

PILAV: A MODEST ATTEMPT TO REPRESENT MALE CIRCUMCISION
TRADITIONS IN TURKEY VIA ANIMATION

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Submitted to the Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Sabancı University
Fall 2010

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TRADITIONS IN TURKEY VIA ANIMATION

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DATE OF APPROVAL:

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ABSTRACT

PILAV: A MODEST ATTEMPT TO REPRESENT MALE CIRCUMCISION TRADITIONS IN TURKEY VIA ANIMATION

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Visual Arts and Communication Design, M.A., Thesis, 2011

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Keywords: Circumcision, 3-D Animation, Fear of Circumcision, Uncanny

The project regarding this thesis is an attempt to render different aspects of Turkish circumcision traditions as much as possible. And while representing these customs, it also aims to depict the psychological effects of circumcision on a child and the fear of circumcision by using 3D and 2D computer animation.

Thesis first tries to explain the history of male circumcision by answering questions such as, when and how it had originated, what are the different traditions and why is it still being performed, to provide a basis for circumcision traditions in Turkey. In addition to history of circumcision, psychological effects of circumcision on a child will also be discussed. Also to be able to establish a better understanding on ways of representing fear and horror in animation, the place of horror genre in mainstream animation is going to be examined. At last, paper will try to relate discussion on representation of horror in animation and discussion on psychological effects of circumcision, by exploring the short animation *Pilav*.

ÖZET

PİLAV: TÜRKİYE'DEKİ SÜNNET GELENEKLERİNİ ANİMASYON YOLUYLA BETİMLEME DENEMESİ

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Görsel Sanatlar ve Görsel İletişim Tasarım, M.A., Tez, 2011

Tez Danışmanı: Yoong Wah Alex Wong

Keywords: Sünnet, 3-B Animasyon, Sünnet Korkusu, Tekinsiz

Bu tez, ilk olarak, Türk Sünnet Geleneklerinin daha iyi anlaşılabilmesini ve anlatılabilmesine destek sağlamak için, erkek sünnetinin tarihini, ne zaman ve hangi sebeplerle ortaya çıktığını, tarih boyunca kaydedilmiş farklı sünnet geleneklerini ve günümüzde erkeklerin neden hala sünnet olduklarını açıklar. Sünnetin tarihi hakkındaki bilgilendirmeye ek olarak, sünnet operasyonunun erkek çocuklar üzerindeki psikolojik etkilerini de anlatır. Ayrıca, animasyon sinemasında korkunun nasıl aktarıldığına dair bir temel oluşturmak için, korku janrının anaakım animasyon sineması içerisindeki yerini inceler. Son olarak, animasyon sinemasında korku ve sünnet korkusu konularını, teze eşlik eden Pilav isimli kısa animasyon üzerinden, birbirleri ile ilişkilendirerek irdeler.

Teze eşlik etmekte olan proje, Türk sünnet geleneklerini farklı yönleriyle anlatmaya çalışan kısa bir animasyondur. Bu proje, sünnet adetlerini olabildiği kadar çok yönlü bir şekilde aktarmaya çalışmanın yanında, sünnet ameliyatının çocuklar üzerindeki psikolojik etkisini ve sünnet korkusunu da iki ve üç boyutlu bilgisayar animasyonunu kullanarak betimlemeye çalışır.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my thesis advisor Yoong Wah Alex Wong for his endless support and belief in this project. Thanks to Wieslaw Zaremba and Onur Yazıcıgil for their feedbacks.

And Neslihan Koyuncu, Aslı Özpehlivan, Sarp Süerdaş, Cihan Kılıçcıođlu and Gizem Ekiz should not be forgotten, without them this project wouldn't even exist.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Male circumcision is a longstanding tradition, with documented evidences dating back to 4.000 B.C., Ancient Egypt.¹ And that tradition is still being carried on at different regions of the world according to different cultural, religious and medical reasons. The varying reasons bring with them, different ways of initiating circumcision. Distinct rituals accompanying circumcision has been evolved during its long history, some of them had been abandoned, and some of them are still being practiced.

In Turkey circumcision is an eminent custom. It takes its roots from Islamic Traditions, but in time it evolved into a ritual that acts as a first step of being adult for a boy that grows up in Turkey. And such a tradition evolved in generations has many aspects to be represented.

In this thesis first I tried to tell the history of circumcision by answering questions such as, when and how it had originated, what are the different traditions and why is it still being performed. In addition to history of circumcision, I also wanted to delve in to psychological effects of circumcision. Since male circumcision is an operation that is practiced on phallus, it always has the high possibility of causing psychological problems and traumas when it is performed on a child. And Turkey with its long line of circumcision traditions is one of the rare places that circumcision is still being performed when a child is at phallic stage.²

¹ W.D. Dunsmuir and E.M. Gordon, "The history of circumcision," BJU International 83.Suppl. 1 (1999): 1.

² Gökçe Cansever, "Psychological Effects of Circumcision," British Journal of Medical psychology 38 (1965): 323.

In the project accompanying the thesis, while trying to refer to as many aspects of Turkish circumcision traditions as possible, I also wanted to depict the psychological effects of circumcision. In order to do so I researched the representation of horror in mainstream animated film. And tried to apply the methods I have acquainted myself with during the research part, to the animation *Pilav*.

Chapter 2. History of Male Circumcision

2.1 Origin of Male Circumcision

Male circumcision is the amputation of the foreskin of penis. A certain opinion about the origin of male circumcision doesn't exist. Although it is widely accepted by anthropologists that circumcision was being performed regularly around 15.000 B.C., in Stone Age, the belief that circumcision had originated independently in unrelated societies and geographical locations is legitimate as well.^{3 4} As a matter of fact, when Columbus discovered "New World" it is found out that many of the inhabitants were circumcised. Besides, other evidences of circumcision were uncovered through the world in regions such as Australia, New Guinea, Middle East and Africa.⁵ There are also several communities that lived in same locations but had different judgments on circumcision, which confirms the latter theory for origination of male circumcision. For instance, vast amount of American Indian tribes didn't practice circumcision according to the belief of the sacred body. Nevertheless, there are few American Indian tribes that practiced circumcision. And Spanish conquerors that arrived in America thought that these circumcised American Indian tribes belonged to a progeny of a lost tribe of ancient Israel. Another example of early divergences on circumcision could also be seen in Sudan, where the Dinka natives that live in the west part of the country practiced circumcision while the Dinka natives that live in the eastern part did not.⁶ It is not clear why some communities adopted circumcision while others didn't and since there is no

³ W.D. Dunsmuir and E.M. Gordon, "The history of circumcision," BJU International 83.Suppl. 1 (1999): 1.

⁴ Donald R. Morse, "Male Circumcision: A Cultural and Religious History, and Questionnaire Study," The Journal of Religion and Psychical Research (2002): 183

⁵ Nicola Zampieri, Emanuela Pianezzola and Cecilia Zampieri, "Male circumcision through the ages: the role of tradition," Acta Pædiatrica 97 (2008): 1305.

⁶ Donald R. Morse, "Male Circumcision: A Cultural and Religious History, and Questionnaire Study," The Journal of Religion and Psychical Research (2002): 184.

documented evidence from prehistoric ages, it is not possible to conceive the origins of early circumcision.

In archeological excavations that had been conducted, male human mummies with circumcised penises were discovered that dates back to 4000 B.C.. In addition to these, the earliest documented evidences of circumcision were discovered in Egypt too.⁷ A 6th Dynasty (2345 – 2181 B.C.) tomb relief, which had been found in Sakkara, clearly depicts the insights of the circumcision rituals in Ancient Egypt. (Figure-1)

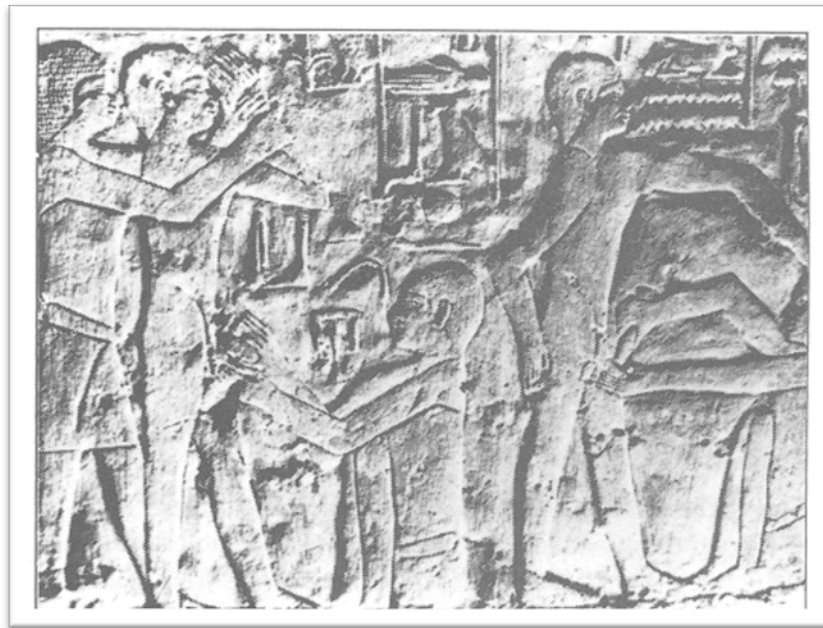


Figure 1 – 6th dynasty tomb relief depicting circumcision Source: nocirc.org

6th Dynasty artwork shows how the surgery was being performed explicitly. There are two male figures, which are in their puberty and being circumcised. The priest on the right side can be seen with a knife in his right hand while holding the penis of the boy in his left hand. The young male standing in front of the priest is resting his right hand on the head of the priest. The priest on the left is holding a circular object in his right hand, which he uses to remove the foreskin of the young male on the left and again he holds the penis of the young male in his left hand. According to Larue priest tells the assistant to hold the boy and not let him faint, from which it can be understood that there is lots of pain inflicted during the primitive surgery. Assistant of the priest who

