

**İSTANBUL BİLGİ UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
SOCIOLOGY MA PROGRAM**

**New Zones of Coexistence in the Cultural Field: The Popular Literary  
Magazines in Turkey**

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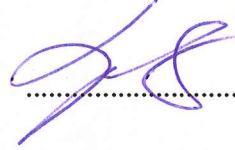
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**İSTANBUL  
2017**

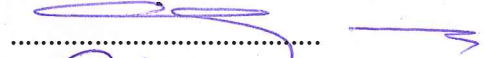
New Zones of Coexistence in the Cultural Field: The Popular Literary Magazines  
in Turkey  
Kültürel Alanda Yeni 'Bir Arada Var Olma' Bölgeleri: Türkiye'de Popüler  
Edebiyat Dergileri

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Date of Approval:

30/06/2017

Total number of pages:

103

Keywords (Turkish)

- 1) Popüler Edebiyat Dergileri
- 2) Kültürel Alan
- 3) OT ve KAFA Dergileri
- 4) Söylem
- 5) Alternatif Kamusal Alan

Keywords (English)

- 1) Popular Literary Magazines
- 2) Cultural Field
- 3) OT and KAFA Magazines
- 4) Discourse
- 5) Alternative Public Sphere

## **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor Kenan ayır for his invaluable contributions, assistance, guidance, support and his positive energy, all of which have motivated me during my thesis writing process. More importantly, I am grateful to him for helping me develop a sociological thinking and perspective on the matters about life in general.

I also would like to thank the members of my thesis jury; Prof. Dr. Aydın Uęur and Prof. Dr. Ferhat Kentel for taking time out of their busy schedule and for their contributions and recommendations which will help me to further develop this study.

I appreciate everything my dear friend Efe zkürkü has done for me, particularly his emotional support throughout the study. Our discussions and brainstorming sessions have always been a great pleasure for me. I also thank Merve Tuner for her friendship, support and for always motivating me. She has also been working on her thesis and we have tried to cope with this stressful process together.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their endless love. I would not have done this without their gratuitous support.

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to explore the potential of today's popular literary magazines for becoming an alternative public sphere for communication in the polarized socio-cultural context of Turkey. My focus will be on two exemplary popular literary magazines that published after 2013, *OT* and *KAFA* magazines, in order to illuminate their discursive formations, how this formation allows multiplicity of voices and narratives to coexist in one magazine as an alternative public sphere and how these magazines challenge/combat other discourses by generating alternative meanings and discourses on certain social and political issues regarding the current socio-political context of Turkey.

Studying literary/cultural products, as material and discursive aspects of their time, in conjunction with the socio-political context serves the basis for an understanding of the cultural, material and political conditions and discussions of the period that they are produced. Accordingly, three main discursive patterns have spotted in the popular literary magazines, namely; the discourses of anti-polarization, peace and the freedom of thought and expression. Using a qualitative textual and discourse analyses, texts (narratives) and issues within the magazines are examined and discussed in terms of their particular use of language, signs and discourses by considering their polyphonic/pluralistic authorial formation, which consists of people coming from different segments of the society, and by situating them into the broader Turkish context. The study will try to illustrate how the popular literary magazines and their authors regard the cultural/symbolic sphere as a space of struggle over meaning, how they tell their (and society's) stories in an alternative way while entering into discursive battles against hegemonic narratives and discuss their potential of being an inclusive and alternative public sphere which allows people with diverse perspectives to share their opinions.

*Key words: The popular literary magazines, Cultural Field, OT and KAFA magazines, Discourse, Alternative Public Sphere*

## ÖZET

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'nin kutuplaşan sosyo-politik bağlamı içinde, bugünün popüler edebiyat dergilerinin, toplumsal iletişim için alternatif bir kamusal alan olma potansiyellerini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada, *OT* ve *KAFA* dergileri üzerinde durularak, bu dergilerin söylemsel oluşumları ve alternatif bir kamusal alan olarak çeşitli seslere ve anlatılara aynı dergi içinde birlikte var olma olanağını nasıl sundukları araştırılacaktır. Ayrıca bu dergilerin alternatif anlamlar/bilgiler üretmek yoluyla, belirli sosyal ve politik konularda karşı söylemler ile nasıl mücadele ettikleri, Türkiye'nin güncel sosyo-politik bağlamı dikkate alınarak aydınlatılmaya çalışılacaktır.

Edebi/kültürel ürünlerin sosyo-politik bağlam ile beraber çalışılması, bu ürünlerin üretildikleri dönemin kültürel, maddi, politik koşullarını ve tartışmalarını anlamak adına önemli bir dayanak teşkil etmektedir. Bu doğrultuda dergilerde; kutuplaşma karşıtlığı, barış ve düşünce/ifade özgürlüğü olmak üzere üç temel söylemsel kalıp tespit edilmiştir. Dergilerde yer alan metinler (anlatılar) niteliksel metin ve söylem analizi yöntemleri ile incelenmiş ve bulgular Türkiye'nin güncel bağlamında değerlendirilmiştir. Çalışma, popüler edebiyat dergilerinin ve yazarlarının kültürel/sembolik alanı anlamın mücadele alanı olarak nasıl gördüklerini, baskın anlatılar ile söylemsel mücadeleler içine girerek, kendi (ve toplumun) hikayelerini alternatif bir biçimde nasıl anlattıklarını açıklamaya çalışacaktır. Çalışma aynı zamanda bu dergilerin farklı görüşlerden insanların fikirlerini paylaşmalarına olanak sağlayan bir platform olarak, kapsayıcı ve alternatif bir kamusal alan olma potansiyelini tartışacaktır.

*Anahtar kelimeler: Popüler edebiyat dergileri, Kültürel alan, OT ve KAFA Dergileri, Söylem, Alternatif kamusal alan*

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to explore the potential of today's popular literary magazines for becoming an alternative public sphere for communication in the polarized socio-cultural context of Turkey.

Bookstores usually have an exhibition space for magazines. Until 2013, those exhibition shelves were filled with classical literary, political, cultural, travel magazines as well as tabloid ones in Turkey. However, if examined carefully, it is possible to notice that the composition of exhibition spaces for magazines have changed dramatically since then. Now, we have a great variety of popular literary magazines occupying these shelves and they have attracted public attention with their very high monthly circulation numbers (Öz, 2015). *OT*, *KAFA*, *Bavul*, *Fil*, *Karakarga*, *Kafkaokur*, *Pulbiber*, *Cins* and *Tuhaf* can be given as examples (some of them stopped publishing, some still continues) of this new current in magazine publishing and the cultural field. Although this distinctive field/type of magazine publishing has started in the late 1990s, the contemporary popular literary magazines have started to be published with the emergence of *OT* in 2013, which made the way for this kind of magazine publishing and encouraged its counterparts. These magazines and their success demonstrate an alteration and evolution within the cultural sphere of Turkey, particularly the tastes of the wider public operating as producers and consumers within this specific field. Popular literary magazines' relative privilege and/or success over other literary products say a lot about our society, social and cultural surroundings and our socio-political context (Eagleton, 2008). Besides, these magazines and their potential and/or impact on Turkey's cultural environment are being increasingly discussed on social media, internet and other platforms by literary critics, journalists, editors, authors and readers. Therefore, it seems vital to tackle this new phenomenon and discuss it in detail as this new trend in magazine publishing may offer fruitful insights on the broader context of Turkey and

Turkish society in particular, including its current social troubles as well as its future potentials.

Today's popular literary magazines, as a literary/cultural genre in Turkey, have emerged with a motivation of combining humor, literature and daily politics. This was the starting point for this new type of magazine publishing since literature and humor were so long seen as two separate fields in Turkish cultural sphere. On the one hand, literary field has always been sanctified and mystified by publishers, editors, authors as well as readers under the power/capital relations in the field (Bourdieu, 1993). On the other hand, the humorous and critical language tradition has been developed in Turkey through comics and humor magazines, particularly after the 1970s with Oğuz Aral's *Gırgır* and continued with *Leman* in the 1990s. These magazines' ironic and sarcastic language has constituted the basis for the formation of the popular literary magazines in the late 1990s as they tried to integrate –and demystify literary field– two traditions under one central body. This initiative, started in the late 1990s, continued in 2000s, and finally has come until today as contemporary popular literary magazines.

Along with their motivation of combining humor and literature, the popular literary magazines' content includes various literary and narrative forms including short stories, memoirs, poems, interviews and fictional/non-fictional prose, in many of them which the current political agenda is being discussed with humorous and ironic language containing implicit or explicit political criticisms. This type of language has become a vital tool due to the political pressures, not only for the popular literary magazines, but also for the social movements and protestors in general, since it has become completely 'visible' during the Gezi Park Protests in 2013 as an alternative political mode of communication. The popular literary magazines have managed to canalize this language into its discursive formation successfully through their well-known, thus already acknowledged or consecrated by the public, group of contributors in order to combat other narratives in the sphere of struggle for meaning. Gathering of group of authors, coming from Islamist circles or secular segments, left or right wing

politics, various ethnic backgrounds such as Armenian or Kurdish, together and letting them to express their opinions freely seem to be the initial discourse in itself, which is signified under the term ‘tolerance’ (*tahammül*), considering the tense social, cultural and political context of Turkey.

However, the popular literary magazines do more than just form a complex authorial crew. Through their ‘easy-to-read’ informal narrative format which signifies personal/humanistic experiences, the popular literary magazines are able to open a new position in the cultural field to combat the official state narratives on certain topics such as democracy, freedom of thought and expression, peace or identity politics. Memoirs of authors or the interviews conducted with ‘ordinary citizens’ constitute a sense of ‘intimacy’ between authors and readers, thus, allowing fast and easy dissemination of ideas. New meanings generated by the popular literary magazines, as a part of the discursive struggle, challenge the hegemonic discourses and they are able to reach to the wider public due to high circulation numbers compared to other magazines in the cultural field, which, in a sense, what makes them ‘popular’.

Up to this time, studies on the literary magazines/periodicals in Turkey have predominantly focused on the magazines’ literary and aesthetic competence, their literary dispositions, contributions to Turkish literary field or their place/significance in Turkish literary history and those studies and master’s or doctoral theses have written overwhelmingly for the Department of Turkish Language and Literature.<sup>1</sup> However, only a very few works seemed to analyze literary/cultural magazines with regard to their sociological or political reflections.<sup>2</sup> Vedat Günyol’s (1986) *Sanat ve Edebiyat Dergileri* and Erdal Doğan’s (1997) *Edebiyatımızda Dergiler* can be given as important and extensive primary sources for the history of literary magazine publishing in Turkey as they

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<sup>1</sup> Some examples from the Turkish Council of Higher Education’s thesis center ([tez.yok.gov.tr](http://tez.yok.gov.tr)) can be given as: Depe’s (2014) work on *A review on Yazko Edebiyat Magazine*, Uçar’s (2007) *The Poetics and politics of Turkish literary magazines in the 1950s* or Sürgit’s (2014) work on *As a literary magazine Maveria and Maveria literary group*.

<sup>2</sup> One example of this type of work is Uslu’s (2004) thesis on *Resimli Ay Magazine (1929-1931): The emergence of an oppositional focus between socialism and avant-gardism*.

provide the list of magazines, contain information about them and allow periodical timetables. Furthermore, today's popular literary magazines have not yet been studied at all in Turkey. In terms of international sources, Mark Parker's (2000) *Literary Magazines and British Romanticism* and Frank Shovlin's (2003) *The Irish Literary Periodical: 1923-1958* can be given as examples of studies focusing on literary magazines and their literary values. On the other hand, Elisabeth Kendall's (2006) *Literature, Journalism and Avant-Garde: Intersection in Egypt* is a comprehensive work on the literary magazine publishing in Egypt with its particular theoretical framework based on the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu.

