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**Deterritorialization, Performative Identity  
and Uncanny Representation of Woman’s  
Body in the Works of Ana Mendieta**

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**Introduction :**

In this paper, the works of Cuban American artist Ana Mendieta (1948-1985) will be analysed in the context of Butler’s performative gender and identity, Deleuze and Guattari’s becoming and deterritorialization, and the uncanny (unheimlich) that Kristeva borrows from Freud. After the general properties of Mendieta’s works are viewed in relation to the history of art, performative elements and performance as a form of an artistic production will be examined in the light of Butler’s concept of performative identity and construction of gender. In the former studies it was found out that Jane Blocker had interpreted Mendieta’s works in the context of performative formation of identity (2004). In this paper, in addition to accepting this approach, we aim at a different interpretation of this theme with a reference to Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of becoming. Mendieta’s works that subvert the Western representation of identity as an integral and closed system will be studied within a Deleuzian terminology such as becoming-woman, becoming-animal, becoming minor and molecular, transgressive and fluid identity. Then we will demonstrate how becoming leads to the lines of flight and different forms of existence. Irit Rogoff has referred to deterritorialization and reterritorialization in relation to Mendieta in her *Terra Infirmis: Geography’s Visual Culture* (2000). She sees Mendieta’s deterritorialization and reterritorialization in her living in different cities, cultural fragmentation and her working outside the art market. Rogoff emphasizes the alternative cultural formations as a result of geography, culture and history interpreted differently by different races and genders. In this paper, we will go beyond Rogoff’s comments, and relate deterritorialization with the transgressive power of becoming as a line of flight to freedom. Deviating from Rogoff’s understanding of deterritorialization reduced to its cultural and historical aspects, we will show how the concepts such as earth, woman, body and language are transformed. Lastly, Mendieta’s identity as a woman, an exile and a foreigner will be analysed using Kristeva’s idea of foreigner. The uncanny position of the foreigner will be related to deterritorialization and lines of flight.

**Ana Mendieta’s Art:**

Mendieta who was born into one of the prominent families of Cuba was sent to U.S.A. together with her sister after the arrest of their father due to his counter revolutionary stance. Spending her puberty years at the orphanages or with foster families, Mendieta retained the traces of this trauma of being an exile and a foreigner all her life and

reflected it in her art. When we look at her art, we see different phases that can be related with each other. First, she did performance works on body, gender and violence after she had begun her studies at Iowa University. Between 1973 and 1983 she realized *Siluetas* series in which she placed her body or its trace in nature, on earth, water, ashes or ice. Finally, she produced litography, sculpture, paper works and installations based on the themes of mother goddess and nature. Although she had a privileged position due to her class origins as compared to other exiles, she was always an active member of organizations for minority and woman's rights. She conducted several projects and trips to Cuba with Cuban and American artists. She lost her life falling from the apartment that she shared with her husband Carl Andre.

Before feminism and multiculturalism were in fashion, hundreds of feminists asking 'Where is Ana Mendieta?'<sup>1</sup>, criticized the exclusion of women from the elitist art club for ethnic, aesthetic and political reasons. After multiculturalism and diversity began to be consumed like commercial commodities in 1990s, the works of artists like Mendieta were used to colour the exhibitions or to clear the conscience of the West. Both in the artistic milieu and the media, it was hinted that she deserved this tragic end after such an extraordinary life. As a Third World woman artist using her naked body, she was undefended compared to her husband Andre who was supported both by the museums and the media.

Mendieta drew upon 1970's conceptualism, performance, body art, land art in her earth body works in which she transformed her body or its trace into an art form. Viennese Actionism, Acconci, Nauman, Burden, Second Wave feminism, Lucy Lippard, Santería (which was a Latin combination of pagan and Christian traditions), and Afro-Cuban sacrificial rites contributed to the hybridity of her art. Her works in which she wrapped herself with a white cloth remind Christo's wrapped women, Susan Lacy's *Ablutions*, George Segal's plaster sculpture and at the same time connote Mexican mummies and Catholic sculpture. Moreover, blood, hair, gunpowder and candles in her works are also used in Santería rituals.