⁷ W.D. Dunsmuir and E.M. Gordon, "The history of circumcision," BJU International 83.Suppl. 1 (1999): 1.

firmly holds the young boy replies to priest "I will do as your request."⁸ Another one of the earliest written evidences from 6th Dynasty is by an Egyptian whose name is Uha. Uha describes his experience as below:

"When I was circumcised, together with one hundred and twenty men...there was none there of who hit out, there was none thereof who was hit, and there was none thereof who scratched and there was none thereof who was scratched."⁹

This written piece unveils a mass circumcision ritual and gives hints to a possible use of a kind of anesthesia. Uha's writings point out that men that were being circumcised didn't show any physical reactions to pain, contrary to the depiction of young male being held to keep him from fainting and trembling during circumcision because of the inflicted pain.¹⁰ However, not all of the Egyptian community was practitioners of circumcision. X-rays of 18th Dynasty (16th Century B.C.) Pharaoh Ahomse's mummies unveil that he was not circumcised.¹¹ From these early discoveries it could be understood that circumcision was not a necessity to become an approved member of the society. It has also been understood that circumcision was more common among the upper society and it probably is a ritual for celebrating puberty.¹²

It is almost definite that, these ancient societies were not practicing circumcision because of medical reasons. There are several distinct theories that try to explain why these people adopted circumcision. One of the possible reasons of origination of circumcision is the concept of sacrifice. Although sacrificing humans to the god used to be common in ancient communities, some of them replaced these customs with sacrificing animals and some others with shedding their own blood or with damaging their own bodies.¹³ The choice of the amputation of the foreskin as a sacrifice may have been a trivial one. First, the object being sacrificed to the god must be a valuable one

⁸ Gerald A. Larue, "Religious Traditions and Circumcision," The Truthseeker (1989): 4

⁹ John Wilson, Circumcision in Egypt, ed. James F. Pritchard (Princeton University Press, 1950).

¹⁰ Donald R. Morse, "Male Circumcision: A Cultural and Religious History, and Questionnaire Study," The Journal of Religion and Psychical Research (2002): 184.

¹¹ Gerald A. Larue, "Religious Traditions and Circumcision," The Truthseeker (1989): 5.

¹² Donald R. Morse, "Male Circumcision: A Cultural and Religious History, and Questionnaire Study," The Journal of Religion and Psychical Research (2002): 185.

¹³ *Ibid*, 186.

and since penis is directly related with fertilization, prepuce must have been an appropriate offering. In addition, blood shedding is a prominent part of the ritual of sacrificing. And with primitive tools and minimal medical knowledge, initiation of circumcision was a bloody operation in those times. Also, the amputation of prepuce doesn't effect the males ability to function normally in the society he belongs but he would carry that irreparable mark of sacrifice with him all his life.¹⁴ Another significant hypothesis is that some of the ancient societies started practicing circumcision due to phimosis. Phimosis is the problem of retraction of the prepuce and it hampers fertilization in severe cases. But Hastings indicate that, some of the ancient tribes that adopted circumcision didn't know that conceiving a baby had any relation with sexual intercourse.¹⁵ However phimosis doesn't only effect fertilization. Because of the prepuces inability to retract while the penis is erected there could be severe pain and complications in urination that could cause infections.¹⁶ It is also proposed that a person in one of these primitive communities who had a problematic prepuce decided to remove his own to eliminate the unpleasant effects. And with the successful result he decided to perform the procedure on his own kin as a precaution. Probably, the outcome of the procedure spread around the society, and it became a tradition within the following generations. The obstruction caused by phimosis comes to attention of the person the most while having sexual intercourse or masturbating. This could be an explanation why these rituals were initiated as a passage of being a man. Usually a male doesn't have sexual intercourse or masturbate before puberty, it is logical to initiate these rituals around puberty. And it has been found out that some of the primitive tribes that were practicing circumcision were following this way of thinking.¹⁷

Customs that pertain to uncharted parts of history usually lose their original functions while being passed to the next generations. But the rituals that are embedded to these customs and the custom itself are strongly conserved without the need for its original function. Even though there may be many theories that had been developed

¹⁴ John P. Warren and Jim Bigelow, "The Case Against Circumcision," British Journal of Sexual Medicine (1994): 6.

¹⁵ James Hastings, ed., Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. 111 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1971) 666.

¹⁶ Donald R. Morse, "Male Circumcision: A Cultural and Religious History, and Questionnaire Study," The Journal of Religion and Psychical Research (2002): 186.

¹⁷ James Hastings, ed., Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. 111 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1971) 662.

about, determining the origin of a tradition (such as circumcision) is still a considerably complicated thing to do. Specially while there are no documented evidences about the actual emergence.¹⁸

2.2. Reasons for the Practice of Male Circumcision Today

2.2.1. Religious Reasons

Approximately, one-third of male population in the world is circumcised.¹⁹ And being one of the most practiced operations in modern day surgery, circumcision has both religious reasons that date back to born of Judaism, and medical justifications, which are comparatively recent. Circumcision still has a fundamental part in both Jewish and Islam cultures. In the first book of *Torah*, *Genesis*, it is explained that, God appeared to Abraham (then known Abram) who was ninety-nine years old and offered him:

“Walk in My ways and be blameless. I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will make you exceedingly numerous. As for Me, this is My covenant with you: You shall be the father of a multitude of nations. And you shall no longer be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I make you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fertile, and make nations of you; and kings shall come forth from you...I assign the land you sojourn in to you and your offspring to come, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting holding. I will be their God.” (Genesis, 17:4-8)

But after the promising, God commands Abraham to circumcise himself, every male in his house and he also commands him to pass on this covenant to his descendants as it is stated in the *Genesis* as below:

“Such shall be the covenant between Me and you and your offspring to follow which you shall keep: every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and that shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. And throughout the generations every male among you shall be circumcised at the age of eight days. Thus shall My covenant be marked in your flesh as an everlasting pact. And if any male who is uncircumcised fails to circumcise the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his kin; he has broken My covenant.” (Genesis, 17:10-14)

¹⁸ Nicola Zampieri, Emanuela Pianezzola and Cecilia Zampieri, "Male circumcision through the ages: the role of tradition," *Acta Pædiatrica* 97 (2008): 1305.

¹⁹ Figen Şahin, "Attitudes and practices regarding circumcision in Turkey," *Child: Care, Health and Development* 29.4 (2003): 275.

Morse indicates in his article, the reason for the choice of circumcision as the covenant between Abraham's descendants and God is because of the duty of the penis. Penis is the organ, which will help the spawning of the next of kin, and these eternally marked penises will metaphorically create all the descendants of Abraham.²⁰ There are no medical reasons for the practice of circumcision in these excerpts from *Genesis*, but there is also no need to be. Circumcision is clearly depicted as a commandment that has its place in the Jewish Law; therefore no cultural or medical debate could be able to convince a religious Jewish person to question the medical aspects of the operation. It is a known fact that many times in the history, Jews were compelled to stop circumcising their sons but they rejected despite of extreme results. For instance, in ancient Greece and Rome, both the son and the father who decided to have his son circumcised would face a death penalty.

However, it is not only the pious Jews that fulfill the covenant between them and their God. According to Glass, even the "most unobservant" Jews have their sons circumcised. Being born to a Jewish mother is enough for a child to be counted as a Jew according to Jewish Law but obviously it is not. While a female child is accepted as a Jew as soon as she is born, a male child is not regarded as a Jew until he is circumcised. And almost all Jews, religious or not, had their male children circumcised to make him a "complete" Jew according to the Jewish folklore.²¹

²⁰ Donald R. Morse, "Male Circumcision: A Cultural and Religious History, and Questionnaire Study," The Journal of Religion and Psychological Research (2002): 186-187.

²¹ J.M. Glass, "Religious circumcision: a Jewish view," BJU International 83 (1999): 18.



Figure 2 - The covenant between the men and God: Circumcision ²²

As it is in Judaism, holy book is not the only element that determines how a Muslim should behave too. *Sharia* is the holy law of Islam and interaction with other people, personal life and religious affairs shall all be governed according to *Sharia*. This divine law constitutes of three elements; Qur'an, traditions of Prophet Mohammed (*sunnah*) and sayings of Prophet Mohammed (*hadith*). It is known that Qur'an does not introduce circumcision to Muslims since there is no reference to circumcision in the divine book. But still, circumcision is an important part of Islamic tradition because Prophet Mohammed was circumcised (which places circumcision to the state of being a *sunnah*). In one of his *hadiths* he supposedly explains the concept of Fitra as below:

“Five are the acts quite akin to the Fitra, or five are the acts of Fitra: circumcision, shaving the pubes, cutting the nails, plucking the hair under the armpits and clipping the moustache.” (Abu Hurairah)

Fitra is a set of practices that is believed to help a human to revert to or maintain the purity that is bestowed by God, while he/she was born.²³ So, in addition to many other things, a devoted Muslim needs to be circumcised and should have his son

²² W.D. Dunsmuir and E.M. Gordon, “The history of circumcision,” BJU International 83.Suppl. 1 (1999): 1.