In this study, I will particularly focus on the popular literary magazines published after 2013, specifically *OT Dergi* and *KAFA Dergi*, by looking at their discursive formations, how this formation allows multiplicity of voices and narratives to coexist in one magazine as an alternative public sphere and how these magazines challenge/combat other discourses by generating alternative/new meanings and discourses on certain social and political issues regarding the socio-political context of Turkey. Indeed, studying literary magazines enables us to explore the historical and material conditions of that particular period by looking at the literary/cultural production and dispositions of the time. Surely, literature history studies which focus on certain authors or works may help in getting basic information about this particular subject or cultural product. However, the socio-political context of the time may be passed unnoticed in this kind of work. On the other hand, a study, which focuses on the literary magazines, is able to serve the proper ground for an understanding of the cultural, material and political conditions of that period since it provides information about a large number of authors (rather than a single one), numerous texts (rather than one book) and therefore it has a capacity to illustrate various social, political, cultural and ideological backgrounds (Uçar, 2007: 2).

In this sense, the literary magazines, as material and discursive aspects and products of their period, provide valuable insights about the '*zeitgeist*', in other words, the spirit of their time. It would be a mistake to consider the literary

magazines (and literary products in general) as fictional/unrealistic materials which may lead to the mystification and ‘*derealization*’ of these literary products that bear witness to their age. Pierre Bourdieu notes on this issue:

Ignorance of everything which goes to make up the ‘mood of the age’ produces a derealization of works: stripped of everything which attached them to the most concrete debates of their time [...], they are impoverished and transformed in the direction of intellectualism or an empty humanism. (Bourdieu, 1993: 32)

Thus, a research on the literary magazines enables us to form logical links with the literary products and concrete social, cultural and political discussions of the time they are produced. That is to say, narratives of the literary magazines are also the stories of various people’s lives and their identities which are naturally embedded in the stories of their communities and societies in MacIntyrean (1981) sense. Put differently, the narratives (texts) in the literary magazines are very much related to the greater social and political context and/or phenomenon, including elements from the stories of other lives rather than belonging subjectively to one particular author. Hence, in this study, I will be using the term ‘narrative’ in its wider sense as it corresponds not only “as a mode of representation but also a mode of reasoning” which covers a large number of actors/subjects sharing a common social existence (Richardson, 1990: 2; cited in Çayır, 2004: 11). Moreover, through this mode of reasoning with narratives, both the authors and the readers produce and reproduce certain discourses and/or counter-discourses under the literary magazines, as institutional sites within the cultural/symbolic sphere of struggle, in relation with their socially-constructed identities and social imaginaries. In other words, literary/cultural production, literary magazines and our constructed identities have been “indissociably bound up with political beliefs and ideological values” as well as the political and ideological history of the epoch since the ‘meaning’ is being produced through debates in this abstract public sphere (Eagleton, 2008; Foucault, 1991; Taylor, 2004; Bakhtin, 1981; Habermas, 1989).

Studying and examining literary magazines by using their literary/textual data accompanies certain difficulties for researchers in terms of sampling, due to magazines' wide range of texts, authors and topics and their rich content as well as their dynamic, monthly-issued forms. Each month, approximately more than 30 authors are contributing to the popular literary magazines with variety of literary forms and topics. Moreover, there are at least 5 or 6 popular literary magazines that are currently being published in Turkey. Therefore, considering the almost infinite number of articles in the literary magazines, limiting the sample size of the research will contribute to the quality of the analysis, allowing us to focus on certain magazines chose over others for particular reasons.

In this study, I will limit my research to two of the popular literary magazines, *OT Dergi* and *KAFA Dergi*. These magazines were selected due to their mass audience compared to others (they are the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> in terms of monthly circulations of popular literary magazines, thus reaching to bigger public), their polyphonic authorial formation which includes a great variety of authors coming from different socio-economic, cultural, ethnic and ideological backgrounds and because of their 'founding'/canonical status (a recipe for the popular literary magazines which was tried and succeeded) since *OT* was the first of its kind in 2013, later followed by *KAFA* in 2014 which also included certain figures previously contributed to *OT*. Yet, the study will include valuable information and data about other literary magazines for comparative reasons and for elaborating my arguments. In related chapters, I have also tried to position the selected popular literary magazines into the wider field of Turkish literary magazine publishing and relate them to the Turkish socio-political context.

Research will be conducted in qualitative methods, by mainly using textual and discourse analyses. In other words, I will be looking at what has actually been said or written through particular use of language, signs, words and discourses by the authors of the popular literary magazines, including the actors in the broader Turkish social and political fields. In terms of sampling, *OT* magazine's all issues are used for the analysis whereas a periodical sampling method is preferred for

*KAFA*, which covers the time period after the failed coup attempt in July 2016 (both until June 2017). Although there have been debates on the aesthetic quality of the popular literary magazines, the aim and focus of this study will be on their discursive formation and their texts' relation to the wider sociological and political context, rather than discussing their literary competence. Put differently, this study will be based on an interpretative approach in order to capture the plausible, competing and contested meanings and discourses rather than debating who and/or which one is 'right' or 'wrong' (Hall, 1997). In a sense, discourse is a form of social action that plays an integral part in producing our social world and surroundings, including knowledge, our social relations and identities. In that vein, knowledge is being created through social and symbolic interactions, in which people construct their common sense, common truths, but all kinds of truth and knowledge compete endlessly throughout history. For instance, let us take a natural event like 'flood', which is a material fact in the beginning. However, when we start to ascribe meaning to this event, it is then considered inside the discourse. Some will argue that it is a natural disaster. Some will say it is 'God's will'. Some other people will attribute it to the mismanagement and so on (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002: 5-9). Therefore, in this study, I try to explore the discursive patterns in and across the texts published in the popular literary magazines, investigate the chains of meaning generation and how they engage in a discursive struggle against other narratives and identify the social consequences of different discursive representations of certain issues concerning Turkish society. In this sense, my major concern is to explore how the authors of the popular literary magazines tell their –and Turkish society's– stories in an alternative way and react other narratives by generating new meanings on particular topics regarding Turkey's contemporary social and political context in their pluralistic environment.

The first chapter of the thesis aims to present the theoretical framework in order to situate the popular literary magazines phenomenon, as a literary/cultural product, into the field of social sciences. I refer to several theoreticians, namely;

Terry Eagleton, Pierre Bourdieu, Stuart Hall, Mikhail Bakhtin and Michel Foucault, to emphasize the role of literature, language and discourse, their close relation with socio-political contexts in terms of producing certain knowledges, and the power relations surrounding the cultural field and other spheres. I will also benefit from Jürgen Habermas and Hannah Arendt for their conceptualization of the public sphere since the popular literary magazines function as a forum, a space for public discussion. Furthermore, I will be drawing on the theoreticians of narrative and identity such as Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor and Benedict Anderson, due to their fruitful insights on identity construction process, both in personal and collective level, through stories and narratives. Finally, I will refer to the New Social Movements literature in order to illustrate the similarities between these movements and the popular literary magazines in terms of their causes and efforts.

The second chapter addresses to the historical background of the Turkish literary magazine publishing field within the cultural sphere. Starting from the late Ottoman period of the 19<sup>th</sup> century up until today, the literary magazines and their dispositions are presented briefly and periodically, along with insights about the social, political and material contexts in which they were published. This chapter aims to signify how the literary magazines and their authors consider the magazine publishing activity and the literary sphere in general, as a sphere of struggle for competing ideologies, as well as to demonstrate the literary magazines' close relations with political developments in Turkey.

In the third chapter, I will be examining my two exemplary popular literary magazines by drawing on their content through articles and interviews, focusing on their discursive practices, authorial and narrative formation and demonstrating how they challenge other discourses on particular issues of anti-polarization, peace and the freedom of thought and expression, in conjunction with the wider social and political context of Turkey. Finally, the thesis will conclude with the evaluation of findings obtained throughout the analysis.

## CHAPTER I

### SITUATING “THE POPULAR LITERARY MAGAZINES PHENOMENON” INTO THE FIELD OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

The popular literary magazines in our research correspond to a contemporary literary/cultural genre in Turkey that combines humor, literature and politics under diverse literary and other forms such as short stories, poems, memoirs, interviews, caricatures and prose through a new type of language which has become highly popular especially during and after the Gezi Park Protests. This humorous language has developed rapidly in Turkey through comics and humor magazines especially after 1970s with Oğuz Aral’s *Girgür*, continued with *Leman* in the 1990s and later constituted a basis for Gezi Park Protests’ and the popular literary magazines’ critical language. During the protests, protestors have generated a different type of language code as an alternative political mode of communication using literary elements –mostly poetry– with humorous, sarcastic and ironic expressions to criticize the current political situation in Turkey. This movement has spread very rapidly as many protestors started to express themselves through their writings on walls or other surfaces that are publicly visible and the social media has mobilized this movement further as it allowed fast and easy transmission of writings, images or ideas. Those ironic and sarcastic expressions have been used widely by comics for political criticism for years but Gezi protestors have made them even more visible via public spheres and social media. The popular literary magazines, which were also a part of the same cultural tradition with comics, have somehow managed to embed this linguistic code into literature with their unique discursive formation. These magazines, having contributions from famous authors, musicians, journalists, actors/actresses or other well-known public figures each month, discuss the current social and political issues by highlighting ‘human stories of everyday life’ through their ‘easy-to-read’ writing format. In relation to these unique characteristics and

discursive formation, the popular literary magazines have achieved to reach very high circulation numbers in Turkey which attracted some public attention. If a certain type of literary genre or activity is privileged over other forms, as Eagleton reminds us, it says something significant about the society that we live, our socio-political context (Eagleton, 2008: 16).

Therefore, my analysis will not approach to the popular literary magazines simply as a literary genre or work but rather will try to consider them along with the power relations generated both by the cultural field and other spheres, situate them in their historical, social and political context, examine their linguistic and discursive characteristics and analyze their relationship with the public sphere and the social movements (Bourdieu, 1993; Bakhtin, 1981; Eagleton, 2008; Foucault, 1991; Habermas, 1989; Arendt, 1958; Taylor, 2004; Anderson, 2006; Çayır, 2016). In this sense, the popular literary magazines, like other cultural products, are the arenas of social and political struggle within the cultural/symbolic sphere. Therefore, theories on language, discourse, culture, public/private sphere and social movements may serve a ground for our conceptualization of the popular literary magazines. Since these magazines are considered to be literary/cultural products, it is important to go through some of the theoretical discussions about the literature and its role in social sciences.

## **1. 1. Literature and Social Reality**

There have been many theoretical discussions about the role of the cultural/symbolic sphere and particularly literature in social sciences. These theoretical discussions may offer significant insights for our research since the popular magazines tend to highlight their particular 'literary' characteristic even though they contain contributions from other cultural areas such as photography or caricature. Some argued that the 'fictional' character of literature has made it inadequate in grasping social reality. This camp represents the modernist,

positivist science understanding which dominated the intellectual sphere since the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Çayır, 2008: 12). In contrast, some thinkers (Eagleton, 2008; Bourdieu, 1993; Bakhtin, 1981) still believe that social scientists should use literature and literary products as they provide a great opportunity in revealing society's socio-cultural –and political– personality through expressions and symbols of language which are crucial in grasping social reality. Literary products and their production processes may disclose that particular society's belief system, manner of life, social relations and history because like other outputs, literary products are coming out of a socio-economic processes and realities. Literature and literary/cultural products cannot be surely placed in completely objective or descriptive categories yet they are not totally subjective either. The process of what is regarded as 'literature' is itself a social one and should be considered along with the value systems of societies and their particular historicity. Literature and its products do “more than just ‘embody’ certain social values” as Eagleton argues (2008: 15), they are vital in the deep entrenchment and wider dissemination of those social values and political ideologies through specific set of institutions such as periodicals, books or coffee houses. In this regard, sociology is providing a dynamic, theoretical ground for us while literature and literary products are helping us to see the societal/cultural accumulation of values and ideologies. Thus, discussions on the broad sense of literature lead us one step further into one of its tools, language, which is used to generate meaning and other discursive practices.