Needless to say that there are similarities and differences between her and male artists such as Bruce Nauman, Dennis Oppenheim, Vito Acconci who used body as an objective and coherent system, or regarded it universal. On the other hand, Mendieta's body problematized femininity and parodied gendered body as a locus of violence and the uncanny. Turning her body into an artwork resulted in the disappearance of the art object and the criticism of the sexist representation. While the male artists using their bodies focused on the universal subject rather than a male subjectivity, women artists sought to redefine female subjectivity. Mendieta used feminine forms as opposed to the masculine and monumental forms of land art. She realized most of her performative works in the nature without an audience. Rather than communicating directly with the viewers as it was the case with most of the performance artists of 70s and 80s, her works were closer to the living sculptures of Gilbert and George. The body as an aesthetic object was more significant than the performative action. As a matter of fact she called her performances '*tableaux*' in which she reenacted rape scenes. Unlike Wilke and Abramovic, an anonymous body such as the body of the victim in her *Rape Scene* is the focus, not the artist herself.

Viennese Actionism was the major influence on her bloody '*tableaux*' about women and violence and the body was regarded as an object of installation. It is possible to see the same effect in her works in which she wrapped herself in a white shroud referring to the

Catholic iconography. Rebecca Schneider (1997), interpretes these works as an answer to the representation that veils and hides the women's body. In 1974 Mendieta painted her hand or body with red paint or blood and left her traces on paper referring directly to *Anthropométries* of Yves Klein, but this time the woman as an artist was responsible for the action, rejecting her position as an object, a tool and living brushes of the male artist.

Between 1973-1980 in Iowa City and Oaxaca Mendieta performed her works on nature, woman's body and mother goddess that transformed the body into matter, trace and a fleeting shadow. She left her traces in the form of a goddess figure made of earth, blood, fire, ashes, grass and flowers on earth, and rocks, river and oceansides. The artist disappears and mingles with the Other in the fluidity of the ego in a manner similar to the relation between mother (mother goddess / nature) and child (artist). When the trace of the body being washed away by the waves was photographed, it was twice molded by death, loss, shadow and void. (Cahun's body washed away by the waves is one of the predecessors of Mendieta's work.) The feelings of separation, loss, mourning, absence and void accompany the rejection of the body. Like Frida Kahlo who influenced Mendieta, she said that life and death were inseparable and her works were about Eros and death. Thus she expressed a Freudian reference to Eros and Thanatos in her lying in an ancient grave or mother's womb (Posner, 1998:164). Renewal and transcendence coexist with both the fluidity and the denial of the body.

Feminine iconography of mother goddess pointing at the primal elements revives the silenced narratives that were suppressed by the West and regarded outside the History and time. Historical narratives following the logic of a linear time are replaced with myths, pagan religions, transitory symbols and narratives belonging to geography and space. They symbolize death and rebirth like the vanitas of 17th century. Mendieta believed that the old civilizations who were creators of goddess archetype had closer relations with nature and thus they were closer to Truth. She made her *Siluetas* series in the context of anti-colonialism that excluded the goddess cults. Being torn away from earth like the colonized people, she made this alienation a significant part of her identity narrative.

The first of *Siluetas* is *Imagen de Yagul* in which the body of the artist covered with flowers lied in a Zapotec grave. Mendieta mentioned that the body was covered by time and history referring to the Mexican tradition of covering the graves with flowers and candles on Day of the Dead. Castillo – castle made of canes burned in the Holy Week to symbolize Judas - was reflected in *Anima, Silueta de Cohetes*. This Christianized pagan tradition has its roots in the burning of the fields after the harvest and the prayers for fertility. The woman figure with raised arms repeated in Mendieta's works signifies not only the mother goddess, but also the present day Mexican ritualistic candles embellished with flowers. Moreover, Mendieta named many of her works after Cuban and Mexican deities.

Mendieta believed that the main difference between her and male artists that worked on nature was that 'they impose[d] themselves on nature' (Blocker, 2004:18). Her attitude suggests the essentialist metaphors of woman and earth in the Second Wave feminism in praise of the femininity suppressed by monotheist religions. On the other hand, it is hard to say that Mendieta used an emancipatory discourse of many women artists like Mary Beth Edelson who blessed the goddess cult with her naked body.