²³ Donald R. Morse, "Male Circumcision: A Cultural and Religious History, and Questionnaire Study," The Journal of Religion and Psychical Research (2002): 198.

circumcised to be “purer”. Although circumcision is considered mandatory by only one (*Shafite*) of the six different schools of thought of Islam (*Hanafite, Jafarite, Malikite, Hanbalite, Zaidite*) most of the Muslims continues practicing circumcision today. Unlike Judaism, a male can be uncircumcised but can still be considered a Muslim. It is more like a tradition or an “external symbol” of being a member of an Islamic society, practiced for sake of cleanliness or for living in the ways of Mohammed and Abraham.²⁴

2.2.2. Medical Reasons

Medical practice of circumcision inconsequential to any religious or cultural reasons is very recent when compared to Jewish and Muslim customs. Explanations of adult circumcision in medical textbooks as a cure for phimosis started to appear in early 19th century. Usage of a scalpel to amputate the foreskin as a treatment in adults for phimosis was explained by two surgeons (Abernethy and Bale) in 1828 and 1833. But in contradiction to contemporary viewpoint, circumcision was not described as a simple surgery. Practice of circumcision on infants as a precaution for phimosis was not mentioned yet too. Starting from mid 19th century, circumcision started to be proposed as a cure for some other illnesses and sexual problems. In 1878 it was offered by Curling as a treatment for impotence for men who had phimosis. Walsham also added excess masturbation and venereal disease in 1907. Later by 1915 epilepsy, night terrors, nocturnal enuresis (inability to control urination) and abruptly even homosexuality were in the medical textbooks under the subject of “phimotic ills”.²⁵

But a particularly interesting case of medical practice of circumcision occurred in 1870 in America and it completely changed the medical debate on circumcision. At the time Lewis A. Sayre was one of America’s leading orthopedic surgeons who was also a well-known academic. He was invited by a friend to operate on a young male who as Gollaher quotes Sayre, was “a most beautiful little boy of five years of age, but exceedingly white and delicate in his appearance, unable to walk without assistance or

²⁴ S.A.H. Rizvi, et al., "Religious circumcision: a Muslim view," BJU International 83.Suppl. 1 (1999): 14.

²⁵ W.D. Dunsmuir and E.M. Gordon, "The history of circumcision," BJU International 83.Suppl. 1 (1999): 4.

stand erect, his knees being flexed at about an angle of 45 degrees.”²⁶ After examining the child, Sayre found out that a paralyzed muscle caused the problems but the reason for this paralysis was obscure. After further examinations, by luck, he had learned that the child had a discomfort while sleeping caused by his prepuce. He circumcised the child and in a couple of days the child was miraculously cured. After operating circumcision on several different male child with similar symptoms he legitimized his prognosis as “Many of the cases of irritable children, with restless sleep, and bad digestion, which are often attributed to worms, is [sic] solely due to the irritation of the nervous system caused by an adherent or constricted prepuce”.²⁷ The thing that Sayre had changed about circumcision was defining phimosis as a systemic disease rather than a local one, which doesn’t only affect the penis itself but causes a nervous discomfort which might create indistinct, puzzling symptoms in whole body. With Sayre’s discoveries, circumcision started to be adopted in USA as a neonatal preemptive surgery that will eliminate the probability of the infant having future irritations on nervous system that will be caused by the prepuce.²⁸ Although debate on infant circumcision continued, a century later, by 1971, 90 percent of the males in America was circumcised which is very significant while compared to percentage in the world, which was 25 percent.²⁹

2.3. Rituals

One of the most fundamental elements of religious or cultural circumcisions is how the custom is initiated. Most of the societies that practiced circumcision had their own varying reasons for it. And each distinct reason merging with the societies culture itself had shaped how the rituals of circumcision were conducted in great diversity. Judaism and Islam are the two most populated societies that practice circumcision and they both have their own rituals or ceremonies. Jewish ritual has strict rules that are governed by Jewish Law, how and when circumcision should done is explicitly

²⁶ David L. Gollaher, "From Ritual to Science: The Medical Transformation of Circumcision in America," *Journal of Social History* 28.1 (1994): 6.

²⁷ Ibid, 7.

²⁸ David L. Gollaher, “From Ritual to Science: The Medical Transformation of Circumcision in America,” *Journal of Social History* 28.1 (1994): 8.

²⁹ Donald R. Morse, "Male Circumcision: A Cultural and Religious History, and Questionnaire Study," *The Journal of Religion and Psychical Research* (2002): 199.

explained in *Talmud* (written version of Judaism's oral law, interpretations of Hebrew Bible).³⁰ But in Islam circumcision is not a direct commandment from God in Islam, it is the tradition of Prophet Mohammed. Probably this is the reason why circumcision rituals in Islam differ from region to region unlike Judaism. In this chapter Jewish ritual of circumcision *Brit Milah*, some selected examples of Muslim circumcision rituals and the circumcision ceremonies in Turkey will be examined.

2.3.1 Judaism

As stated before, all rules of circumcision has been included in *Talmud* and circumcision must be done according to strict rules described in it. Circumcision, as indicated in the covenant between Abraham and God, must be performed at the age of eight days. This is for having at least one Saturday, between the birth of the child and the circumcision. Saturday is *Sabbath*. In Jewish tradition, Sabbath is the most divine day of the week. And only after experiencing a *Sabbath* an infant will be considered prepared to embrace "the yet Greater holiness embodied in Brit Milah".³¹

The responsibility of having the infant circumcised belongs to his father and he is also the one that should perform the surgery on the infant himself. If he doesn't have the sufficient training - which is usually the case today -, he needs to assign a *mohel* (a Jewish person specially trained to perform circumcision) to circumcise the son. If a father chooses not to circumcise his son, the responsibility will be passed on to the local religious authority, if still not circumcised a Jewish male would be responsible for his own circumcision at the age of 13 (the age for being accepted as a man, according to Jewish Law).³²

One or two days before the eighth day, mohel will visit the child to see if he is healthy enough to undergo the operation. If the child is healthy, Brit Milah will occur on the eighth day. Baby will be brought in to the place where the circumcision is going

³⁰ J.M. Glass, "Religious circumcision: a Jewish view," *BJU International* 83 (1999): 18.

³¹ Donald R. Morse, "Male Circumcision: A Cultural and Religious History, and Questionnaire Study," *The Journal of Religion and Psychological Research* (2002): 187.

³² J.M. Glass, "Religious circumcision: a Jewish view," *BJU International* 83 (1999): 18.

to take place. A male who doesn't have a son brings and hands the son to the father, father passes the baby to the mohel and he passes the infant to the *Sandek*. Sandek is the man who is going to hold the child during circumcision and usually is one of the grandparents. Sandek holds the child during entire operation appropriately as he was taught by mohel before the operation. The baby first gets stripped of his clothes and then the mohel will initiate the circumcision using contemporary medical tools. Several prayers are said before and after the circumcision.³³



Figure 3 – an old circumcision set of a *mohel*

Source:<http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Projects/Reln91/Blood/Judaism/circumcision/circumcisiontk.htm>

³³ Ibid, 19.



Figure 4 - a modern set of tools of a mohel³⁴

Mohelim are well trained and the number of complications that occur during circumcision done by a mohel is very low. Although the tools and technique haven't changed much over the generations, a mohel circumcision commonly produces remarkably successful results.³⁵ (Figure 3,4)

2.3.2 Islam and Turkey

Circumcision is not mentioned in Qur'an but almost all Muslims have their sons circumcised according to the tradition of Prophet Mohammed. Since there are no descriptive directions as there are in Judaism, practice of circumcision varies from one Islamic community to other significantly.

Unlike Judaism, there isn't a religiously determined age but it is known that Mohammed advised it to take place when the child is at an early age. Al-Mawardi, an important Muslim jurist and Qur'anic interpreter, indicated that the appropriate age is the seventh day after birth, however depending on the well being of the child the circumcision could be initiated until the child is 7 years old.³⁶ But this is not obligatory and depending on the country or regional culture the age of circumcision diversify. For

³⁴ J.M. Glass, "Religious circumcision: a Jewish view," BJU International 83 (1999): 19.

³⁵ Ibid, 21.

³⁶ S.A.H. Rizvi, et al., "Religious circumcision: a Muslim view," BJU International 83.Suppl. 1 (1999): 14.

instance, a study about circumcision that was made on 100 males with average age of 36.4 in Turkey revealed interesting results about the age at which circumcision is carried out. 15 of these males were circumcised while they were infants, 5 of them were above 18, 80 of them were between 1 and 18. And 51 of these 85 people were 7 years old or younger when they were circumcised and the average age for circumcision was 7.6.³⁷ Another example with varying ages is from Pakistan. Rizvi states that, the common practice in Pakistan is to circumcise the newly born child in hospital. If he is not circumcised while an infant, he will most probably be circumcised while he is between the ages of 3-7. But if the child is from countryside, he may be circumcised when he is aged 5-7 and sometimes even after he reaches adolescence.³⁸ The person who performs the operation may be a traditional circumciser from a family of circumcisers, a doctor or a medical technician and in rural areas he may even be the town barber who is adept at using a razor. This mostly depends on the wealth of the family of the child. As an example, in the end of 1990's, while in opulent countries such as Iran, the United Arab Emirates or Saudi Arabia only 15 percent of circumcisions were performed by traditional circumcisers. In a comparatively less wealthy country such as Pakistan the rate of circumcisions performed by traditional circumcisers was around 90 percent.³⁸

In most of the Muslim countries, unless the circumcised child is an infant, there will be a celebration accompanying the circumcision. This celebration may be a kind of feast, a ceremony, sometimes both and sometimes it may even evolve into a glorious festive. Circumcision is commonly carried out during the ceremony. And the ceremony itself is a tradition that originated as a method to palliate the pain of the circumcised child and to distract him.³⁸ But nowadays, for example in Turkey, sometimes these ceremonies take place even after the child is circumcised and completely recovered, just for the sake of the celebration. Importance of celebration is consequential to the importance of circumcision. Circumcision is still considered as a major step in life of the child by families. Relatives and guests are invited to a festive, which can be as pompous as a wedding ceremony. Circumcised child wears a crown-like hat with

³⁷ Ayhan Verit, et al., "A Limited Study on the Perception and Change in Attitude about Circumcision among Health Care Professionals and Their Male Family Members," *Urologia Intertionalis* 69 (2002): 303.