## **1. 2. Socially Constructed Nature of Language, Meaning and Discourse**

To start with, in the analysis of the popular literary magazines, the concept of language has a central importance theoretically. In the most general sense, language is the system of symbols and signs (sounds, written words, electronic images etc.) that we use for representation, in other words, to represent our

concepts, ideas and feelings to other people. To put differently, meaning is produced and circulates through language as we place values on different things in our culture (Hall, 1997: 1). Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, meaning was thought to be a natural phenomenon which simply expressed in language rather than being produced and reproduced by it. However, Saussure's (1966) works on the topic has changed this idea as he argued that the signs and language are arbitrary and conventional systems in which their meanings are fixed by codes. Language, after Saussure, came to be understood as a base for the production of meaning which changed the understanding dramatically.

On the other hand, Saussure was criticized for focusing exclusively on the formal characteristics of language (*langue*) and considered it as an abstract system which leads to a diversion of attention from other critical issues such as the social and 'dialogic' features of language (which has an effect also on individual utterances; *parole*) or the questions of power operating within the system (Hall, 1997: 35). In response to this, Russian linguist Mikhail Bakhtin shifted attention from Saussure's abstract system of *langue* to the concrete utterances of individual subjects in particular social contexts as he considered language fundamentally 'dialogic'. Sign, for Bakhtin, was to be seen as an active component of language – whether it is spoken or written– which is open to modification and transformation in meaning by variable social conditions rather than a fixed unit of an objective system (Eagleton, 2008: 101). Thus, as Bakhtin (1981) argued; we cannot separate language, a socially constructed sign-system, from its historicity and sense of community. This collective sign-system is able to generate a common ground among members of the society. Moreover, because of its strong influence, language has always been a sphere for struggle for meaning as well as to influence other meanings to form a kind of hegemony. It reflects an active struggle in which the meaning is coming and dying during that competitive process.

This process of production of meaning –or knowledge– is vital to understand the relations of power in Foucauldian sense. "Speaking of literature and ideology", Eagleton (2008: 19-20) notes, as two separate phenomena is quite

unnecessary since “literature, in the meaning of the word we have inherited, is an ideology”. Therefore, literary/cultural products such as the popular literary magazines have the most intimate relations regarding social power. After Saussure and Bakhtin, Foucault’s work has marked the shift, ‘the discursive turn’, from language to discourse in social sciences which included the questions of power. Discourse in Foucauldian sense, according to Hall (1997: 44) “is a group of statements which provide a language for talking about a particular topic at a particular historical moment”. Specific discourses are used to construct certain topics, define and produce the objects of our knowledge and render them possible for a meaningful way to talk about. Discourses and the knowledge they produce are highly interrelated with questions of power, our conduct and the construction processes of identities and subjectivities. In this regard, political issues and notions discussed in the popular literary magazines such as the refugees or the freedom of expression, are involved in this process of what Foucault called ‘power/knowledge’ as the magazines constitute a certain way of talking about these issues (as an institutional site) and produce knowledge through a range of texts, which is called their ‘discursive formation’. In this way, we should consider ‘power’ not only in its negative sense, something that excludes, represses, censors, abstracts, masks or conceals but also as a productive force, as Foucault (1991: 194) argues that “it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production”. Thus, putting Bakhtin and Foucault together, the popular literary magazines can be thought as yet another institutional site within the cultural field competing for meaning with other social groups, classes, individuals and discourses. In sociological sense, the popular literary magazines must be seen as yet another material means of production as concrete as facilities or machinery since the material body of the sign is being transformed through their discursive formation and becomes an object of socio-political contention with a particular historicity. We use the term ‘political’ not in some divine sense but rather in the sense that the way we organize our social life and the power relations embedded inevitably in it. Therefore, an analysis of the popular literary

magazines as literary/cultural products is part of the political and ideological history of our own epoch since literature is closely bound up with beliefs and values (Eagleton, 2008). In order to reach an understanding of these beliefs and values, or ‘tastes’ in Bourdieuan sense, we have to investigate further into the field of cultural production where the competition for legitimate meaning fiercely occurs just as it does in other fields.

### **1. 3. Power Relations in the Field of Cultural Production**

Pierre Bourdieu, one of the most prominent thinkers in the history of sociology, has contributed greatly to the cultural sphere with his works focusing on the field of symbolic/cultural production. *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, edited by Randal Johnson, offers vital insights about this particular sphere and for our analysis of the popular literary magazines. Bourdieu’s work covers variety of issues such as the aesthetic value, the relationship between cultural practices and broader social processes, the social position and the role of intellectuals and artists and the relationship between ‘high’ culture and ‘popular’ culture. Bourdieu’s main concerns are the role of the culture in the reproduction of social structures, unequal power relations which are embedded in our systems of classification –taste– used to identify and discuss our practices of everyday life. Indeed, value-judgments and tastes have their roots in deeper structures of belief-systems of societies which are historically variable and have close ties with social ideologies. In this regard, tastes and values do not refer simply to our private experience, but rather to assumptions by which particular social groups exercise and maintain some degree of power over others throughout history (Eagleton, 2008: 14). Bourdieu has introduced some specific notions of ‘habitus’ and ‘field’ into the social sciences which allow us to examine the symbolic world without collapsing into the reductionist approaches. His analytical model of habitus will help us in analyzing the concept of agent (the artist, or

reader) in his/her own life trajectory while the concept of field is opening a larger outlook for us to see the agent's actions within the objective social relations surrounding him/her. Therefore, each habitus has its own narrative, identity and history whereas every field (economic, educational, cultural...) is defined as a structured space with its own specific laws, ways of functioning and power relations.

For instance, in our case of cultural (symbolic or literary) field, power relations often concern with the authority inherent in consecration, recognition or prestige which is called the 'symbolic power/capital' rather than economic/material forces. Thus, we confront with two crucial forms of capital in the field of cultural/literary field which are the 'symbolic capital' that is a degree of accumulated prestige and consecration of the agent and the 'cultural capital' which concerns forms of cultural knowledge or dispositions. All of these concepts are highly important in our analysis of the popular literary magazines as these power/capital relations occupy a massive place in the field of cultural production. In light of Bourdieu's work, we are reminded that the respective producers of literature and other cultural products do not exist independently of a complex institutional framework both within and outside of the field, including political-structural power relations. Therefore, while doing my analysis on the popular literary magazines, I will also focus on objective relations and contemporary social conditions rather than just falling into formalist/text-based analysis (Johnson, 1993: 1-25).

In his first essay, *The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed*; Bourdieu (1993) opens his discussion with an important dynamic concept of 'space of positions' and 'space of position-takings' within the cultural field. He argues that each position, whether it is a genre like novel or sub-category, is subjectively defined by the system of this particular field and the relational movements within that field. The power relations may change the established space of positions from time to time after the symbolic struggles. For instance, a new literary group may modify and displace the status of the dominant

as we have seen in our case; the popular literary magazines have had an impact on these positions since they pushed the dominant classical literary magazines from their respective positions. This is just another way of thinking relationally and realizing that no cultural products exists outside the relationships they form with other products which signifies the fact that products cannot exist by themselves, in other words signifies their status of interdependence. The artists and their works come into this relational status through the production of their own particular discourse (critical, historical) about the other works and the art in general. Therefore, the critics they get or the polemics they pulled into always contain recognition of the value of the work which is apparent in the popular literary magazines as they draw lots of criticisms from various positions within the cultural production. In relation with these positions and position-takings, Bourdieu argues that there is a double hierarchy within the field of cultural production. The first one is the 'heteronomous principle of hierarchization' which concerns with the loss of autonomy in which the author becomes subject to the economic sphere and his/her success measured by the principle of 'success' (sale numbers etc.). The second principle is called the 'autonomous principle of hierarchization' which indicates a relative autonomy from the laws of the market and measured by the degree of consecration and literary prestige, even though it is still affected by the economic sphere. This double hierarchy demonstrates that there is a hidden principle of 'loser wins' in the literary/cultural field which is also apparent in our case of the popular literary magazines since any attempt to signify economic success is seen as a negative stand within the field. Nevertheless, within this site of struggles, there are different cultural groups benefitting from both of these hierarchies; namely, one camp dominant with its economic and political power and the other camp that is rich in symbolic and cultural capital.

Naturally, this sphere of struggles and position-takings are influenced by objective/structural changes occurred outside of the field of cultural production. So indeed, as Çayır (2004: 10) noted, "there is no literature outside of a given cultural context since the author (and readers) operate within a linguistic and

cultural tradition –field in a Bourdieuan sense– from which the texts’ signs are derived and interpreted”. Thus, the popular literary magazines have close ties with the events and developments occurring within the cultural and historical context. These may be political breaks or social movements which affect the power relations within and outside the cultural field. Gezi Park Protests can be given as an example of this kind of situation as it has helped the opening of new positions within the cultural/symbolic field through its own specific discourse and humor which seems to be taken by the popular literary magazines if we consider the development process of the magazines in conjunction with this external socio-political event. Consequently, the popular literary magazines –as newcomers– have brought changes to the field of cultural production as they needed to differ, occupy a distinct and distinctive position in the literary sphere in order to get known and recognized. Thus, they have endeavored to impose new modes of thought and expression into the magazine publishing in Turkey as they have aimed to combine literature and humor which leads to many criticisms from orthodoxy (classical literary magazines and their supporters) directed to them, accusing the popular literary magazines as being ‘obscure’ and ‘pointless’. What is interesting is that the popular literary magazines are somehow able to combine a group of authors coming from the professional writers, the ‘bohemian’ world of ‘proletaroid intellectuals’ who live on odd jobs of journalism or the public figures coming from other artistic spheres such as cinema or music. This complex group of contributors is made possible through the possession of a large social capital by Metin Üstündağ (*OT*) and C. Tolga Işık (*KAFKA*) –and their familiarity with the field– who formed the most successful popular literary magazines in Turkey. They are both able to sense the new hierarchies and the new structures of the chances of profit within the field, mostly in symbolic sense (Bourdieu, 1993: 29-71).

Furthermore, in the process of determining the value of the work, there is a ‘circle of belief’ according to Bourdieu (1993: 77-78). Publisher’s authority contributes this process as a credit-based system in which the writers who belong

to publisher's 'catalogue', set of agents who constitute connections during the process including critics as well as the public; which helps to make the cultural product's value in terms of certain appropriations such as materially (collectors) or symbolically (reader-base). In this sense, both *OT Dergi* and *KAFA Dergi* have been able to offer a symbolically consecrated group of authors, able to draw attention especially from orthodoxy and finally able to form a broad reader-base coming from different backgrounds of society through their 'common-sense' based and easy-to-read, humorous discourse. Moreover, the popular literary magazines' power to convince and their system of belief depend heavily on the notion of 'sincerity' which is one of the preconditions of the symbolic/cultural efficacy and it is made possible through the almost-perfect harmony between the expectations inscribed in the position the magazines occupy and the dispositions of the group of authors contributing to these magazines. This notion of sincerity is one of the things that give the intrinsic ideological discourse its particular symbolic force which is crucial for the popular literary magazines (Bourdieu, 1993: 74-111). Ultimately; these inner-field struggles and relations of power over meaning and legitimacy leads us to consider yet another, but related field: the public sphere, in where the communication and dialogue take place inevitably between different social groups and classes through inter-subjective interaction and which the popular literary magazines are part of it in a sort of way.