Mendieta was not a popular artist in New York art market due to the style of her works and ethnic origin. The major criticism about her was narcissism, a typical criticism

addressed to several women artists and not to male artists when they did similar works. For example, Donald Kuspit spoke of her wounded self and its pathological aspects adding that the main reason for her not using other people in her works was her narcissism and her personal problems with her mother. (Blocker, 2004: 16) Blaming her with narcissism only helps to marginalize and feminize her works and disregards the political aspect of them. For instance, using her own body in the bloody and harsh works on rape and violence increased the critical power of the performances and displayed the violence of the gaze and the woman as the passive object of that gaze.

Kuspit also excluded the references to identity, deterritorialization and rituals and related Mendieta's naked body with virginity, sexuality and chastity. In the same manner her relation with nature was interpreted as a way to create a bond with her lost land, so the artistic quality of her works were reduced to her private life and, thus depoliticized. It would also be reductionist to view her works either in the light of feminism and ethnic Other or as subjective self-portraits. On these grounds, one can reconsider Mendieta's art as a new opening to reinterpret body, earth, land and identity so as to reveal the transgressive aspects of her art subverting the binary oppositions and fixed identities.

### **Performative Identity and 'Becoming':**

In this section Mendieta's works will be interpreted in the light of Butler's concept of performative identity subverting the representation of the unified Western subject. Parallel to this idea, it will be demonstrated that we can read Mendieta's works through 'becoming', a critical tool from Deleuze and Guattari. 'Becoming' transforms the man-centered thinking through becoming woman, becoming animal, becoming plant or becoming imperceptible and helps create a fluid identity at the threshold open to passages.

In her early performances Mendieta used woman's body as the locus of violence and gender parody. When we look at the performances of women artists from 1960s to 1990s, we can see that performance was a way to express their reactions against the fiction of femininity projected on their bodies and to reclaim these bodies from the status quo. Just as Rebecca Schneider says:

'(...) performance artists (...) peel back layers of signification that surround their bodies like ghosts at a grave. Peeling at signification, bringing ghosts to visibility, they are interested to expose not an ordinary, true, or redemptive body, but the sedimented layers of signification themselves.'<sup>2</sup>

In addition to transforming her body into a work of art and eliminating the object in art, Mendieta also represented the woman's body in terms of sexuality veiled by gender constructions (*Untitled*, 1972; *Facial Hair Transplant*, 1972) and violence concealed in the gaze (*Untitled- Rape Performance*, 1973; *Sweating Blood*, 1973; *Untitled - Rape Performance*, 1973). Similar to Hannah Wilke and Bruce Nauman presenting their self-portraits in series of different forms, Mendieta photographed herself in various forms with wigs and make-ups making different facial expressions (*Untitled - Facial Cosmetic Variations*, 1972). Unlike Wilke who turned femininity that she mimicked into a pose and masquerade in a playful style, Mendieta didn't only play hide-and-seek with woman's body in different disguises, but also pointed out the violence as a dominant element in these deformations. When she glued the beard cut by a male friend onto her face, or she photographed herself with a moustache in *Untitled* (1972); *Facial Hair Transplant* (1972), she exposed that gender and body are a matter of construction and representation. She mentioned Marcel Duchamp's *Rose Sélavy* and *L.H.O.O.Q.* as the

sources of her works as she problematized gender and power relations. They can also be compared to the drag performances of women artists like Annette Messager and Adrian Piper or to Vito Acconci's performances in which he burned his body hair or hid his genital organs to transform his sexuality. In this context, gender can be seen as a fictive and performative phenomenon in Judith Butler's terms.

According to Butler gender doesn't have a unified nature or essence, but rather it is a 'repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts (...) to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being' (1990:33). Thus it is possible to smash the category of woman. Butler rejects the gender/sex difference and the social constructs such as natural sex or true woman and instead believes that layers of gender form the corporeal styles that create the illusion of a natural sex. So gender as a performative act is neither an individual's choice realized by his/her free will, nor the cultural codes imposed or inscribed on a passive body as it is the case in poststructuralist theories. Instead gendered body can only be performed and doesn't have an original coherent unity. It doesn't have an ontological status prior to the discourses and acts that construe it. Gender is fabricated at the intersection of discourses forming historical, ethnic, class and gender distinctions. It would have different results in different historical conditions, so we can't talk about a fixed and coherent unity. Body can't be considered as a politically neutral ground or a *tabula rasa* that the cultural significations can be inscribed.