³⁸ S.A.H. Rizvi, et al., "Religious circumcision: a Muslim view," *BJU International* 83.Suppl. 1 (1999): 14.

feathers on it and wears a cape and he usually carries a scepter. With an outfit like this he bears a striking resemblance to the Ottoman princes.³⁹



Figure 5 - two Ottoman princes that are going to be circumcised
Source: muslimheritage.com



Figure 6 - two Turkish boys that are going to be circumcised with their costumes that resemble Ottoman princes' Source: muslimheritage.com

Turkish circumcision traditions are thought to be an extension of Ottoman ones. There are two major historical works about Ottoman circumcision ceremonies that let researchers to gain insight into the details of these events. *Şehinşahname* and *Surname-i Vehbi* are the illustrated documentations of the circumcisions of Sultan Murat III's son Mehmet in 1582 and Ahmet III's four sons in 1720 respectively.⁴⁰ There are remarkable similarities between Ottoman and contemporary Turkish circumcision ceremonies. For instance, in Ottoman ceremonies there were feasts served not only for the members of royal family but also for whole society which resembles today's Turkish ceremonies with food being served to hundreds of relatives and guest. Another example would be

³⁹ Ayhan Verit, et al., "A Magnificent Circumcision Carnival in the Early 18th Century Ottoman Period," *Urologia Internationalis* 75 (2005): 303.

⁴⁰ Nil Sarı, Cenk Büyükkunal and Bedizel Zülfişkar, "Circumcision Ceremonies at the Ottoman Palace," *Journal of Pediatric Surgery* 31.7 (1996): 920.

the entertainment factor. There were several kinds of entertainment in the Ottoman ceremonies. Hunting, sports, dance, music, drama, fireworks, acrobats and war games are only a part of the extreme entertainment that may last from 15 to 55 days.^{41 42} Although most of today families are not as excessively rich as Ottoman sultans, attractions such as fireworks, dancers, music and clown shows could be experienced during Turkish ceremonies. Other similarity between historically connected two ceremonies is the concept of present giving. It used to be a custom to bring presents to the princes that are being circumcised, this custom still continues today. Relatives and guests coming to the ceremony kindly bring presents to the child or attach a gold coin or money on the circumcised child's festive garments.⁴³ Also during these circumcision festivals, team of doctors was circumcising poor boys. In *Şehinşahname* and *Surname-i Vehbi* it was indicated that 10.000 and 5.000 poor boys were circumcised respectively.⁴² Today in Turkey some municipalities conduct mass circumcision for poor people to not get circumcised by untrained circumcisers instead of doctors or medical technicians.⁴³

Since it is considered as an important social step through being a “real man” in Turkey, male children at the age of circumcision are highly encouraged by their family and relatives. And added elements such as the ceremony and the presents are used to deceive the young male to be brave about the operation. Also being uncircumcised is usually depicted as a shameful thing. Because of these elements children anticipates the day they are going to be circumcised, but they are also aware of the surgery and the fear it spreads which causes reluctance and a clash between two ideas.⁴⁴ The fear caused by circumcision and its reasons and effects will be examined in the next chapter.

⁴¹ Nil Sarı, Cenk Büyükuşal and Bedizel Zülfişar, "Circumcision Ceremonies at the Ottoman Palace," *Journal of Pediatric Surgery* 31.7 (1996): 921.

⁴² Ayhan Verit, et al., "A Magnificent Circumcision Carnival in the Early 18th Century Ottoman Period," *Urologia Internationals* 75 (2005): 302.

⁴³ Ayhan Verit, *Circumcision in Turkey*, 2003, November 2010
<<http://www.cirp.org/library/cultural/turkey1/>>.

⁴⁴ Fişen Şahin, "Attitudes and practices regarding circumcision in Turkey," *Child: Care, Health and Development* 29.4 (2003): 276.

Chapter 3. Psychological Effects of Child Circumcision

But what are the circumcised children's reactions? After all, circumcision is a serious surgery and a kind of amputation. And it is practiced on an organ that carries all the cultural implications that are related with being a male. Also because of their young age the children may not be able to conceive how the procedure works and mistake it as an amputation of penis or castration. Freud proposed that a male child's "genital concentration of all sexual excitement is achieved and the boy's interest in the genitals attains a dominant significance" when he is around 4-5 years old. This period is called *phallic stage*. In this period boys may fear that something will happen to their precious sexual organ and this fear is called *castration anxiety*.⁴⁵ Age for circumcision in Turkey varies greatly. It could be practiced when a child is newborn or before he starts school or just before he reaches puberty. But studies of Cansever, Şahin and Verit shows that the common ages for circumcision are 5 to 7, 6 and 7 respectively.^{46 47 48} As stated above the phallic stage when a boy feels his penis is most vulnerable starts when the kid is 4-5 years old. And Turkey with corresponding average age of circumcision makes great cases for possibilities of examining the psychological effects of circumcision.

⁴⁵ Gökçe Cansever, "Psychological Effects of Circumcision," British Journal of Medical psychology 38 (1965): 321.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 322.

⁴⁷ Figen Şahin, "Attitudes and practices regarding circumcision in Turkey," Child: Care, Health and Development 29.4 (2003): 276.

⁴⁸ Ayhan Verit, et al., "A Limited Study on the Perception and Change in Attitude about Circumcision among Health Care Professionals and Their Male Family Members," Urologia Intertionalis 69 (2002): 303.



Figure 7 – a crying Turkish Child being circumcised Source:

<http://health.howstuffworks.com/sexual-health/male-reproductive-system/circumcision.htm>

Cansever's study gives a plain insight about psychological effects of circumcision on the child. 12 boys who are aged between 4-7 from families of differentiating social and economical levels were selected for the study. Several psychological tests were administered to the children a month before and a week after the operation. Additionally, two questionnaires were handed in to the mother. First one given a month before the operation included questions about "child's living conditions, development, social, emotional, intellectual adaptation, his and the families reaction to circumcision" and the second one given a week after was examining the boy's psychological and physical reactions to the surgery.⁴⁹ Cansever interpreted the test results and questionnaires as below:

"The results obtained for the different psychological tests indicate that circumcision is perceived by the child as an aggressive attack on his body, which damaged, mutilated (Cansever) and in some cases totally destroyed him. The feeling of 'I am now castrated' seems to prevail in the psychic world of the child. As a result, he feels inadequate, helpless, and functions less efficiently. Following circumcision, the ego weakens under the impact of the experience, is unable to cope efficiently and adaptively to the trauma and the instinctual drives, as well as the anxieties initiated."⁵⁰

Another study done by Öztürk reveals the boys fear of being castrated too. Children selected for the study were looking extremely scared during the operation. In addition, after each circumcision boys were checking if their penises were in place or

⁴⁹ Gökçe Cansever, "Psychological Effects of Circumcision," British Journal of Medical psychology 38 (1965): 323.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 327.

not.⁵¹ But neither of the studies gives any information about the test subjects' future life or how they would remember circumcision while they are adults. Şahin made a different questionnaire study for 823 families that have at least one son. At one point, fathers of the families were requested to tell the memories belonging to their own circumcision. Surprisingly, only 39.9 percent of the fathers told that they remember their circumcision and 73.9 percent of them acknowledged that they were nervous and scared. The ones who were not frightened explained that they were happy because they received lots of presents, there was the entertaining ceremony and they thought that they had become grownups by being circumcised.⁵²

Examples from neonatal practices of circumcision in Judaism and America are not considered in this chapter. Although it has been proved that infants also experience pain and get anxious while they are being circumcised when they grow up they don't remember the circumcision. And also contrary to the children in Öztürk's and Cansever's studies, infants inability to talk simply makes it impossible to explore the reactions of them to circumcision.⁵³ I believe these three studies explain the psychological effects of circumcision on children in Turkey explicitly. Fear of losing the penis affects the boys intensely. In addition to being scared before and during operation, they also remember the dreadful anxiety years later even when they have their own children.

⁵¹ Orhan M. Öztürk, "Ritual Circumcision and Castration Anxiety," Journal for the Study of Interpersonal Processes 36.1 (1973): 55.

⁵² Fiğen Şahin, "Attitudes and practices regarding circumcision in Turkey," Child: Care, Health and Development 29.4 (2003): 278.

⁵³ R. Goldman, "The psychological impact of circumcision," BJU International 83.Suppl. 1 (1999): 93-94.

Chapter 4.

Representation of Horror in Animated Films and “the Uncanny”⁵⁴

Paul Wells, in *Animation: Form and Meanings*, defines animated film as “a film made frame by frame, providing an illusion of movement, which has not been directly recorded in the conventional sense.”⁵⁵ Curiosity towards moving images is indeed an old one. Evidences of early mechanisms that can project moving images on a surface were found which belongs to 70 B.C.. Flipbooks from 16th century Europe are also considered as early examples of animation since drawings on moving pages also create an illusion of movement.⁵⁶ Early devices such as Zoetrope (1831), which could put strip of images in motion, and Praxinoscope (1877), which combined zoetrope with mirrors to project the generated illusion, were some of the forerunners of later film projectors.⁵⁷ The discovery of the “dissolve” effect, which lets one frame of a film to fade into another, brought out novel cinematic effects, which had built the core of animation techniques. These experiments were followed by premature examples of cartoons in early 20th century, which are the building blocks of today’s animated film industry.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," Sigmund Freud, Sigmund Freud Standart Edition, Vol. xvii (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955).