#### **1. 4. The Popular Literary Magazines as an Alternative Public Sphere**

The popular literary magazines can be thought together with Jürgen Habermas's conceptualizations of 'public and private spheres', 'inter-subjectivity' and 'public communication' since they are institutionalized arenas of discursive relations and interaction as well as sites for the production and circulation of discourses that are publicly open and visible (Fraser, 1990: 57). Although the concept of inter-subjectivity may contain different meanings in different spheres,

it basically refers to the 'common-sense', shared understandings and meanings constructed by people in their social and cultural life through interactions in our sociological case. As a member of the Frankfurt School, Habermas's theory of the public sphere was inspired by Adorno and Horkheimer's ideas on culture industry since they all looked for the solution against the negative effects of mass culture. According to Habermas, unlike the feudal times, modern bourgeois democratic sovereignties are based on the boundary between the subjective private sphere and the objective public sphere and private individuals' interaction within this public sphere. In other words, modern society's concept of popular sovereignty relies on the 'inter-subjectivity' and communication of the members of the society (Habermas, 1989). We can picture Habermas's concepts of private and public sphere as two concentric circles linked through 'communication'. The inner circle represents the private sphere, individual autonomy and subjective particularity which create the possibility, through inter-subjective dialogues and communication, of the outer circle of public sphere with its objectiveness and abstractness (Liu, 2002). Thus, owing to its generality and abstractness, the public sphere is able to form a "social space of communication structure" for subjective members of the society in which "they can communicate with each other, and confirm each other's subjectivity as it emerged from their spheres of intimacy" (Habermas, 1989; 1996).

This notion of inter-subjectivity is closely linked with another concept that Habermas used called the 'communicative rationality'. In order to grasp this idea, we must clarify what rationality means for Habermas. His concept of rationality relies on two criteria; validity claims that are open to criticism/objective judgment and inter-subjectivity. As Giddens (1987) puts it; something can be rational as long as it forges an understanding with at least one person, thus rationality in Habermas's terms is inter-subjective rather than being objective or subjective in itself. In this sense, Habermas (1984: 101) defines his concept of 'communicative rationality' as something "carries with it connotations based ultimately on the central experience of the unconstrained, unifying, consensus-bringing force of

argumentative speech, in which different participants overcome their merely subjective views and, owing to the mutuality of rationally motivated conviction, assure themselves of both the unity of the objective world and the inter-subjectivity of their lifeworld.” Based upon this definition of rationality, communicative action aims to reach an understanding rather than egocentric pursuits of power and knowledge (Habermas, 1984) which clearly presents an affiliation with the discourse of the popular literary magazines that emphasizes the common societal understanding of private individuals and their identities. In our case, this communicative action is made possible through the representational function of words and the inter-subjectivity formed between the author and the reader through the articles within the magazine which allow them to reach a possible understanding with one another since it is not a one-way relationship as the readers may also share their thoughts with authors through several ways, including social media.

On the other hand, Hannah Arendt (1958: 50-58) tackles the issue of public sphere a bit differently than Habermas’s conceptualization of ‘rationality’ and defines public as a “common sphere of appearances” where debate occurs between diverse perspectives and constitutes a shared world of appearances. Arendt considers public realm as a space of freedom because of this realm’s ability to create an artificial equality among members since it preserves the human condition of plurality by relating and separating people simultaneously. This public realm’s artificial world of equality enables subjects to co-exist with their individualities while offering an equal ground for public discussion (Arendt, 1958). The popular literary magazines’ ‘polyphonic’ nature, in this sense, corresponds with this idea as we frequently read human stories from various subjectivities/individualities presented us on pages equally. So indeed, the concept of ‘plurality’ itself seems to be the main concern for publishers and authors of these magazines as they often promote and highlight this matter on their pages through ‘identity’ and ‘anti-polarization-based’ discourses. The public realm once again, as Villa (1992: 714) puts it, “understood as a discursive space characterized

by symmetry, non-hierarchy and reciprocity, both presupposes and makes possible, plurality and so provides the opportunity for a politics based on mutual recognition and respect for difference”. However, according to Arendt (1973: 164), under the politics of totalitarianism, this pluralistic public sphere may be forcibly collapsed or eliminated as “the boundaries and channels of communication between individual men” are under threat of a replacement by “a band of iron which holds them so tightly together that it is as though their plurality had disappeared into One Man of gigantic dimensions”. Accordingly, authors of the popular literary magazines consistently emphasize the notions of ‘communication’ and ‘freedom of speech’ against the threat of totalitarianism in Turkish politics.

Nevertheless, both theories of public sphere have been criticized by some social scientists from various angles. One of the critiques focused on Habermas’s approach of idealizing his abstract bourgeois public sphere over other, *subaltern counter-publics*, using Nancy Fraser’s words, of subordinated social groups such as women, workers or LGBTI communities. In our case, as a potential alternative public sphere, the popular literary magazines seem to include these subaltern publics and their discourses within its scope. The popular literary magazines need not to be idealized as Habermas’s bourgeois public sphere, but they may reflect an alternative, sub-space within the cultural field which allows ‘other’ voices and discursive formations to be heard and discussed ‘inter-subjectively’. In other words, there are multiple voices, identities and narratives came together under one magazine –just like an umbrella– therefore, we may talk about a multiplicity of publics (discourses) rather than a single one. Needless to say, the popular literary magazines do not –and perhaps cannot– eliminate social inequalities all by themselves, but they certainly create a publicly visible space for various social groups which enable them to express their opinions on particular political issues. This discussion will lead us to consider some of the historical and contemporary reflections –or the effects– of the magazines and the cultural production in general.

## **1. 5. Cultural, Political and Ethical Reflections on the Popular Literary Magazines**

After all, the public sphere, the politics, the culture, the ethics and the developments in society, which are observable in the form of social movements or within the political agenda and public discussions, have tangible, and sometimes abstract, reflections on the cultural field, particularly through the processes of narrative and identity formations of the popular literary magazines, in their human stories of everyday life. The popular literary magazines and other cultural products are certainly inter-connected with processes operating in other fields such as economic or political in which they are continuously influencing each other. Therefore, discourses and meanings generated by the popular literary magazines, as a contemporary literary genre, “have social influences, political consequences and cultural power” (Çayır, 2004: 35). While at the same time, the popular literary magazines’ discursive formation was also being affected by the social forces and events.

Starting from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman Empire had gone through a series of reformation and modernization processes such as *Tanzimat* (reorganization) or the First and Second Constitutional Era. These processes had direct impacts on the field of cultural production which led to the formation of certain magazines in that century. Naturally, these early attempts of magazine publishing were doing mostly in primitive ways because of the Empire’s declining process but these reformation movements, once again, demonstrate the link between political developments and cultural production, particularly the magazine publishing. After the formation of Turkish Republic, the literary magazines had taken an active role in disseminating the ideology of modern nation-state through realism, nationalism and rationalism-based literary production. Afterwards, the magazine publishing and literary production had kept their close ties with social

and political context as social realist literature had risen during the Second World War and mystic/symbolic poetry of '*İkinci Yeni*' had become prominent under political repression of Democratic Party term which was a new type of discourse to express social and political ideologies through images and word games. '*İkinci Yeni*' poetry also worked on themes of individual loneliness and depression which reflected society's 'mood' during the rapid urbanization and industrialization of Turkey. Besides, some of the literary magazines such as *Büyük Doğu* or *Mavera*, had taken on a different role and reflected the ideas and opinions of conservative population against the secular literature which signifies the deep-rooted discursive struggle going on between two groups in cultural field as well as other fields (Günyol, 1986). Up until today, the literary magazines have kept their ties close with economic, political and social developments in Turkish society and reflected what was happening in that particular context. In this regard, it can be said that the literary magazines have always been trying to form a particular narrative and cultural identity under different socio-political contexts.

So indeed, literature is all about human narratives that use symbols, signs to product meaning which is one of the fundamental features of human existence. In his prominent work, *After Virtue*, Alasdair MacIntyre (1981: 216) attacks both to the ideas of Enlightenment liberalism and to the responses offered by post-modern thinkers to its problems, and he defines "man as a story-telling animal". He points out the fact that the Enlightenment and post-modern society have abstracted man out of his/her community and history through fragmentation of human life. Modern man's work life is divided from leisure time, public life from private life etc. Therefore, the fractured individual conceives 'virtue' as skill or talent such as being a good businessman or artist rather than seeing it as an excellence of character as a whole like Aristotle did (Maizlish, 2014). On the contrary, in order to restore the Aristotelian concept of virtue, MacIntyre proposes the idea of life as a unified narrative. While saying this, MacIntyre (1981) also indicates that the stories of our lives are always embedded in the stories of those societies and communities from which we derive our identities. Thus, he draws

attention to the other lives, histories and traditions that our own story is embedded. In this regard, we may think of the popular literary magazines in light of MacIntyre's 'narrative' concept since these magazines signify 'human stories/narratives' in their content, mostly through memoirs, to constitute cultural and political meanings. Their narrative formation may not always be well-structured –like for instance, novels– due to their limited space for many authors, but their concentric and intense formation tend to be effective in practical terms since they are being issued monthly, which enables them to be actively involved in (and influenced by) recent socio-political developments and context. Put differently, authors in the popular literary magazines tend to present their own narratives in relation to the greater social and political phenomenon or events which are naturally connected to other lives and narratives just as MacIntyre argues. Each month, the authors of the popular literary magazines are able to find something new to tell the readers while forming a dynamic narrative and discourse with their 'easy-to-read' format that enables fast and easy accumulation and dissemination of ideas. While doing this, some of the magazines, such as *Cins*, prefer an 'unilinear' narrative focusing on one center theme (conservatism) whereas others, such as *OT* or *KAFA*, prefer 'multi-directional' narratives which bring various 'stories' together in one body. Authors like Dücane Cündioğlu, Murat Menteş or Tark Tufan, who 'speak' in both secular and conservative ways, highlight the sense of 'plurality' in these multi-directional magazines. As Eagleton (2008: 100) puts it, "...we may inhabit many different 'languages' simultaneously, some of them perhaps mutually conflicting".

Hence, this whole process of the formation of narratives indicates that social actors make sense of the world they live in through their life narratives both individually and collectively as they mobilize their socially-constructed emotions and forge their identities within the boundaries of their social context. In this sense, the concept of narrative has close ties with the process of identity formation which has directly related to social and political developments of our environment (Çayır, 2004: 38-43). Indeed, the authors of the popular literary magazines tell

their short stories or memoirs about themselves, other people and their social surroundings each month that inevitably correlates with, and falls into our general understanding of the world, our perceptions and our social identities. In a similar manner, Charles Taylor (2004: 23) discusses the issues of narrative and identity in relation with our historically developed 'social imaginary', the ways in which people imagine their social existence, how they fit into the social world with others, how things and interactions go on between them and their fellows, individual experiences and expectations and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these experience and expectations. In other words, social imaginary is not a set of ideas, but rather, it is what enables for us the regular practices of society and our everyday life through making sense of them (Taylor, 2004: 2). In the concept of social imaginary, the focus is more on the way in which ordinary people 'imagine' and perceive their social surroundings which are carried in images, legends and stories of everyday life. Literary and cultural products are one of the key elements of this process since they have the power to shape our consciousness and the reality about the world we live in. Accordingly, Benedict Anderson (2006) argues that even our national consciousness, something that we take for granted most of the time, is a constructed 'imagination' through political and cultural projects and artefacts, which is closely related to the development of print capitalism and the rapid dissemination of ideas. Thus, the stories, images and representations about the social and political life in the popular literary magazines simultaneously shape both readers' and authors' understandings or 'imaginaries' as well, perhaps partly unconsciously.