Butler maintains that the drag invalidates the beliefs in an understanding of gender as a psychological consistency and presumptions about a congruity between appearance and reality (2005). In this regard when Butler says gender is like a drag, she means that drag 'reveals the imitative structure of gender' (1990:137). Imitating the dominant heterosexual regime rather than an original sex, drag transgresses the status quo. Pointing out the acts constituting the gender proves gender itself to be an imitation. It is possible to see Mendieta's works in which she crossgendered in this perspective. The artist parodied gender and reduced the identification with any sex to a masquerade. It is with parody that the identities can become fluid and open to replacements. Essentialist and naturalist identities and the myth of originality constituted by the dominant discourses can be displaced through mimesis.

According to Blocker, performative element in Mendieta's works can also be found beyond the gender theme (2004). Blocker asserts that Mendieta performed an identity that is not predefined or homogeneous (2004:24-27). Both her works and identity were transformed through her acts disallowing a coherent subjectivity. According to Butler who refers to Nietzsche saying 'there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming; 'doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything' (Butler, 1990:25), there is no inner self pre-existing behind these acts (1990:25). Performative identity is re-enacted each time and diminishes the power of suppressive categories of identity.

Mendieta's performative identity can also be analysed with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'becoming'. According to Deleuze and Guattari, becoming suggests a fluid subjectivity beyond evolution, development, mimesis, identification or transformation. Self is regarded as a constant form of becoming rather than a fixed norm (Colebrook, 2002). 'In fact, the self is only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988:249). In this respect, becoming and fluid subjectivities are proposed: 'Becomings, becomings-animal, becomings-molecular have replaced history, individual or general' (Deleuze ve Guattari, 1988:162). For both men and women becoming woman has a priority among other forms of becomings. The reason

is that men are the dominant majority whereas becoming is minoritarian. Becoming-man is a molar existence as opposed to the molecular existence of becoming woman, child, animal, plant, etc. It is not a matter of emancipation of women or an antagonism between men and women, but the question is 'that of the body they steal from us in order to fabricate opposable organisms' (Deleuze ve Guattari, 1988:276). Becoming-woman proposes multiplicities and lines of flight beyond identity and subjectivity.

Mendieta experienced various ways of becoming-woman while her minoritarian position as an immigrant transgressed the Western understanding of subjectivity and body. It is also possible to see her becoming-animal in Deleuzian sense in some of her performances. In *Bird Transformation* (1972) and *Ocean Bird Washup* (1974) when she covered first another performer, then herself with bird feathers, becoming passed through becoming-animal. Becoming-animal dismantles the construct of human centered identity and it doesn't mean to imitate another being. On the contrary, it expands life with creation and transformation. 'From a majoritarian perspective, becoming-animal requires the loss of language and subjectivity' (Goodchild, 2005:271). In this sense it demolishes the humanist and modernist constructions of identity.

When Mendieta said, "[m]y art is grounded in the belief in one Universal Energy which runs through everything from insect to man, from man to spectre, from spectre to plant, from plant to galaxy' (Viso, 2004:35), she referred to the fluidity of becoming. The body transformed into earth, water and fire is the aesthetic embodiment of becoming in Mendieta's art. An opening and expanding body leaving itself behind is created. It passes from becoming-animal, tree and earth into becoming imperceptible. To conceive an existence beyond the human image brings with it becoming the flow of images. Thereby we can speak of becoming molecular in art. A new kind of perception replaces the fixed subjects perceiving life (Colebrook, 2002). This can be a way of excelling and expanding oneself towards a line of flight. So it is possible to liberate from the concept of an active human being observing a passive world (Colebrook, 2002).

Deleuze and Guattari who are against the objectification of life and the world suggest opening towards life and liberty. They problematize concepts like subject, substance and matter to reconsider them in their relations with other bodies and living creatures in the context of discontinuous organs, processes and flows. Therefore taking human beings, things, animals, etc. on the same ontological plane and rejecting center, hierarchy and organism, they propose an alternative to the man centered categories. Dissolution of the organism doesn't mean to destroy oneself, but open the body to connections, deterritorialization, thresholds and passages.