⁵⁵ Paul Wells, "Animation: Forms and Meanings," An Introduction to Film Studies, ed. Jill Nelmes, 3rd Edition (London: Routledge, 2003) 214.

⁵⁶ Paul Wells, Understanding Animation (London: Routledge, 1998) 1.

⁵⁷ Mike Wellins, Storytelling Through Animation (Massachusetts: Charles River Media Inc., 2005) 4-5.

⁵⁸ Paul Wells, Understanding Animation (London: Routledge, 1998) 13.

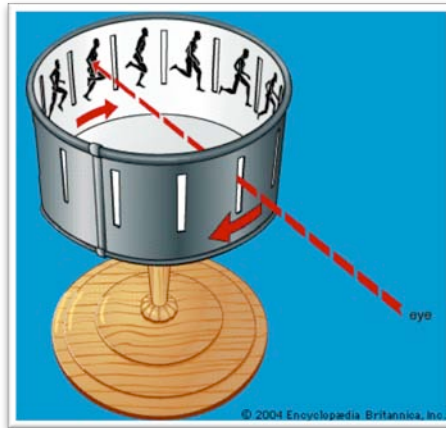


Figure 8 - a zoetrope Note: Copyright Encyclopædia Britannica

In spite of the huge size of animated film industry and animations popularity, mainstream audience does still not reckon animation as a serious art form. It is still “closely associated with cartoon and with children” and most of the time it is belittled as raw entertainment.⁵⁹ It is fairly trivial to suggest mainstream audience that relates a form with children will also limit the subjects the same form depicts. In the first part of this chapter, the common themes of contemporary animation will be fairly explained, the reasons of the rareness of horror as a sub-genre of animated film and examples of elements of horror from contemporary mainstream animated film will be discussed.

As noted above, animated film industry is growing day by day. When the revenues of some of the contemporary animated productions examined, one can see the growing audience and popularity of animated film. For example *Toy Story 3*⁶⁰ the latest film of Pixar Animation Studios is the highest grossing film of 2010 (and 5th highest grossing film of all times) with a revenue over a billion dollars.⁶¹ Other contemporary films such as *Up*⁶², *Wall-E*⁶³, *Coraline*⁶⁴, *Lion King*⁶⁵, *Shrek*⁶⁶ and many others

⁵⁹ Leonie Rutherford, "Australian Animation Esthetics," *The Lion and the Unicorn 2* (2003): 251.

⁶⁰ *Toy Story 3*, dir. Lee Unkrich, Pixar Animation Studios, Walt Disney Pictures, 2010.

⁶¹ *The Numbers - Movie Box Office Data, Film Stars, Idle Speculation*, 23 January 2011 <<http://www.the-numbers.com/>>.

⁶² *Up*, dir. Pete Docter, Pixar Animation Studios, Walt Disney Pictures, 2009.

⁶³ *Wall-E*, dir. Andrew Stanton, Pixar Animation Studios, Walt Disney Pictures, 2008.

⁶⁴ *Coraline*, dir. Henry Selick, Laika Entertainment, Universal Pictures, 2009.

⁶⁵ *The Lion King*, Roger Allers and Bob Minkoff, Walt Disney Pictures, 1994.

⁶⁶ *Shrek*, Andrew Adamson and Vicky Jenson, DreamWorks Animation, DreamWorks Pictures, 2001.

which would take up too much space to indicate here are one the highest grossing films of the year they had been released.⁶¹ These films represent the common genres that mainstream animation fits in: adventure, drama, comedy, fantasy, science fiction. But almost none of these mainstream animation releases belong to horror genre.

Why is animated film is not being used as common as live-action film in horror genre? The differences between the story telling methods of live-action film and animated film is beyond this thesis' scope, but to understand the absence of horror, I will try to explain the difference of emotional stimulation created by this two different forms in a brief way. Robert Hopkins in his article *Moving because Pictures? Illusion and the Emotional Power of Film* tries to elucidate the reason of differences of emotional stimulations that are created by traditional film and animation. He explains that live-action film, with the use of scenes, sets and real actors and actresses, seems much more familiar to us as an image compared to a one that is generated by traditional animation which uses hand-drawn and caricatured figures like in Disney cartoons.⁶⁷ And thus, it should be easier for our visual system to recognize the events that the film portrays. He then refutes this argument with these words:

“The idea is that just as many details of an object’s appearance are irrelevant to the visual system’s ability to recognize it, so many of the details of a realistic picture of that object play no role in getting the visual system to respond to the picture as to the object portrayed... The realism of traditional film is not therefore a reason to think that it will trigger the relevant perceptual processes more effectively than its less realistic animated cousins. No more, then, does it follow that the former will elicit emotion as the latter does not.”⁶⁸

But still being aware of that people “do not usually think of animated film as emotionally serious in the way that traditional fiction film is (or at least can be)” he puts forward another supporting theory that explains the difference between two forms.⁶⁹ He points out the historical and cultural evolution of traditional animation. As noted before, first examples of animations were commonly cartoons and by mid 1900’s animation

⁶⁷ Robert Hopkins, “Moving because Pictures? Illusion and the Emotional Power of Film,” *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 34.1 (2010): 208.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 216.

was regarded as an entertainment for children.⁷⁰ Also early examples of traditional animation mostly adopted “frivolous” themes. This path of evolution is, according to Hopkins, what caused people to accept animation as a less serious form, and he believes this is what causes the distinction between the potential of emotional effectiveness of traditional animation and live-action film.⁷¹ However, when CGI and 3D animation come into question, thoughts on the magnitude of animations ability to stimulate emotions differ compared to traditional animation.

While discussing if the *Astro Boy* episode *Franken*⁷² can make the audience experience the uncanny, Katharine Buljan tries to answer if *Franken* was done in a 3D style instead of 2D, could it change how audience perceive it. In her article, she interprets the writings of Freud on the “uncanny” as: “The uncanny, according to him, belongs to that class of the frightening which relates not to what is alien and unfamiliar, but, on the contrary, to ‘what is known of old and long familiar.’”⁷³ One can say, what is not real cannot be familiar, so she delved into the concept of realism in animation. She puts forwards Alice Crawford’s and Lev Manovich’s ideas on realism in computer animation as her starting point. According to Crawford recent advancements in computer graphics expanded the animators ability to grasp realism in animations.⁷⁴ And Manovich also supports the idea that realism could be achieved by advanced computer graphics, according to him realism “is achieved when the distinction between the computer image and a photograph of an object cannot be made”.⁷⁵ She then concludes her article by indicating that *Franken*’s potential to produce an uncanny effect on the audience would have increased, if the animation was done in a photo-realistic 3D style instead of 2D. But she adds that there are also other problems of the

⁷⁰ Mike Wellins, Storytelling Through Animation (Massachusetts: Charles River Media Inc., 2005).

⁷¹ Robert Hopkins, “Moving because Pictures? Illusion and the Emotional Power of Film,” Midwest Studies in Philosophy 34.1 (2010): 216.

⁷² *'Franken' Astro Boy*, dir. Kazuya Konaka, Tezuka Productions, Fuji Television, 2003.

⁷³ Katharine Buljan, “The Uncanny and the Robot in the Astro Boy Episode “Franken”,” Animation Studies 4 (2009): 48.

⁷⁴ Alice Crawford, “The Digital Turn: Animation in the Age of Information Technologies,” Prime Time Animation: Television Animation and American Culture, ed. Carol A. Stabile and Mark Harrison (London: Routledge, 2003): 115.

⁷⁵ Katharine Buljan, “The Uncanny and the Robot in the Astro Boy Episode “Franken”,” Animation Studies 4 (2009): 50.

animation, which avoids it to produce the sense of uncanny, which would be explained later.



Figure 9 - Franken chasing Jack in *Astro Boy* episode *Franken* Note: Copyright Fuji Television

Even though stating that visual system's ability to recognize what an object depicts is not related with how photo-realistic the object is portrayed, Robert Hopkins shares the thoughts of Manovich on photo-realism and CGI. Today, it is possible to create computer-generated imagery of an object that is indistinguishable from the real one. And Hopkins says that, if an animated film produced in this hyper realistic 3D style, it would be impossible to separate it from a traditional film in sense of visual recognition. And that impossibility would let an animated film to achieve the emotional effectiveness of a live-action film.⁷⁶ It can be said that what Robert Hopkins proposes is quite true. CGI is being used heavily in special effects for live-action films and most of the audience won't be able to separate it from a live footage.