Taylor (2004: 83) also touches upon the concept of 'public sphere' following Habermas's footprints and describes it as a "common space in which the members of society are deemed to meet through a variety of media" including print, electronic as well as face-to-face encounters to discuss matters of their common interest and try to form a common-sense about these issues. Public sphere has made it possible for widely dispersed individuals to share their views that have been linked in a certain space of discussion and share/exchange their

ideas as we see in our case, the popular literary magazines. People that are never met are linked in this particular common sphere of discussion through media. Readers share their ideas about the magazine, or share certain ‘quotes’ from the authors to reflect their ‘state of mind’ and thus enter into ‘dialogues’ with each other, particularly on social media. In parallel with our previous discussions on the public sphere and identity, this common realm, as Fraser notes (1990: 68) “is not only an arena for the formation of discursive opinion; in addition, it is an arena for the formation and enactment of social identities”. Authors express their opinions, value-judgments or ‘tastes’ in Bourdieuan sense through their stories and writings in the popular literary magazines. The readers, on the other hand, may either comment to these writings on social media or send their own material to the magazines with a possibility of getting published each month. Therefore, we can talk about a kind of ‘participation’ and ‘inter-subjectivity’ of both parties. This participation of both sides creates the possibility of “being able to speak ‘in one’s own voice’, thereby simultaneously constructing and expressing one’s own cultural identity through idiom and style” on this common sphere (Fraser, 1990: 69).

According to Taylor, one of the crucial characteristics of this sphere is its ‘extra-political’ status. In our modern social imaginary, debates of public sphere are supposed to be listened to by political authorities but it is not a mandatory condition, thus these debates are not themselves an exercise of power. These extra-political and meta-topical debates form a certain kind of a discourse emanating from reason (not power) about specific issues such as security, freedom, peace or polarization through activities of various media (Taylor, 2004: 83-99). So indeed, matters discussed or expressed in the popular literary magazines usually correspond to these issues that concern almost every member of society, far from being completely subjective or individual wishes. After all, culture (and cultural production) is so vitally bound up with one’s common identity which is also related to political struggle (Eagleton, 2008: 187). Throughout history, there have been various successful combinations of cultural

and political action and one of them is the feminist movement which –as a social movement– have changed most of the established cultural perceptions about women by using their ‘discourse of the body’ through series of images, representations, academic as well as literary publications.

In this regard, the popular literary magazines, as cultural products, may reflect some of the characteristics of the ‘new social movements’ of the world that came up in Western societies after 1960s. The New Social Movements theory seeks to explain the social movements arose particularly in the United States and Europe during roughly the mid-1960s. Human rights, ecology, LGBTI, women’s and peace movements can be given as examples of this kind of new movements. These new movements were different than classical social movements in terms of their themes, agents, values and forms and they were focused more on the issue of ‘identity’. In other words, new social movements have been giving their struggle for existence in cultural (symbolic) sphere rather than economic sphere which was the case in the classical social movements (Çayır, 2016). In this sense, we may claim that there is a tacit affinity or there are some common features between the new social movements and the popular literary magazines that are published by ‘actors’ as they both operate in the cultural/symbolic sphere –as well as political– and they both differ from their classical counterparts in very close ways.

Both the new social movements and the popular literary magazines aim for the control –or at least to make an impact– on the cultural sphere through developing new discourses and generating new meanings against the dominant social order/discourse. They both contain complex elements and agents coming from different economic and ideological backgrounds who struggle for the preservation/promotion of their unique identity (like LGBTI or women’s movements) and/or for their common cause (peace, anti-polarization). Their agents –authors in our case– are not formed hierarchically as it was in the classical movements but rather they operate mostly individually to make their symbolic/cultural cause visible to the greater public. In this respect, they act like a ‘new media’ just as the popular literary magazines do. They both question the

legitimacy of the hegemonic discourse and try to open it to dispute. These new social movement networks allow multiple affiliations of their members as we can see authors contributing to multiple magazines at the same time in our case. While the gap between public and private spheres has becoming more and more transitive; the new social movements and the popular literary magazines seem to stand somewhere between them as they are not completely public nor private, but also they are both public and private in some sense, particularly due to their subjective and political features. Although it would be too speculative to claim that the popular literary magazines are also a part of the new social movements, it is at least apparent that both of them is trying to generate a new social sphere with their special emphasis on cultural and symbolic values due to inadequate political alternatives (Melucci, 2016: 75-100).

Strikingly, we can observe that the great majority of authors of the popular literary magazines are visible in the new social movements in Turkey either through active involvement or through their supportive articles, especially in the Gezi Park Protests. During the demonstrations, different ideological, political and social groups were able to come together under a ‘*carnivalesque*’ atmosphere, using Bakhtin’s terminology. This atmosphere corresponds almost perfectly with Habermas’s and Arendt’s conceptualization of public sphere and inter-subjectivity (Avcı, 2013). Many of the authors of the popular literary magazines such as Ahmet Mümtaz Taylan, Can Bonomo, Emrah Serbes, Burak Aksak, Onur Ünlü, Zafer Algöz, Nejat İşler... etc. participated in the protests while others such as Murat Menteş or Düccane Cündioğlu supported the movement with their articles on social media or newspapers which drew some harsh criticisms from the conservative or pro-government wing. After the protests, authors have carried their resistance onto their pages of the popular literary magazines. In a similar manner, *Yaprak Dergisi* (1949-50) was actively involved in the campaign for poet Nazım Hikmet’s release from the prison among other intellectuals both local and worldwide (Günyol, 1986). Yet another example of tangible political reflections on the cultural field can be given from the transatlantic; when the Caribbean

literary magazines stood against the colonial rule and tried to form a national identity (in Benedict Anderson's sense), revive their national culture, literature and language with their strong political stance which led to the independence movements in many countries in the region (Rodriquez, 1985: 83-92).

That is to say, "literature" as Eagleton (2008: 17) puts it, "has become a whole alternative ideology, and the 'imagination' itself, becomes a political force. Its task is to transform society in the name of those energies and values which art embodies". Just as the Romantic poets that Eagleton talks about, many authors of the popular literary magazines are also political activists who perceive continuity rather than conflict between their literary and social commitments. In the same vein, '68 Movements were unable to break the rigid structures of state power but then they tried to dislocate the very structures of language for their cause. Both the '68 Movements and Gezi Park Protests were flushed off the streets but these new social movements kept their hopes alive through discourse, cultural production and particularly literature in our case (Eagleton, 2008: 123).

## CHAPTER II

### **THE HISTORY OF TURKISH LITERARY MAGAZINE PUBLISHING: POLITICAL CONTESTATIONS WITHIN THE CULTURAL SPHERE**

The history of Turkish magazine publishing and the literature in general, starting from the late Ottoman period up until today's popular literary magazines, have closely related to the developments in the political sphere and proceeded in conjunction with Turkish political history. Historically, the literary magazines have always been the spheres of cultural, political, ideological and discursive struggle for meaning between different groups, in different periods. Although it is impossible to tell the every single case or incident in this particular area, in this section, I will try to mention the crucial points, main themes and ideas regarding the history of the magazine publishing, its close relation with the political conditions of the particular period and the evolution of the Turkish literary field as a sphere of struggle between various social, cultural and political ideologies. Therefore, my focus will be on the overall historical development of the literary magazines concerning their cultural and political dispositions and finally the emergence of the popular literary magazines as the latest phenomenon in the space of cultural production in Turkey. In line with this purpose, I will be relying mostly on two influential documents, Vedat Günyol's (1986) *Sanat ve Edebiyat Dergileri* and Erdal Doğan's (1997) *Edebiyatımızda Dergiler*, since these two are the fundamental works written on the literary magazines, though, which is still very limited considering the 156 years of magazine publishing on Turkish soil.

## 2. 1. The Magazine Publishing in the Late Ottoman Period (1861-1923)

The history of magazine publishing in Turkish literary sphere dates back to the 1860s. *Mecmua-i Fünun*, published by Münif Paşa, who was a member of the Ottoman intelligentsia, spent time and received education in Western states and influenced by their ideas, appeared in 1861. It is considered the first magazine in Turkish history, discounting the fact that a special professional medical magazine, *Vekayi-i Tıbbiye* was published in 1850. Generally speaking, there was plenitude of magazines in this era, though they were not effective due to the pressures from the Ottoman court and they mostly focused on technical issues such as medicine, military or science. The magazines remained largely unpolitical until the Second Constitutional Era (*II. Meşrutiyet*), due to the Ottoman court's strict control on published material. Number of critical works relatively increased during the Constitutional Era as the court's strict control loosened. This fact also demonstrates the close relationship between the literary and political spheres. Major magazines of this period were; *Mecmua-i Fünun* (1861), *Ceride-i Askeriye* (1863), *Mecmua-i Ulum* (1867), *Mecmua-i Ebüzziya* (1880), *Hazine-i Evrak* (1881), *Malumat* (1893) and *İçtihat* (1904). Additionally, *Servet-i Fünun* (1891), an 'avant-garde literary journal', *Genç Kalemler* (1910), a review supporting the ideology of Turkism, and *Dergah* (1921) were also significant magazines in the pre-Republican period.

## 2. 2. Historical Background of the Literary Magazine Publishing in Turkey

The close relations between the literary field and the politics continued in the early republican period and the process of nation-state formation. The nationalist-republican elite made series of reforms following the foundation of modern Turkey, including the alphabet reform, which changed the nation's script

into Latin. This groundbreaking development affected the society, literacy rate as well as the magazines and caused a great decline in both their numbers and circulations, especially in the first ten years of the republic. In this first 10 year-period, the magazines formed a collective discourse, engaging in a discursive battle against the old ideas and declaring their loyalty to the newly formed republic and its official ideology, namely; Kemalism. Notable magazines of this period were: *Resimli Ay*, *Hayat Mecmuası*, *Fikirler*, *Güneş*, *Meşale* and *Uyanış*. *Resimli Ay* occupied a distinct position among these magazines as it covered a range of topics such as literature, fashion, theatre and pedagogy, had a very popular group of contributors like Nazım Hikmet and Sabahattin Ali and its articles touched upon the actual social problems of that particular period for the establishment of a sustainable democracy. One of magazine's founders', Sabiha Sertel, later explained this distinct position in her memoir:

*Resimli Ay*'s method of propaganda was completely brand new. It pursued a goal of explaining the relationship of ideas with the people's daily needs, showing them to live in a certain way, rather than presenting these ideas to them as clichés or dogmas. Hence, the emphasis was placed on the articles that could capture the readers' souls and hearts through presenting lively and real topics, directly taken from life.<sup>3</sup> (Sertel, 1969: 88; cited in Doğan, 1997: 15)

In a sense, *Resimli Ay*'s approach to the social problems, its inclusion of wide range of authors (including socialist authors such as Nazım Hikmet and Sabahattin Ali), leftist notions (though implicitly due to the political pressures) and diverse topics echoes today's popular literary magazines in some ways.