### **Deterritorialization and the Uncanny:**

It is observed that Mendieta constructed herself repeatedly within a discourse of an exile in her writings and works. Besides being an exile as part of her personal history, her body was represented existing between presence and absence as if exiled from the world in various geographies. There are some examples to her attitude:

"I have been carrying a dialogue between the landscape and the female body (based on my silhouette). I believe this to be a direct result of my having been torn away from my homeland during my adolescence. I am overwhelmed by the feeling of having been cast from the womb (nature)."<sup>3</sup>

"My art is the way I re-establish the bonds that unite me to the Universe. It is a return to the maternal source. Through the making of earth/body works I become one with the earth. It is like being encompassed by nature, an after-image of the original shelter in the womb."<sup>4</sup>

The artist frequently spoke about her need to return to the womb of the earth after losing her original bonds with her motherland and projected this traumatic impact, estrangement and the pain that she called 'wound' on her works. The fragile relationship that she formed with nature endeavoured to compensate her relations with her land and family.

Mendieta was a foreigner who was 'torn between here and else where, now and before' (Kristeva, 1991:10). 'A lost origin, the impossibility to take root, a rummaging memory, the presence in abeyance. The space of the foreigner is a moving train, a plane in flight, the very transition that precludes stopping. As to landmarks, there are none' (Kristeva, 1991:7). Mendieta experienced a constant loss with her images of a lost paradise (motherland) after leaving her family and relatives 'buried in another language'. On the other hand she wasn't only exiled from her language, but at the same time she was freed from all of them and open to lines of flight. In one of her writings she said, 'I have roots that are most unheimlich. I am grown in the deep earth' (Blocker, 2004: 77). Family, house and land connote home, familiar (*heimlich*) while orphanhood and exile refer to the uncanny (*unheimlich*). The uncanny is the reiteration of the suppressed fears, 'the stranger inside' once familiar:

'Confronting the foreigner whom I reject and with whom at the same time identify, I lose my boundaries, I no longer have a container, the memory of experiences when I had been abandoned overwhelm me, I lose my composure. I feel 'lost', 'indistinct', 'hazy''<sup>5</sup>

When Mendieta's body is represented in her art, it is twice uncanny and belongs to the black hole of representation as the body of a foreigner and a woman. Particularly it can be viewed in her works on woman, violence and death. At the same time it is one of the major reasons for her being excluded in the art world.

Mendieta praised the lost values of local cultures and wrote against the colonialism of the West which stripped the local people of their authentic cultures in the name of modernism. According to Mendieta who said, 'today the Black Venus has become a legendary symbol against slavery. She represents the affirmation of a free and natural being who refused to be colonized' (Blocker, 2004: 114), the land that she was exiled from had already lost its own origins as a result of colonialism. The people, split between a lost identity and an imposed one, live in a crack of losing an essential unity, and consequently, they are open to hybridity and differences. In this sense, deterritorialization and hybridity of exiled people deconstruct the representation of Other as a victim.

Mendieta saying, '[t]here is no original past to redeem; there is the void, the orphanhood, the unbaptised earth of the beginning, the time that from within the earth looks upon us. There is above all the search for origin' (Blocker, 2004:34), didn't exclude the essentialist connotation of 'the search for origin' and referred to a search, rather than the existence of such an origin (Blocker, 2004:34). This approach defines identity in terms of exile and orphanhood and takes one to an endless estrangement. 'The unbaptised earth' points to a presence that is neither colonized, nor defined by language, religion and 'civilization':

'To unbaptize the earth is to unmark it, that is to make it disappear from the binary structures that normally mark it as feminine, primitive, or underdeveloped in a pejorative sense. It is a deconstructionist move that undoes the very hierarchies by which naming is organized. To unbaptize is to reveal the name as a cinder.'<sup>6</sup>

In this way the borders between the traditional and the modern, prehistory and history are problematized.