There may be an absence of horror genre in mainstream animated film industry. But some animated films, although released as "family" productions, still possess strong narrative elements in their story that audience can relate to themselves and their memories and feel an effect of fear or "uncanny" as stated by Freud and Buljan. Henry Selick's, stop-motion animation *Coraline* for example is an adaptation of a horror

⁷⁶ Robert Hopkins, "Moving because Pictures? Illusion and the Emotional Power of Film," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 34.1 (2010): 217.

novella.⁷⁷ And due to the nature of its narrative, it needs to bear some elements that should arouse feeling of creepiness to some extent. Film revolves around the protagonist *Coraline*. A young girl, who discovers a small door in her new house that acts as a portal to an alternative world. This “other” world, at first, is much more tempting than her own world. Although the “other” parents in this alternative world shows extreme amount of effort to fulfill desires of *Coraline*, they slowly transform into a nightmarish form that must be defeated.⁷⁸ Buljan and Freud describes uncanny as a novel way of experiencing “what is known of old and long familiar”.⁷⁹ If the story of film is examined from the perspective of Buljan and Freud, it would be very hard to deny that a twisted mother is not uncanny. Surely, it is hard to find something that is more familiar to a person than his/her parents. Buljan also states in her article that for the viewer to feel the horror that is depicted in an animation, the viewer needs to put himself/herself in the place of the characters that experience the horror, and according to her *Franken* fails to make the viewer sympathize with the frightened characters.⁸⁰ But in *Coraline* the viewer almost becomes one with the protagonist, and the protagonist is the character that experiences all the uncanny in the film. Director Henry Selick, acknowledging the elements of horror, describes the target audience of the film, as "Our film is not for all kids, it is for brave kids. Brave children from 8 to 88."⁷⁷ Still, even with all those elements that can evoke a feeling of fear, I don't think it is possible to place the film in horror genre.

⁷⁷ Susan Wloszczyna, "The movie version might frighten some younger children.," *USA Today* 05 February 2009: 2.

⁷⁸ Ken A. Priebe, *The Advanced Art of Stop-Motion Animation* (Boston: Corse technology, a part of Cengage Learning, 2011) 56.

⁷⁹ Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," Sigmund Freud, *Sigmund Freud Standart Edition*, Vol. xvii (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955) 220.

⁸⁰ Katharine Buljan, "The Uncanny and the Robot in the Astro Boy Episode “Franken”," *Animation Studies* 4 (2009): 52.



Figure 10, 11, 12 – these figures are stills from *Coraline*, respectively showing Coraline’s mother, Coraline’s other mother and Coraline’s other mothers transformed version Note: Copyright Laika Entertainment

There are other examples of films that are targeted through a mainstream audience and still maintain horror elements to some extent. *The Nightmare Before Christmas*⁸¹, which is also directed by Selick, presents the story of the king of fictional Halloween town, Jack Skellington, who gets bored of Halloween and decides to capture Santa Claus and replace him on Christmas Eve.⁸² Although design of the citizens of Halloween town is creepy and unsettling, it is not sufficient enough to create a frightening effect. And unlike *Coraline* the protagonist of the films is the character that scares the other characters, and the viewer by putting himself/herself in the place of protagonist loses the feeling of the uncanny. Another example, that stands between *Coraline* and *The Nightmare Before Christmas* in the scale of “the uncanny” can be *Corpse Bride*. *Corpse Bride*’s story is derived from a European folk tale about “a man who unknowingly proposes to a dead woman”.⁸³ The mere use of the Land of the Dead and undead in this film is itself enough to create the sense of the uncanny. Depiction of an undead human according to Buljan and Freud is one of the highest points of uncanny.⁸⁴ (or lowest, according to creator of the term “The Uncanny Valley”,

⁸¹ Tim Burton's Nightmare Before Christmas, dir. Henry Selick, Skellington Productions, Tim Burton Productions, Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, 1993.

⁸² Ken A. Priebe, The Advanced Art of Stop-Motion Animation (Boston: Corse technology, a part of Cengage Learning, 2011) 37.

⁸³ Ken A. Priebe, The Advanced Art of Stop-Motion Animation (Boston: Corse technology, a part of Cengage Learning, 2011) 37.

⁸⁴ Katharine Buljan, “The Uncanny and the Robot in the Astro Boy Episode “Franken”,” Animation Studies 4 (2009): 48.

Masahiro Mori, he says that zombies belong to the bottom of The Uncanny Valley)⁸⁵. Buljan quotes Kyle Bishop to explain the uncanny effect created by zombies as: “They belong to a diverse class of creatures that cross the metaphysical line between life and death, where a strong sense of the uncanny inspires unease and fear.”⁸⁶



Figure 13 - Land of the Dead and undeads in *Corpse Bride*

Note: Copyright Warner Bros. Pictures

And the constant switch between the afterlife and life in this film could be able to create a strong sense of uncanny on the viewer. However, one may think without seeing the film, that the effect of horror created in *Corpse Bride* is much more stronger when compared to *Coraline*. But extremely cheerful ways of behavior shown by the occupants of the Land of the Dead and the musical nature of the film decreases the films ability to evoke the sense of the uncanny.



Figure 14 - a scene from *Nocturnal Dread* one of the segments of *Peur(s) du Noir* Note: Copyright Metrodome Releasing

⁸⁵ Ibid, 52.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 47.

Even though it is rare, animated film industry occasionally brings out films that belong to horror genre. French made *Peur(s) du Noir*⁸⁷ (English title of the film is *Fear(s) of the Dark*) is one of those few examples. Film consists of 6 different segments, using 3D animation, hand-drawn animation or cel animation and all of the segments are in black and white. Charles Burns, director of the segment *Nocturnal Dread* explains the decision of making the film in black and white simply by stating that, at least for him personally, “black and white lends itself to horror”.⁸⁸ Needless to say, making a film in black and white is not enough by itself to achieve the intended effect of horror. Unlike its mainstream counterparts, the film does not contain horror elements sprinkled through the film. It uses the power of narrative to “to generate a mood of ominous unease”. Nick Schager in his review of the movie explains this power in more detail:

“It does so through narratively unrelated short stories whose thematic commonality is chiefly rooted in awful sensations - spiders creeping up legs, splinters wedged into a hand, the disorientation of darkness”⁸⁹

Segments of the film also explore social and psychological problems one can experience such as “sexual insecurity, rural superstition and sociopolitical anxieties”.⁹⁰ Roy Wilkinson also describes the second half of the film as completely adult oriented, exploring “universal inner fears”.⁹¹ These familiar psychological problems a person can easily suffer should be enough to produce a sense of the uncanny and this is probably where this film differentiates from films such as *Coraline* or *Lion King*. While Henry Selick represents his film *Coraline* as entertainment for brave kids and everybody who still feels like a kid, film critic Ron Wilkinson suggests parents to leave their kids at

⁸⁷ *Peur(s) du Noir*, Blutch, et al., Prima Linea Productions, Metrodome Releasing, 2008.

⁸⁸ Dan Persons, "Charles Burns on FEAR(S) OF THE DARK," 22 October 2008, *Cinefantastique*, 23 January 2011 <<http://cinefantastiqueonline.com/2008/10/charles-burns-on-fears-of-the-dark/>>.

⁸⁹ Nick Schager, "Fear(s) of the Dark Film Review," 19 September 2008, *Slant Magazine*, 23 January 2011 <<http://www.slantmagazine.com/film/review/fears-of-the-dark/3790>>.

⁹⁰ Jeannette Catsoulis, "Movie Review - Fear(s) of the - Dark From Fertile Sketchpads, Anxious Tales and Terrors," 22 October 2008, *NYTimes.com*, 23 January 2011 <<http://movies.nytimes.com/2008/10/22/movies/22fear.html>>.

⁹¹ Roy Wilkinson, "Fears of the Dark (Peurs du Noir) - Movie Review," 5 November 2008, *Monsters and Critics*, 23 January 2011 <http://www.monstersandcritics.com/movies/reviews/article_1441274.php/Fears_of_the_Dark_Peurs_du_noir_-_Movie_Review>.

home and adds that the film wouldn't be attractive for mainstream audiences.⁹² Thus, it can be said that *Peur(s) du Noir* is fairly successful in evoking the sense of the uncanny. But dissimilar to mainstream animated films or live-action horror films it couldn't reach out to a wide audience.



Figure 15 – a scene from *Supreme Vulnerability: Marie Caillou* segment from *Peur(s) du Noir* Note: Copyright Metrodome Releasing

After exploring *Coraline*, *Corpse Bride* and *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, it can be said that these films all share a reluctance to be a horror film. Although stories of the film are quite suitable for creating an effect of horror, they all have a predisposition to belong to another genre such as adventure, drama or fantasy. Maybe the panic of losing the mainstream audience or the urge to reach wider audiences is the reason behind this predisposition. This may be true since, while showing a success in representing horror and being a stylized and mesmerizing animation, *Peur(s) du Noir* for example only grossed 77 thousand dollars worldwide. And this revenue is incomparable with the revenue of its mainstream counterparts, which are usually hundreds of million dollars.⁹³ This is probably the main reason of absence of horror films in mainstream animation, which is directly related to Robert Hopkins' claims, about the seriousness of animated film as an art form.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, sense of the uncanny could still be found occasionally in some of the mainstream animated films,

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ The Numbers - Movie Box Office Data, Film Stars, Idle Speculation, 2011 йил 23-January <<http://www.the-numbers.com/>>.

⁹⁴ Robert Hopkins, "Moving because Pictures? Illusion and the Emotional Power of Film," Midwest Studies in Philosophy 34.1 (2010): 216.

such as the ones that have been examined in this chapter. And there are still some animated films that experiment on horror genre as *Peur(s) du Noir*. In next chapter the short animation *Pilav*, that tells a story of a boy who is going to get circumcised, will be explored to see if it evokes a sense of uncanny while trying to render a ritual everyone is familiar with in Turkey, which also sometimes causes serious psychological problems that have been explained before in chapter 3.

Chapter 5.

***Pilav* and the Representation of Circumcision**

Pilav means, “cooked rice” in Turkish. It may seem like an irrelevant choice as a name for an animation about circumcision, but it is not. After a boy is circumcised in Turkey, other children, friends and relatives of the boy, who are not well aware of the nature of circumcision, curiously ask questions regarding the whereabouts of the amputated part of the penis. And the usual answer of parents to this question is that the foreskin was or will be shredded and put in the “pilav”.