During the 1930s, the newly formed Turkish Republic was eagerly continued to pursue its reform and the nation-building process under the

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<sup>3</sup> Original text: “*Resimli Ay*'ın propaganda metodu da tamamıyla yeni idi. Fikirleri bir klişe halinde, bir dogma halinde okuyuculara sunmak değil, bu fikirlerin, halkın günlük ihtiyaçlarıyla olan ilgisini açıklamak, onlara tutulacak yolu göstermek amacı güdüyordu. Bunun içindir ki, okuyuculara hayattan alınmış, canlı, reel konular sunulmuş, okuyucunun ruhunu, kalbini fethedecek yazılara önem verilmişti.”

modernization project, especially in education. The literary magazines of that time actively involved in disseminating the official ideology of modern nation-state as they mostly discussed the themes of national language, national history, national culture and national literature in this period. Strikingly, in the late 1930s, an article published in *İnsan* magazine defined these cultural developments as “Turkish Renaissance” and many magazines included the theme of ‘humanism’ in their content. Furthermore, *Ülkü* magazine was published by Ankara Community Center (*Halkevi*) to propagate the official narrative of the nation-state under the editor-in-chief Recep Peker, who was a former prime minister of Turkey, and it was named directly by Mustafa Kemal. In terms of the culture policy, Translation Bureau started to publish *Tercüme Mecmuası* in order to introduce the western classics into the Turkish language as a part of the top-down modernization process. Discussions concerning a certain type of ‘village literature’ also started in this period as a part of the material and discursive conflict between the East and West or primitive and modern. As it is seen, the literature of the cultural sphere and its sub-category, the magazine publishing, went hand in hand with the modernization process and political developments of Turkey from the very beginning of its formation and they contributed to the constitution of the social imaginary of the national-subjects and their narratives.

Afterwards, during the 1940s, under the social, economic and political conditions of the World War II, the literary magazines’ authors started to focus more on leftist notions in their articles, stories and poems through social realist perspective. On the other hand, there were few other magazines, such as *Büyük Doğu*, that advocated the right-wing politics of nationalism and conservatism against the potential threat of communism of the Soviet Union. Yet again, it is clear that we cannot think language and one of its constructions, literature, separately from its historicity and social conditions in Bakhtinian (1981) sense, as the harsh conditions of war highly affected the content of the cultural production in Turkey, as elsewhere. In this sense, *Yaprak* magazine (1949-1950) set a great example as it advocated and discussed the subjects of democracy, human rights

and the freedom of thought and expression in its pages. As a concrete extension to the political sphere, *Yaprak Dergisi*, as a cultural institutional site, was actively involved in the pardoning campaign for Nazım Hikmet, a well-known Turkish poet who was imprisoned because of his communist political views. In the 27<sup>th</sup> issue of the magazine, poet Orhan Veli Kanık stated the reasons for supporting the campaign:

...The issue of Nazım Hikmet, for us, is not a right-wing or left-wing matter, but rather, it is a matter of humanity. It is a matter of returning the rights to a person who is deprived of freedom for unjust reasons. Tomorrow, such an injustice may happen to another person who believes to the whole another ideology, believe me, we will be mobilized again.<sup>4</sup> (*Yaprak*, 1950; cited in Doğan, 1997: 45)

In a sense, *Yaprak* was acted as a ‘social movement’ by actively involving and supporting this campaign for human rights. In addition, another literary magazine of that period, *Varlık*, was first published in 1933 and it still operates as a strong classical literary magazine in the Turkish field of cultural production, making it as the longest-lived magazine in Turkey.

During the 1950s, under the Democratic Party government, there was an oppressive political atmosphere against the opponents and the previous institutions of the Republican People’s Party as DP government closed the village institutes and community centers. Correspondingly, as the political oppression increased, the cultural field generated an alternative discourse, especially in poetry with *İkinci Yeni* movement that became prominent in this period, which was based on the extensive use of images and word games in poems, to combat against political pressures. Notable literary magazines of this period can be listed as; *Hisar*, *Mavi*, *Türk Dili*, *Yeditepe*, *Berber*, *Çağrı*, *Dost*, *a*, *Pazar Postası* and *Ufuklar/Yeni Ufuklar*. Among these literary magazines, *Pazar Postası*, a weekly

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<sup>4</sup> Original text: “...Nazım Hikmet meselesi, bizim için, bir sağlık, solluk meselesi değil, bir insanlık meselesidir. Hürriyeti haksız yere elinden alınmış bir insana, haklarını geri verme meselesidir. Yarın öbür gün böyle bir haksızlık apayrı zihniyetteki bir insanın da başına gelir, inanın, biz o gün de seferberiz.”

political newspaper/magazine which included an influential art and literature supplement, occupied a distinct position as it was able to gather the important figures coming from different backgrounds under its pages including Sezai Karakoç, Behçet Necatigil, Turgut Uyar, Can Yücel, Aziz Nesin and Ece Ayhan, particularly the authors and poets affiliated with *İkinci Yeni* movement, allowed its authors to write and discuss various topics without any censorship and tried to resist the political repression. Poet Cemal Süreya depicted this atmosphere as:

*Pazar Postası* was like the fair of Oqaz<sup>5</sup>... In a manner, it was desired for everyone to discuss everything, to tell anything they like. It was not suggested directly by someone either... Attila İlhan characterized this crowd as “the circus”. (Süreya, 2015; cited in Doğan, 1997: 56)

Besides, the literary magazines in this period were actively engaged in dialogues inter-subjectively, both within the same magazine and with other magazines which contributed to the cultural and intellectual production with fruitful debates.

Turkish literary magazines and the cultural sphere in general, entered a new phase with the 1961 constitution. After the repressive political atmosphere under the Democratic Party rule, the new constitution allowed better opportunities for the freedom of thought and publication. In this period of wide realm of freedoms, starting with the year 1960, the cultural production flourished as a large number of publishing houses opened and magazines published with various different ideological backgrounds. Bülent Ecevit, a former prime minister of the Republic of Turkey, portrayed this new era in his article, titled “Going out from the Darkness” (*Karanlıktan Çıkış*) written for *Dost* magazine’s 34<sup>th</sup> issue:

It was an era of darkness for Turkish cultural life under the Democratic Party government that lasted for 10 years... In recent years, Turkish society and Turkish intelligentsia were able to show the courage for their desire for liberties, openly carry out the struggle for freedom, by voicing it in

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<sup>5</sup> Pre-Islamic fair in Arabia in which the various tribes came together to trade and discuss. In the fair, a poetry competition was also held and the best poems were hung on the walls of Kaaba.

newspapers or streets even under the hardest and most serious threats... Now, it is time for the Turkish Republic to move towards the light after the 10 years of darkness period. Under this light, Turkish society and Turkish artists will meet again, and will have the opportunity to get strength and speed from each other by working together...<sup>6</sup> (Dost, 1960; cited in Günyol, 1986: 64)

As it is seen, this new environment of growing liberties allowed different political or ideological groups to gather around various magazines, which led to the formation of certain sides in cultural sphere, for instance, the right-wing literary magazines such as *Diriliş*. Yet, social realism and the leftist notions managed to become the prominent theme in the literary magazines during 1960s. Notable literary magazines of the period between 1960 and 1970 can be listed as: *Türk Kültürü*, *Diriliş*, *Yeni Dergi*, *Papirüs*, *Ataç*, *Değişim*, *Yordam*, *Şiir Sanatı*, *Edebiyat*, *Dönem*, *Yeni İnsan*, *Evrım* and *Devinim*.

The 1970s up until the 1980 military coup was the period that the unsteady political environment in Turkey had its reflections on the cultural sphere and the literary magazines. The rapid social and political polarization had an impact on the cultural production as the sides chosen up in magazine publishing as well as in the political sphere. The political and ideological identity of the literary magazines became evident, perhaps as it was never before (Baycanlar, 2012: 291). Some magazines, such as *Mavera*, formed a conservative discursive formation while some others, such as *Militan*, formed a socialist one. Prominent literary magazines in this period were: *Sanat Emeği*, *Mavera*, *Milliyet Sanat*, *Yeni Adımlar*, *Yeni a*, *Militan*, *Birikim*, *Yansıma*, *Yarına Doğru*, *Halkın Dostları*, *Türk Edebiyatı*, *Güney*, *Türkiye Yazıları* and *Eleştiri*.

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<sup>6</sup> Original text: “On yıllık DP iktidarı Türk kültür hayatı için bir karanlık çağ oldu... Türk toplumu, Türk aydını, son yıllarda en çetin, en ağır tehditler karşısında bile hürriyet mücadelesini açıktan yürütebilecek, hürriyet isteğini gazetelerde, sokaklarda dile getirebilecek cesareti göstermiştir... Şimdi Türk Cumhuriyetinin 10 yıllık karanlık çağından aydınlığa çıkış zamanıdır. Bu aydınlıkta Türk toplumuyla Türk sanatçısı, 10 yıllık bir ayrılıktan sonra yeniden buluşacak, yeniden el birliğiyle çalışma, birbirinden güç ve hız alma imkanına kavuşacaktır...”

In the 1980s, there was a quantitative decrease in the number of the published literary magazines, due to the 1980 coup and the repressive administration of the military government. On the other hand, there were also changes in qualitative terms as the large capital (companies) entered into the magazine publishing sphere through its media organizations, such as *Hürriyet Gösteri*, and started to transform the publishing sector. Under these conditions, *Yazko Edebiyat*, a magazine of the first Turkish cooperation of writers and translators, occupied a central position as it was able to gather important writers of that period under its pages. It tried to constitute a ‘free-space’ for its authors to discuss social and cultural matters which was very limited due to the martial law of the military government. *Yazko*’s editor-in-chief, Adnan Özyalçiner, explained their intentions in an interview:

Since it was forbidden to talk about politics, then, we could express our ideas through literature, culture, and art... Authors could disseminate their ‘democratic ideas’ through literature, culture, and art more effectively. *Yazko Edebiyat* was published because of this cause, for defending the democracy in art, literature and political ideas. (Doğan, 1997: 192-193)

*Gergedan* and *Sanat Olayı* can be given as other influential magazines in this period. The literary popular literary magazines’ antecedents, on the other hand, came out in the 1990s along with a new and unique conceptualization of the magazines, combining literary work with humoristic, ironic and sarcastic elements.

### **2. 3. A New Type of Magazine Publishing: *Öküz* and *Hayvan* as the Initial Forms of the Popular Literary Magazines**

The new conceptualization of the literary magazines differs from its classical counterparts, which were mentioned above, in various ways, regarding

their form, techniques, content, language and discursive formation. Thus, analyzing the popular literary magazines phenomenon primarily requires a description of this new type of magazine publishing with its distinctive elements. Having presented the history of literary-cultural magazine publishing in Turkey, in this section, first, I will identify the distinguishing characteristics of the popular literary magazines and how they differ from the previous magazines through their use of the language, techniques and forms. Then, as a part of the historical development, I will be providing some insights about *Öküz* and *Hayvan* magazines as initial forms of today's popular literary magazines. Finally, I will try to depict today's popular literary magazines, *OT* and *KAFA* magazines, as the core examples of this analysis.

