed killed, the woman who had the only comfortable manners, who seemed cheerful and strong, was the hardest to be killed and expelled from the society. A self-satisfied person who adopts her personality is harder to ignore, and the fact that such a woman can love life makes her even more out of the norm. Having a sarcastic smile on her face even when she died can be considered a symbol of resistance. It is not surprising that the person who is the most undesirable type of woman is featured on the poster of the movie. To continue, at the beginning of the movie, the city is viewed from above and the name *Holy Spider* appears on the screen at the same time. It is not a coincidence that the lights of the city resemble a spider’s web when viewed consciously. The spider is one of the representations of femininity, and associating the city with the woman can be one of the ways of changing the perception of the city and culture which is associated with men. In addition, this city, which looks like a spider’s web and has been reconsidered by being associated with femininity, is referred to as the Holy City of Meshed throughout the movie. But the screenwriters and director of the film place the woman in a position of holiness.

Apart from the concept of abjection, another subject that can be examined through feminism is the nature of evil. The point that Arendt tries to convey through the theory of the

banality of evil is the fact that people who are systematically manipulated and abused by many very powerful and dangerous devices can easily turn to evil. If this concept is considered in the context of *Holy Spider*, it is understood how the Iranian Saeed's attempt to declare himself a folk hero is a natural consequence of a dangerous process. Saeed is only one of the members of the people who have been exploited by religious and national feelings. His words summarizing why he attempted this disaster are as follows: "I want to do something. I don't think I was created to do masonry, construction, remodeling, and that sort of thing. Haji, haji. I wish the war didn't end, haji. Some were martyred, some disappeared, some lost their limbs, and some returned to their families in coffins. But nothing happened to me. Why is that? Is it because I'm not worthy? Why wasn't I worthy?" (*Holy Spider* 33.05) The protagonist is grappling with existential issues. He has the desire to contribute to society and religion. What makes him unhappy that such terrible things have not occurred to him, as opposed to being relieved that he has returned safely? The reason for his happiness in the court is the same because, in the end, he gets rid of being an obscure character and becomes someone who is admired in public as he wishes, but he is unaware that he will be a victim of the system that makes him feel obliged to act as a hero and to be hostile to a part of the society. The hypocrisy of the system mentioned earlier doesn't just work for women. It also sacrifices Saeed, and the most striking proof of this is that they tricked him into executing him. The situation in which Arendt investigates the causes is that systems and institutions use people for their own benefit and then easily sacrifice them. She questions how the system can become a force that manipulates people and turns even good-hearted, calm, loving, and respectful individuals into monsters like Saeed. Saeed actually does nothing but practice the mistakes that he has memorized. It is not even immoral or even a sin for him to try to get rid of women who are out of the norm by following the ideas imposed on him by the patriarchal system and religious exploits. Finally, as far as I am concerned, the film ends with its most striking scene because when watched with a deep perception, it successfully reflects how violence and social roles are transmitted from generation to generation without being noticed as a natural process, and how people, regardless of men and women, wear the mask prepared for them calmly and ignorantly. So, it wouldn't be too hard for the viewer to predict what kind of people Saeed's son and daughter will be when they grow up, just as their mother accused the women of immorality instead of accusing her husband of being a murderer. For both men and women, the system offers only two paths, and those who wish to create other paths have to choose between individuality and society. If they eventually choose themselves or become unwanted because of society, they become abject.

When everything is taken into account, *Holy Spider* has a strong subtext and is rife with sociological, political, and feminist criticism. It can be said that it focuses on people who are marginalized in general terms. Being marginalized refers to the experience of being excluded, dismissed, or neglected by mainstream society. Various factors, such as color, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, handicap, or social status, can lead to marginalization. People and groups who are marginalized frequently experience bias, discrimination, and hardship as well as possible exclusion from opportunities and resources that are accessible to more privileged parts of society. Being ostracized may be highly challenging and have a significant negative effect on a person's sense of identity, self-esteem, and well-being. It can also result in emotions of irritation, powerlessness, and loneliness. As Kristeva states about the difficulty of being an individual, it is highly challenging for a person to distance himself or herself from society and stand behind it. When he/she has a style that society is not accustomed to, the individual turns into an abject figure. On the other hand, as Arendt puts forward, facts such as politics, literature, and religion are factors that help people to be governed as desired. It can be understood from here that the system determines who is disgusting and who is admirable in society, and the same system makes victims of both the people it declares abject and the individuals it keeps in the center. Just as, in *Holy Spider*, both Saeed and the prostitutes he kills are symbolically sacrificed, the system determines the fate of the community.

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