Mendieta's works related to earth include a passage, disappearance and an interspace like Deleuze and Guattari's 'intermezzo', exemplify deterritorialization. At this point we should explain deterritorialization according to Deleuze and Guattari. This concept cannot be separated from 'becoming' and subaltern minor and it implies a possibility of a micropolitical movement against the power. There cannot be any central subjectivities in deterritorialization. Instead we can talk about certain connections and productions that aren't goal directed (Colebrook, 2002:55). Deterritorialization which means having neither a home nor a land implies becoming and lines of flight, rather than being. Deleuze and Guattari see lines of flight as ruptures and interruptions emerging with differences and changes (1988). Deterritorialization also excludes any ideas of origin. Life is not homogeneous, but is a network of singularities (Colebrook, 2002:58).

'[T]he earth constantly carries out a movement of deterritorialization on the spot, by which it goes beyond any territory: it is deterritorializing and deterritorialized. It merges with the movement of those who leave their territory en masse, with crayfish that set off walking in file at the bottom of the water, with pilgrims or knights who rides a celestial line of flight. (...) Movements of deterritorialization are inseparable from the territories that open onto elsewhere; and the process of reterritorialization is inseparable from the earth which restores territories.'<sup>7</sup>

The disappearing trace of Mendieta's body points to the disappearance of the land and a constant deterritorialization. Her art is shaped by the reiteration of acts beyond any essentialist, coherent and unified identity. It is impossible to speak of one definition or essence of being an exile. The deterritorialized exile transforms him/herself and the discourses about exile in a crevice-like presence. Although he/she bears a wound of a lost land, he/she rejects any origins. Influenced by Octavia Paz, Mendieta described solitude as 'a form of orphanhood, an obscure awareness that we have been torn from the All, and an ardent search: a flight and a return, an effort to re-establish the bonds that unite us with the universe' (Blocker, 2004:58).

Mendieta, who suggested a different position beyond a coherent cultural identity and a traditional idea of origin, compared her works to an African tradition. In Africa the wives of Kimberley villagers coming from other tribes used to bring a sack of earth from their original villages. According to Irit Rogoff this earth provides a passage between their new and old houses (Rogoff, 2000:124) and she interpretes this passage in the context of deterritorialization and reterritorialization of Deleuze and Guattari. Rogoff observes Mendieta's deterritorialization in her living in different cities, cultural fragmentation, working with different materials far from New York art market, her merging avant-garde feminism of 1970s with Third World feminism. 'Reterritorialization' places positionality in the place of a singular, linear and unified self. It supports a political identity that emphasizes difference of margin and center, and priority of the minoritarian when race, class and gender are the issues. Rogoff describes Mendieta's reterritorialization as an alternative cultural formation and reconstruction of a collective history by a different race and gender. Her works which focus on matter as opposed to outlines and classical understanding of space are also deterritorialized in the countryside 'in a personified geography' (Rogoff, 2000). These transitory works whose borders became washed away also erased the separation between the places where works of art were made and displayed.

Mendieta on the side of the minoritarian in Deleuzian sense and open to possibilities destroyed the borders and fabricated her spatial and corporeal discourse. She was also on the side of passages and immigrations as a nomad travelling in different geographies

extending between Cuba, Iowa, Mexico, New York and Rome. Deleuze and Guattari emphasized being minor rather than minority because the minorities (like Jews or Gypsies) reterritorialize themselves unlike the deterritorialized minor. Deterritorialization 'is the movement by which one leaves a territory. It is the operation of the line of flight' (Deleuze ve Guattari, 1988:508). Nomad is deterritorialized while migrant is reterritorialized. Migrant goes from one point to the other while nomad just goes and moves constantly: 'It is the earth that deterritorializes itself, in a way that provides the nomad with a territory. The land ceases to be land, tending to become simply ground (sol) or support' (Deleuze ve Guattari, 1988:380-381). So for Mendieta, too U.S.A. wasn't a new land, but a passage which she deserted for other lands (Mexico, Cuba, Italy). On the other hand, her art still bears the cultural imprint of her motherland, but for the artist it resulted in a continuous form of loss and not a claim of the original culture.

'We are also of a mind to believe that everything commingles in these intense becomings, passages, and migrations-all this drift that ascends and descends the flows of time: countries, races, families, parental appellations, geographical and historical designations (...) The first things to be distributed on the body without organs are races, cultures, and their gods. (...) The full body doesn't represent anything at all. On the contrary, the races and cultures designate regions on this body-that is, zones of intensities, fields of potentials. (...) We pass from one field to another by crossing thresholds: we never stop migrating, we become other individuals as well as other sexes, and departing becomes as easy as being born or dying.'<sup>8</sup>

In this context Deleuze ve Guattari gives Artaud's journey to Mexico as an example. Although Mendieta's first migration was not voluntary, her other departures reveals a similar search.