Pilav is a short 3D animation with parts of 2D computer animation which was started as a group (which included me) project, but then discontinued because of personal reasons. I then decided to pick up the project and complete the film by revising 3D scenes. Film depicts the day a five years old Turkish boy is being circumcised. As explained before in chapter 2, circumcision is a very important custom for Turkish boys and usually regarded as a major step through the path of manhood. Most of the people who had grown-up in Turkey has their own distinct memories about circumcision, specially men. But since the celebration of circumcision usually involves a feast or a ceremony, anybody (male or female) who had a close relative that is being circumcised could probably relate to a memory that belongs to a circumcision celebration. Thus, it is a very well known event and it has many aspects to represent that had been built up collectively generation by generation. When we first developed the story, we tried to add as many references as possible to Turkish circumcision traditions, and I will try to explain them using storyboard and stills from 3D and 2D scenes by relating them to chapter 2 and 3.



Figure 16 – the boy who is going to be circumcised

There are 3 characters in the film, boy, circumciser and a clown. It can be accepted that the boy is the protagonist of the film. He is a chubby 5 years old boy who is going to be circumcised. Film depicts the day he is circumcised, by combining the boy's dreams and nightmares about circumcision with the actual day he is being circumcised. As explained in the chapter *Psychological Effects of Child Circumcision*, around 4-5 years old, boys enters to phallic stage and starts to fear that something will happen to their penis which is referred to as castration anxiety.⁹⁵ This anxiety about castration is referred to in film by depicting the circumcision moment in a nightmarish way. After the kid puts on his circumcision garments and checks himself in the mirror, the environment he is in starts to transform in a twisted way and animation continues with the practice of circumcision as imagined by the boy.



Figure 17 - Kemal Özkan and clown are preparing the boys for circumcision still from a Discovery Channel documentary trailer Source: <http://vimeo.com/3661573>

⁹⁵ Gökçe Cansever, "Psychological Effects of Circumcision," *British Journal of Medical psychology* 38 (1965): 321-331.

Circumciser, the ideas of putting a clown in a circumcision celebration and the huge palace like saloon that the boy is being circumcised in are all inspired by the innovations of a famous Turkish circumciser. Kemal Özkan, regarded by Turkish press, as the “Sultan of Circumcision” is the only circumcision celebrity of Turkey.⁹⁶ He is the owner of the famous *Sünnet Sarayı* (circumcision palace in Turkish) and he created his own way of celebration of circumcision. In his palace, kids that are going to be circumcised travel to a stage on a kiddy train. There they sing and dance and be entertained by a clown, until the time comes for them to take their places on the huge turning sofa. With each slight turn of a chair, a boy takes his place in front of the Sultan of Circumcision in order to be circumcised.⁹⁷



Figure 18,19 – clown, circumcision palace and the stage where circumcision takes place in *Pilav*

The design of circumciser is based on Kemal Özkan himself. In animation the circumciser appears in the nightmare scenes and being a product of the boy’s imagination, some of his physical attributes are exaggerated or deformed, such as his gigantic eyeglasses. Clown also goes under some deformations. Clown is the one who takes the boy to the circumciser, such as a prisoner sentenced to death is being taken to

⁹⁶ Matt Mossman, "Sultan of Circumcision still reigns in Turkey ," 01 June 2009, The Globe and Mail, 15 November 2010

<<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/sultan-of-circumcision-still-reigns-in-turkey/article1162455/>>.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

an executioner, is depicted as a giant. At first he seems jolly but as the moment of circumcision becomes sooner, he transforms in to a creepy clown with extending arms and a fierce face. The circumcision saloon in the animation also inspired by Kemal Özkan's *Sünnet Sarayı*, resembles a palace with its high ceiling, huge size and pompous ornaments. And the seat again is a reference to circumcision palace. But to evoke a sense of uncanny, it is turned into an animate object with an arm like extension that grows from the middle of it, which will hold the boy in his place during circumcision. The character and prop designs are carrying a strong sense of deformation and exaggeration, the reason of this, as noted before, circumciser, clown and circumcision palace are all products of the boys imagination in the narrative of animation. And also these deformations of the familiar elements of circumcision may help to create a sense of the uncanny, which is defined by Buljan and Freud as a novel and twisted way of representing "what is old and familiar".⁹⁸ Such effect was also used in *Coraline* to achieve the dark nature of Coraline's "other" mother as it could be seen in figures 10, 11 and 12.⁹⁹



Figure 20 – transformed clown from *Pilav*'s storyboard

The opening scene of animation is a 2D computer generated one. It was made before the discontinuation of the project by Aslı Özpehlivan. It serves as opening titles for the animation and it also is the dream of the boy. In his dream, we see him in his circumcision costume, wearing his crown-like hat, his cape and his scepter. As the presents fly around him, he seems cheerful. In Turkey, parents and relatives usually

⁹⁸ Katharine Buljan, "The Uncanny and the Robot in the Astro Boy Episode "Franken", " *Animation Studies* 4 (2009): 46-54.

⁹⁹ *Coraline*, dir. Henry Selick, Laika Entertainment, Universal Pictures, 2009.

encourage boys who are going to be circumcised. They encourage the child by telling him about the celebrations and the presents the child will receive after the operation.¹⁰⁰ The dream sequence tries to portray the effects of these encouragements on the child. I can say from my personal experience that this encouragement works to some extent. After my circumcision arrangements were done I started to wait for the day of my circumcision eagerly, imagining the presents I was going to receive and the gold coins that were going to be hanged on my bed and the celebration day. But when the moment of circumcision arrived and the doctor brought out the syringe that contains the local anesthetic, I started crying and screaming and tried to run away. At the end they had to put me under general anesthesia in order to circumcise me.



Figure 21 – dream sequence at the beginning of *Pilav*

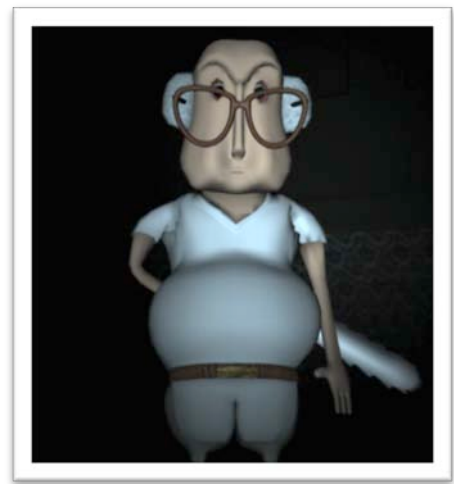


Figure 22 – circumciser emerges from dark in *Pilav*

The boy in the animation also experiences a moment of panic as I did. Just before the circumcision while he is being held down by the animate chair, the circumciser emerges from darkness and he carries a chainsaw as a tool to circumcise the boy. Boy immediately closes his eyes with his hands. The feeling of panic and fear just before the circumcision must be related with castration anxiety. Anna Freud's statement on surgical operations that are initiated on a child that is at phallic stage also supports this idea. She writes in her article *The Role of Bodily Illness in The Mental Life of Children* as below:

¹⁰⁰ Figen Şahin, "Attitudes and practices regarding circumcision in Turkey," *Child: Care, Health and Development* 29.4 (2003): 276.

"... any surgical interference with the child's body may serve as a focal point for the activation, reactivation, grouping, and rationalization of the ideas of being attacked, overwhelmed and (or) castrated..."¹⁰¹

After the circumcision scene, ending title comes up. Neslihan Koyuncu did this part. It's a fast paced motion animation and carries references to circumcision traditions in Turkey. Gold coins, a scepter which is a part of the circumcision costume, an axe which is commonly used as a joke when someone who is not a child is going to be circumcised ("The doctor will need an axe to circumcise you!") and tools for circumcision such as a scalpel are some of these references.

¹⁰¹ Anna Freud, "The Role of Bodily Illness in The Mental Life of Children," Psychoanalytic Study of the Child (An Annual) 7 (1952): 73.

6. Conclusion

When the idea to use circumcision as a theme in an animation first came up, it was basically an instinctive one, probably caused by the possibility of relating to memories of all members that formed our group, which initiated *Pilav*. After I had decided to pick it up and finalize as my thesis project, I started the research. During the research I realized that circumcision as a theme for an animation has much more potential than I expected. With its 15.000 years long history, it is a theme with many possible aspects to refer to. And Turkey with its distinct customs that goes back to magnificent circumcision celebrations of Ottoman Empire is a special case.

While trying to depict circumcision traditions of Turkey virtually correct in a stylistic way, I also wanted to represent the possible psychological effects of circumcision on a child. To do this, I had to gain an insight on representation of horror in animations. Unfortunately, examples of animations that belong to horror genre are not so common so I tried to understand how does mainstream animation films uses elements of horror in their narrations. I stumbled upon Freud's definition of "the uncanny". According to him, the uncanny "belongs to that class of the frightening which relates not to what is alien and unfamiliar, but, on the contrary, to 'what is known of old and long familiar.'"¹⁰² And I tried to adopt this method of "the uncanny" while trying to represent the *castration anxiety*.

I believe *Pilav* as a whole film, renders most of the significant elements of Turkish circumcision traditions successfully. And I can also conceive the panic and anxiety that the protagonist feels immediately. But this understanding may be consequential to immediate relation I can create between the boys circumcision and my own memories.

¹⁰² Katharine Buljan, "The Uncanny and the Robot in the Astro Boy Episode "Franken", " *Animation Studies* 4 (2009): 48.