### **2. 3. 1. Unique Experiment in the Cultural Field: Combining Humor and Literature as a New Recipe for the Literary Magazine Publishing**

In these days, as it has come to the public's attention, there have been many discussions on social media and the internet in general about the phenomenon of the popular literary magazines. Above all, what are the popular literary magazines? First and foremost, starting from *Öküz* magazine in 1996, today's popular literary magazines have appeared with the motivation of combining humor and literature. Founder of this alternative sphere, Metin Üstündağ expressed his thoughts on this motivation in an interview:

My field is humor. I was feeling uncomfortable with the perception of the humor and literature as two separate fields in Turkey. Literary magazines did not include humorous articles, and the humorous magazines did not

feature literary articles. I tried to end this separation and integrate these two fields.<sup>7</sup> (Üstündağ, 2001)

Through this motivation, the popular literary magazines are being issued monthly and it is easy to find them in book stores, kiosks and elsewhere. In terms of the printing techniques; the popular literary magazines use the ‘newsprint’ paper which seems quite old-fashioned for a contemporary magazine, but it constitutes a sense of ‘intimacy’ between the magazine and its reader-base. Regarding the literary forms; the popular literary magazines publish short stories, poems, memoirs, interviews and fictional/non-fictional prose. Each month, the current political agenda is being discussed by some of the contributors through these literary forms with either implicit or explicit political messages. In this sense, one of the specific characteristics about the popular literary magazines is their use of language. The motivation of combining humor and literature have generated a ‘new type of street language’ that reached its peak at the Gezi Park Protests in 2013, supplied by irony, humor and sarcasm and literary elements as well as the social media, which became highly popular especially among the youth in Turkey. Correspondingly, the popular literary magazines were able to channel this new language into their pages, as the most crucial part of their discursive formation. This humorous language, as an alternative political mode of communication, “has generated due to the political pressures, yet, it has already existed in comic magazines’ tradition” (Üstündağ, June, 11, 2001).

Another common feature of the popular literary magazines’ is their highly famous authorial crew. Authors are predominantly nation-wide famous public figures such as writers, singers, actor/actresses, journalists or popular social media users. In this sense, a complex group of authors, which consisted of Islamists, socialists, authors with various ethnic backgrounds, also contributes to these magazines’ ideal to do ‘polyphonic’ magazine publishing. Moreover, the authors’

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<sup>7</sup> Original text: “Benim alanım mizah. Türkiye’de mizah ve edebiyatın iki ayrı alan gibi algılanmasından rahatsızlık duyuyordum. Edebiyat dergilerinde mizah yazılarıma, mizah dergilerinde de edebiyat yazılarıma yer verilmiyordu. Ben, bu ayrılığa son verip, iki alanı kaynaştırmaya çalıştım.”

articles often contain intense aphorisms which are internet and social media-friendly, allowing the ideas to disseminate rapidly and sharing of these short, but striking sentences by readers in other platforms can be considered as an effort to generate a certain kind of a social capital in Bourdieuan (1993) sense.

### **2. 3. 2. The Classical vs The Popular: Differentiating Characteristics of the Popular Literary Magazines**

In the light of these observations; we can capture several differences between the classical literary-cultural magazines and the popular literary magazines in terms of their form, content, use of language and their discursive formation in general. First of all, the motivation of integrating everyday humor and literature in the popular literary magazines is mostly absent in the classical literary magazines since they approach these two as separate cultural fields, as indicated above. Secondly, the popular literary magazines prefer short, ‘easy-to-read’ informal forms which signify ‘human stories’ (like memoirs) of everyday life, whereas the classical literary magazines often prefer longer texts and analyses with a detailed monthly political or literary case for deep intellectual discussion. In this regard, we may argue that the popular literary magazines are trying to do ‘experimental magazine publishing’ due to their content which focuses mostly on everyday human experience in relation with everyday politics through daily (informal) language. In this sense, it is clear that both genres follow the current political agenda but the classical literary magazines contain deeper analyses and longer texts with special emphasis on the use of literary and/or academic language. Moreover, the classical literary magazines are published for a relatively more limited number of copies and they apply to a relatively narrow reading public due to their sophisticated content. On the other hand, the popular literary magazines are being published for a greater number, and their distribution is much wider. Considering that the popular literary magazines’ authors are mostly well-

known public figures, writing each month with the ‘easy-to-read’ format, they are able to reach a greater number of readers (monthly circulations as of January 2016; *OT*: 36.970 and *KAFA*: 40.344<sup>8</sup>) from broad segments of society which is why I prefer to call them ‘the popular’ literary magazines. After presenting this general picture of this phenomenon, now, I will mention *Öküz* and *Hayvan* magazines, as they were the first examples of this type of magazine publishing.

### 2. 3. 3. First Steps into the Popular Literary Magazines: *Öküz* and *Hayvan*

*Öküz* was first published in May 1996 as a literary/cultural and art magazine by Metin Üstündağ, Hatice Meryem, Cebraail Okçu and Oylum Gölbaşı. The magazine was issued weekly in its first 31 volumes and turned into the monthly basis for the rest of its printing history. Regarding the process of choosing the magazine’s name; *Öküz*, which literally means “ox”, Metin Üstündağ already started to generate his ironic/humorous discursive formation as he noted in an interview:

The ox is a humiliated, sorrowful and gloomy animal even though it deserves so much more and it is also vulgar and bulky as well. On the other hand, the literature is a fine and elegant interest. We wanted to show what we are trying to do already with the title of the magazine.<sup>9</sup> (Üstündağ, 2001)

In a sense, Metin Üstündağ and his friends’ project also aimed to generate a new kind of discourse to ‘demystify’ the ‘sacred’ literary field by using contradictory elements all together, including the title of the magazine.

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<sup>8</sup> Source: <http://medyanoz.org/Haber/9651/OCAK-2016-EDEBIYAT-DERGILERI-TIRAJ-SONUCLARI>, Retrieved May 28, 2017

<sup>9</sup> Original text: “Öküz, çok şeyi hakettiği halde aşağılanan, gamlı, mahzun bir hayvan, bir o kadar da kaba ve hantal. Edebiyat ise çok ince, zarif bir uğraş. Ne yapmak istediğimiz daha derginin ismini görünce anlaşılın istedik.”

*Öküz*'s source of inspiration was 'the streets'. Magazine's articles were written by famous authors such as Orhan Pamuk, Can Yücel, Ece Ayhan, Fazıl Hüsnü Dağlarca, Ferhan Şensoy, Can Dündar, Perihan Mağden, Gani Müjde, Sunay Akın, küçük iskender and Cüneyt Özdemir as well as by unknown contributors of amateur and young poets/writers or a prostitute, Mehtap Kandemir. Metin Üstündağ clarifies this environment of complex group of authors:

*Öküz* is a magazine that is open for everyone who is literate and who has troubles and matters to tell. This magazine is a platform, a 'green-field'. We want people to 'breathe' in here and to be able to tell things that they could not say in other places. The only point that we are trying to make of is diversity, colorfulness.<sup>10</sup> (Üstündağ, 2001)

*Öküz* also conducted several interviews with people who sleep on the streets and carry their stories onto the greater public sphere. Moreover, the magazine's interviews with Ece Ayhan, one of the most influential poets in Turkish cultural history, was later published as a book called *Öküz'lemeler*. In this way, *Öküz* magazine was able to tell about 'the other' lives (or alternative narratives) to its readers and the greater public through its own, unique ways. Thus, this effort of telling the alternative stories makes *Öküz* an important reference guide on what happened during the 1990s in Turkey. They tried to reveal the 'blur sides of the life' and wanted their magazine "to have resemblance to the life with its content, form, ethics and aesthetics because the obscurity and absurdity of life cannot be explained solely with high literature" (Üstündağ, 2001). *Öküz* stopped publishing in November 2001 with its 90<sup>th</sup> issue. It achieved a great success and popularity during its time of publishing, and became a somewhat legendary social/cultural phenomenon particularly among younger generations.

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<sup>10</sup> Original text: "Öküz, eli kalem tutan, derdi, meselesi olan herkese açık bir dergi. Bu dergi bir platform, yeşil alan. İnsanlar burada nefes alsınlar, başka yerde söyleyemediklerini söylesinler istiyoruz. Dikkat ettiğimiz tek nokta, çeşitlilik, renklilik."

In February 2003, Metin Üstündağ published another literary/cultural-arts magazine: *Hayvan* (literally meaning ‘the animal’). This magazine’s form and content was very similar to *Öküz* and *Hayvan* was considered the successor of it. Along the same line, well-known public figures and authors such as Yaşar Kemal, Oğuz Aral or Yılmaz Erdoğan contributed to the new magazine. Although there were no large differences between two magazines, *Hayvan* was not able to maintain the high popularity of *Öküz* and it stopped publishing three years later, in 2006. Both magazines have added another dimension to the established magazine publishing sector and the cultural field in Turkey. These magazines were able to fill a certain void in the cultural sphere as they treated subjects that people could not reach in the mainstream media. Starting from the *Gırgır* and other humor magazines’ specific cultural tradition and legacy, both *Öküz* and *Hayvan* were articulated in this process of alternative media and language. They were able to capture the alternative narratives and moments through their strong connection with the culture of the streets which the mainstream and/or highly politicized partisan media organs were either consciously or unconsciously missing. Thus, both magazines have prepared the proper ground for the emergence of the contemporary literary magazines in the next years.

#### **2. 4. The Emergence of the Contemporary Literary Magazines: Examples of *OT* and *KAFA***

After 7 years, Metin Üstündağ started to publish another popular literary magazine, along the same line and tradition with previous experiments. *OT* was first issued on February 14<sup>th</sup> 2013. This magazine also identifies itself as a combination of culture, current political agenda, literature and humor. Thus, what we confront with *OT* magazine is another effort to make inter-disciplinary literary/cultural magazine publishing. The name of the magazine, *OT* which

literally means weed/grass, like the previous ones, contains metaphoric elements. Metin Üstündağ accounts on how he decided on this name and the previous ones:

We have laid the emphasis on the things which were believed to be unnecessary up to the present. Both the ox and the animal (*Öküz* and *Hayvan*) were words that contained insulting meanings. *OT* (weed/grass) also vegetates everywhere but it is considered worthless.<sup>11</sup> (Üstündağ, August, 30, 2013)

In the same vein, *OT*'s ex-editor-in-chief, Nurhak Kaya notes on the name of the magazine:

Weed is not considered as valuable as daisy or rose, so; our effort was an attempt to honor something that was seen insignificant. We wanted to give the value to the things that we have in life, run across at any moment, but we do not pay any attention.<sup>12</sup> (Kaya, May, 08, 2016)

Similarly, *OT*'s official motto is: “Purpose is; let it be greenery!” (“*Maksat yeşillik olsun!*”), alternatively can be translated as “just for fun” in colloquial language, which characterizes the magazine’s objective to be open for every social layer of society and to present a polyphonic environment for both writers and readers, like an “open, green field” for everyone to express their opinions freely.

One of the main objectives of the magazine is to increase the number of readers and canalize the fanatic –and marginalized– humor magazine readers into the literary/cultural sphere (Üstündağ, February, 14, 2013). Since Metin Üstündağ frequently tries to combine literature and humor under the same form, *OT* offers a common space for different forms of artistic production, wide range of authors for their readers coming from variety of social, economic and political backgrounds.

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<sup>11</sup> Original text: “Bugüne dek hep gereksiz olduğu düşünülen şeyler üzerinde durduk. Öküz ve Hayvan da hakaret barındıran kelimelerdi. Ot da her yerde biter ama çok değeri yoktur.”

<sup>12</sup> Original text: “Ot, papatya ya da gül gibi değerli bulunmaz; bizimkisi de önemsiz bulunan bir şeyi onurlandırma girişimiydi bir nevi. Hayatımızda var olan, her an rastladığımız ama önemsemediklerimize hak ettikleri değeri vermek istedik.”

The magazine's content includes articles on culture, art, politics and literature, illustrations, caricatures and interviews conducted with people ranging from the well-known public figures to a family in Southeastern Turkey. In the same way, *OT* has a wide range of authors, either contributing each month or writing from time to time, including the popular figures such as Zülfü Livaneli, Ertuğrul Mavioglu, Tarık Tufan, Selim İleri, Düccane Cündiođlu, Jehan Barbur, Murat Menteş, Ali Atay, Gündüz Vassaf, Sevan Nişanyan, Hakan Günday, Haydar Ergülen, Seray Şahiner and many others with complex socio-political dispositions. *OT* also has a café, publishing house, store and a comic magazine.