Mendieta's deterritorialization as a form of becoming beyond her being a nomad, an exile or a foreigner has a significance in terms of the transgressive power of her art. The artist's body can be seen as the flow and becoming, not as a mere metaphor. Land, woman and identification of land and woman are all discursive constructs and each of them needs to be deterritorialized in the same way that language and body are deterritorialized. Mendieta's art deterritorializes land, woman, language, body and art, and consequently has the power to create lines of flight. Deleuze's understanding of deterritorializing art stresses the power to create lines of flight and transform the world, rather than represent it in a picture.

On the other hand, reterritorialization fabricates a subject at the origin of language. For example, the women's discourse which is trapped in the language and image of woman that it itself construed would no longer be minoritarian, but majoritarian. Minoritarian excludes any given essentialist identity (Colebrook, 2002). Peggy Phelan mentions that subaltern groups can be imprisoned in the social representation of themselves in their struggle to be visible. Thus they risk reinforcing the dominant ideologies. Although performance doesn't have a political visibility, it still has a potential for 'representation without reproduction' (Blocker, 2004:25). Being exile is also a form of becoming that is created like a performance.

## **Conclusion:**

In this paper, the works of a woman artist who got inspiration from nature, body and myths have been analysed in the light of some philosophical concepts. Butler's approach to gender was useful to understand Mendieta's drag performances. Blocker's interpretation of Butler's performative identity was reconsidered with a new look through the glasses of Deleuze and Guattari's becoming (becoming minor/

molecular/woman/animal/plant). The relation between deterritorialization, becoming, and lines of flight in Mendieta's art helped us expose the liberating elements. Deviating from Rogoff's approach to deterritorialization in a cultural and historical perspective, deterritorialization was taken to a conceptual and existential level as the concepts of body, woman and land were also deterritorialized. In addition, Mendieta's exile was analysed with Kristeva's understanding of foreigner and the uncanny. It was demonstrated how the uncanny can lead to freedom using Deleuzian terminology of line of flight and becoming. As a result, besides going beyond Blocker's and Rogoff's analyses, we displayed how Mendieta's works transformed the idea of a fixed and coherent identity of the West in the light of Kristeva, Deleuze and Guattari. It is a typical question of hybridity forming a bridge between cultures; however, identity itself can be deterritorialized in a continuous process of nomadhood. In that respect, even today Mendieta sets a good example.

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<sup>1</sup> Women's Action Coalition protested against the exclusion of women artists, Mendieta in particular while her husband Carl Andre's Works were on display at the exhibition in the new SoHo Guggenheim asking '¿Dónde está Ana Mendieta?'

<sup>2</sup> SCHNEIDER, Rebecca, (1997), *The Explicit Body In Performance*, Routledge, London, New York, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> VISO, M. Olga, (Ed.), (2004), *Ana Mendieta – Earth Body, Sculpture and Performance, 1972-1985*, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden Smithsonian Institution & Hatje Cantz Publishers, Washington D.C., p. 47.

<sup>4</sup> BLOCKER, Jane, (2004), *Where Is Ana Mendieta? Identity, Performativity, and Exile*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, p. 57.

<sup>5</sup> KRISTEVA, Julia, (1991), *Strangers to Ourselves*, (Trans.: L. S. Roudiez), Columbia University Press, New York, p. 187.

<sup>6</sup> BLOCKER, Jane, (2004), *Where Is Ana Mendieta? Identity, Performativity, and Exile*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, p. 35.

<sup>7</sup> DELEUZE, Gilles ve GUATTARI, Félix, (1994), *What is Philosophy?*, (Trans.: Tomlinson&Burchell), Columbia University Press, New York, p. 85-86.

<sup>8</sup> DELEUZE, Gilles ve GUATTARI, Felix, (1999), *Anti-Oedipus – Capitalism And Schizophrenia*, (Trans.: R. Hurley, M. Seem, H. R. Lane), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, p. 84-85.