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Appendix A



Figure 22 – Image from the storyboard of *Pilav*



Figure 23 – Image from the storyboard of *Pilav*



Figure 24 – Image from the storyboard of *Pilav*



Figure 25 – Image from the storyboard of *Pilav*

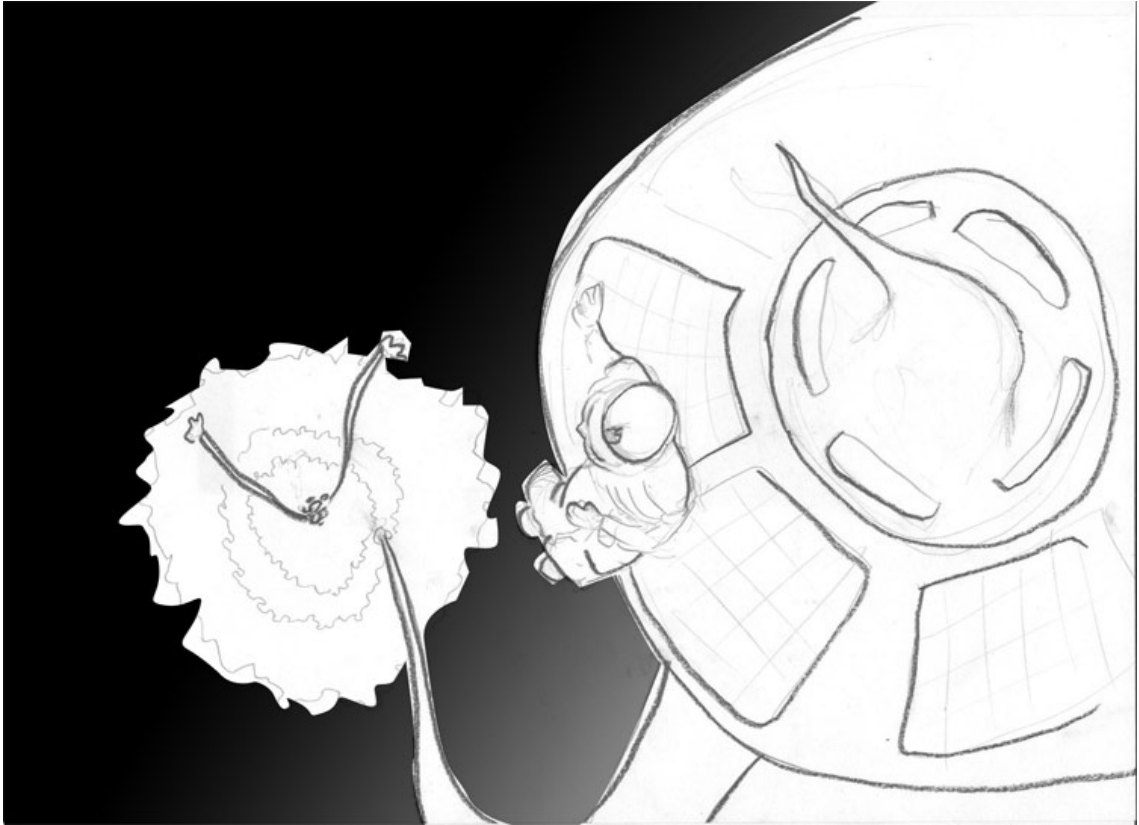


Figure 26 – Image from the storyboard of *Pilav*

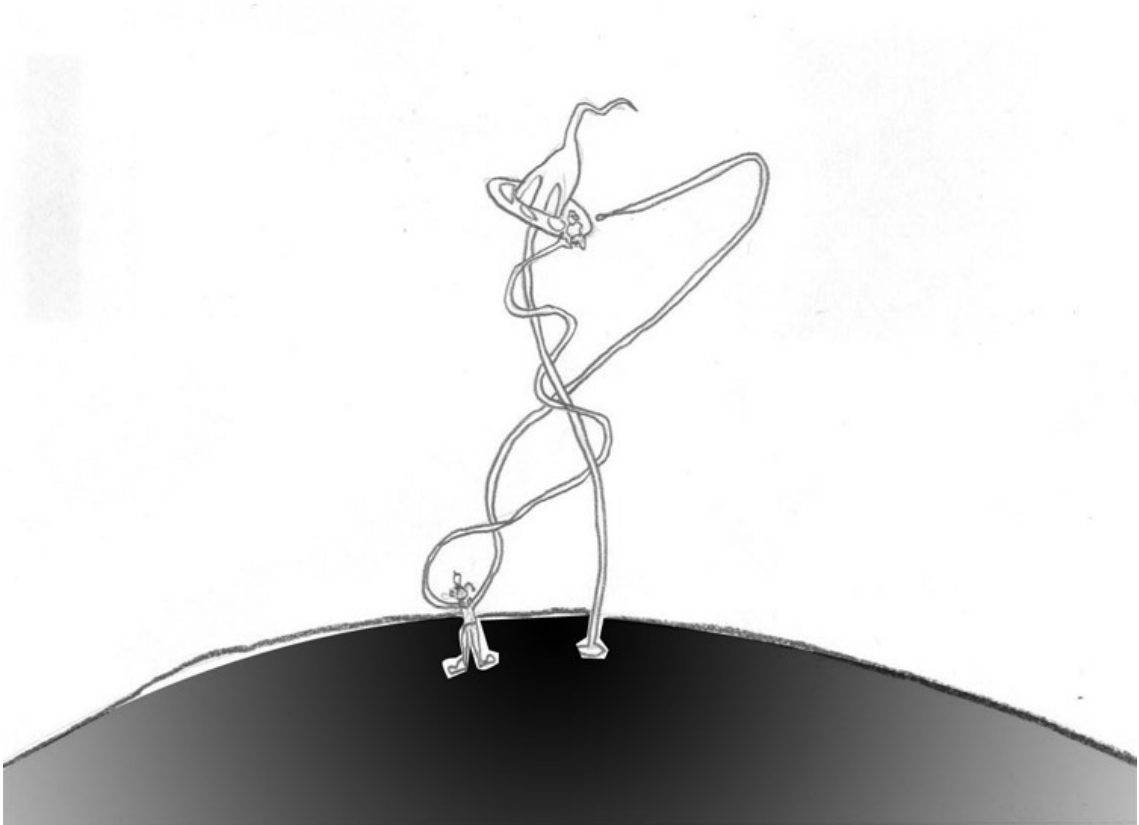


Figure 27 – Image from the storyboard of *Pilav*

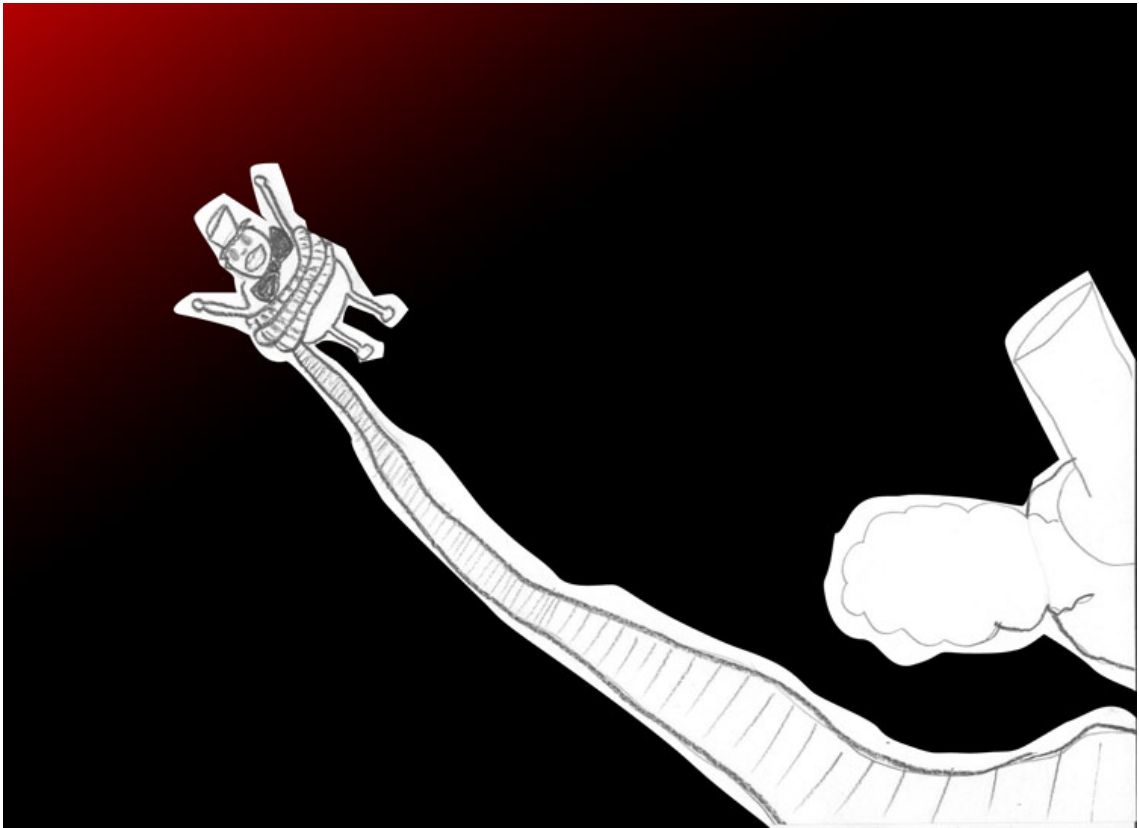


Figure 28 – Image from the storyboard of *Pilav*



Figure 29 – Image from the storyboard of *Pilav*



Figure 30 – Image from the storyboard of *Pilav*

Appendix B

DVD containing *Pilav* and the trailer of Discovery Channel film about Kemal Özkan.