As the other subject of analysis of this thesis, *KAFA* magazine is another monthly-issued popular literary magazine. It first published in September 2014 by journalist-writer Candaş Tolga Işık, who previously contributed to *OT* with his articles. Just like its counterpart, *KAFA* also has a wide range of content and contributors coming from different backgrounds. As to form and content, it is very similar to *OT* and it seems to maintain the same cultural tradition as their practices and the messages they convey share many common points. *KAFA*'s editorial coordinator, Ayça Derin Karabulut indicates their overall intentions:

Surely, as a literary product, *KAFA* has a backbone that deliberately and willingly slips into the political humor, which constitutes its political views as well. However, this backbone (of political stance) comes from the social democracy rather than a certain kind of traditionalist-authoritarian views. Its wide range of authors verifies this fact... In this regard, our magazine takes up its position about life as 'everyone can speak, everyone can write'... So much so that, being critical is a must for a magazine that has something to say. The ones who do not dissent, who cannot keep dissenting, do not belong to the sphere of literature and art, but somewhere else.<sup>13</sup> (Karabulut, 2015)

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<sup>13</sup> Bir edebiyat ürünü olarak elbette "KAFA"nın da politik mizaha bilerek ve isteyerek kayan, bununla beraber siyasi görüşünü oluşturan bir omurgası var. Ancak bu omurga öyle gelenekçi bir otoriterlikten ziyade olsa olsa sosyal demokratlıktan geliyor. Son derece geniş bir yelpazeden

*KAFA* was able to gather reputable and well-known figures, such as Ferhan Şensoy, Adalet Ağaoğlu, İlber Ortaylı, Emrah Serbes, Alper Canıgüz, Selahattin Demirtaş, Can Dündar, Sunay Akın, Rıdvan Akar, Metin Uca, Levent Erden, İsmail Saymaz, Zafer Algöz or Ataoğlu Behramoğlu, to contribute which increased their popularity and made them ‘the best-seller’ popular literary magazine in terms of monthly circulations.

Both magazines and their equivalents are also being criticized harshly for having ‘fast-food’ type short and marketable contents that aimed only to the consumption, for commodifying the decedent public figures and the narratives of ‘the Other’, for having authors with contradictory political stances, for commercializing the left-wing notions, for not being ‘literary magazines’ at all and so on (Semercioğlu, 2016; Kara, 2015; Bilgin, 2016; Şimşek, 2015; Gümüş, 2016; Sarıdoğan, 2016; Öz, 2015). Certainly, the cultural sphere needs critical thinking and some of these critics may offer a fair ground for discussion and may include valid insights. However, this thesis, naturally, will not be able to discuss each critic with every detail. Instead, as Bourdieu (1993) reminds us, we need to consider the popular literary magazines as literary/cultural products within the cultural sphere and this sphere is not independent from the power relations of ‘positions’ and ‘position-takings’. For instance; *Cins* magazine is being published in the same form with other popular literary magazines, but it prefers to generate an alternative –conservative– discourse against them, again, in conjunction with the power relations within the field. *Cins*’s authorial formation relies greatly on authors coming from Islamic circles and these authors frequently engage in a discursive battle against ‘polyphonic’ framework of the other popular literary magazines, as they generate ‘unilineal’ narratives. *Cins*’s discursive formation is based on the concept of ‘cultural hegemony’, which is allegedly possessed by the secular elites in Turkey and the authors persistently combat against the secular discourses through their articles within the magazines. In this sense, it can be

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teşkil yazar kadrosu da bunu doğrular nitelikte... Bu bağlamda dergimiz hayata dair tavrını “herkes konuşsun, herkes yazsın” olarak koyuyor... Zaten söyleyecek sözü olan bir derginin olmazsa olmazı bir şeylere muhalif olmaktır. Hiçbir şeye muhalif olmayanın, muhalif kalamayanın yeri edebiyat, sanat değil, başka alanlardır.”

argued that the popular literary magazines of all kinds, regard their field of activity (magazine publishing) as a sphere of active struggle over meaning. It is not a fixed process since the old meanings die and new meanings come into the competition in this constant struggle (Bakhtin, 1981).

As the historical development demonstrates, the literary magazines have always been going hand in hand with the political context and they consider the literary field as a sphere of struggle against competing narratives. Thus, a sociologically explanatory approach, taking the socio-political context into account, will help us to develop an understanding towards these magazines, meanings they generate and the cultural sphere in general.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **THE POLITICS OF POLYPHONIC NARRATIVES: THE POPULAR LITERARY MAGAZINES' DISCURSIVE STRUGGLE**

The emergence of the popular literary magazines as a contemporary literary/cultural genre in Turkey represents the unique combination of humor, literature and politics, as has been noted previously. The popular literary magazines manifest themselves in a somewhat, ambiguous way as they prefer to use humorous, ironic and sarcastic language, as an alternative political mode of communication, rather than didactic statements due to their 'polyphonic' nature and dynamic features. Narratives of various authors contributing to the popular literary magazines may seem fragmented at first sight but these narratives tell us the story of contemporary Turkish society, from various perspectives, with their 'situatedness' within the current socio-political context of Turkey in Bakhtinian sense. In other words, narratives, as being concrete tools of story-telling or writing of individual subjects, reflect the particular social, political and cultural contexts that they are situated, since they shape and are shaped by this certain historicity (Bakhtin, 1981). Each article (narrative) situates itself in the literary public sphere, which prefigures its political counterpart according to Habermas (1989), and generates new –political– meanings and discourses to convey its message to the public in an entertaining and memorable way, for example, by using short stories, poems or memoirs. Moreover, through the narratives in the popular literary magazines, these literary texts naturally gain an additional political definition and status as the magazine sets them against the context of a plurality of voices in which each narrative, literary or otherwise, resonates against one another in a single space and time. Thus, as the cultural and political sphere is getting intertwined more and more each day, narratives of the popular literary magazines are acting as both the organ of political dissemination by cultural means, and, vice

versa, as the organ of cultural dissemination by political means (Kendall, 2006; 2).

In general terms, the popular literary magazines try to develop a discursive strategy to combat the ‘polarizing’ and ‘anti-democratic’ effects produced by the official state narratives as well as the partisan and/or mainstream media on the topics such as terrorism, peace, minorities or the freedom of thought and expression. In a sense, they aim to produce new discourses, meanings, and therefore knowledges in Foucauldian sense, on particular topics to constitute certain –and alternative– ways of talking about these issues (Foucault, 1991). Put differently, the popular literary magazines provide alternative value judgments, points of views and realities for Turkish social imaginary, the ways in which the members of Turkish society imagine their social existence and how they develop their interactions with their fellows within their shared social world (Taylor, 2004).

In this vein, the popular literary magazines are trying to remove the previously set borders between humor and literature or between sociology/politics and literature and they are becoming an active actor in circulation of products, persons and ideas through their polyphonic nature and thus contributing to the formation of an alternative “common sphere of appearances” in the current socio-political context of Turkey, which enables diverse individual subjects to appear and coexist to express their ideas for public discussion, just as Arendt’s (1958) conceptualization of the issue. Accordingly, Metin Üstündağ, the founder of *OT Dergi*, depicted this sphere humorously by saying that “*OT* has a distinct position of being a ‘green-field’ where everyone can talk comfortably.” (Üstündağ, February, 16, 2013). In this regard, these magazines claim to represent the society’s capacity to tolerate each other and to live together in peace through their ‘polyphonic’ setting that welcomes wide range of authors coming from different backgrounds. In this chapter, I will discuss the prominent themes of ‘anti-polarization’, ‘peace’ and ‘the freedom of thought and expression’ appeared in the popular literary magazines by analyzing the discursive practices of authors

through examining their articles with significant quotations and how they challenge other discourses by generating new meanings with their narratives in conjunction with the social and political context, by drawing mainly on two magazines, *OT* and *KAFA*, but I will also be giving references to other magazines to elaborate my arguments.

### **3. 1. Anti-Polarization: New Zones of Coexistence in the Cultural Sphere**

One of the most prominent themes/discourses that the popular literary magazines use is ‘anti-polarization’ in which the authors promote plurality, tolerance and dialogue between different ethnic, cultural, religious and political groups within the Turkish society. Carrying the legacy of the Ottoman Empire, the modern Turkish Republic, with more than 75 million inhabitants, is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural country, containing approximately 50 different Muslim and/or non-Muslim ethno-cultural groups such as Sunnis, Alevis, Armenians, Greeks, Jews, Arabs, Kurds, Circassians etc. (Andrews, 1989). However, Turkish state has been far from recognizing the ethnically and culturally diverse structure of the Turkish society as these ethnic, cultural and religious groups/minorities have been historically exposed to homogenizing state policies which has become a ‘hot topic’ for the popular literary magazines. Therefore, in order to analyze the popular literary magazines’ discourse on societal polarization and ethno-cultural or religious minorities and the Turkish minority concept in general, which is based on imaginaries of national and religious sameness and ‘otherness’, the issues at stake need to be situated and understood in their historical context and background. While doing this, I will be using the term ‘minority’ within the sociological/anthropological framework since this terminology may contain certain negative/offensive connotations in the popular imaginary (Kaya and Harmanyeri, 2010: 397).

In the late Ottoman and early Republican period; efforts made to centralize and modernize the state structure, along with religious and nationalist revivalism have sharpened the boundaries between different ethnic, cultural and religious groups. The Ottoman Empire had gone through a series of socio-economic, cultural and political transformations in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that paved the way for certain powerful ideas of nationalism, citizenship and secularism which dramatically changed the perspectives and perceptions of ethnic and religious groups in terms of their relations with each other as well as with the state. Reformation movements such as *Tanzimat*, had boosted ethno-religious consciousness, sharpened the boundaries between them, intensified competition among them and thus prepared the proper ground for nationalist discourses. Consequently, the process of transformation of the Ottoman religion-based *millet* system into various ethno-national communities has caused those religious frontiers to become national boundaries which were seen as outside of the Ottoman (Turkish-Islam synthesis) and later the Turkish nation during the nation-state building process. Accordingly, the story of the period covering the Balkan Wars, the World War I and the Turkish War of Independence has been told as a struggle of Turkish (and implicitly Muslim) people against foreign enemies (both from within and outside) and/or non-Muslim forces in the hegemonic Turkish narrative. In other words, all of these political developments and dynamics of inter-communal rivalry and violence have been sedimented in collective memories and public representations, both in material and discursive terms, all of which are informing us about the modern Turkish subjectivities and related discourses in distinctive ways (Dressler, 2015: 9-16). In our context, these subjectivities and discourses of ‘Turkishness’ and ‘others’ are becoming apparent and contested on the pages of the popular literary magazines from various perspectives and authors coming from different ethnic, religious, cultural and political backgrounds.

These boundaries formed between different subjects (and subjectivities) had deepened further following the formation of the Republic of Turkey, through the state elites’ policies aimed to form an official national identity based on Sunni

Islam and Turkish nationalism under the nation-state. In order to create this identity, several homogenizing policies, such as the nationalist Turkish history thesis of 1932, the Unitarian nationalist education policies (*Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu*, 1924), banning the use of mother tongue and of ethnic minority names, discriminatory settlement laws, the imposition of Wealth Tax in 1942 (particularly on non-Muslims) and the forced migration of Kurds in the east and southeast of Turkey, implemented during the early Republican period, all of them was aiming to wither the social and cultural diversity within the nation-state (Kaya, 2007). Furthermore, the whole top-down modernization process itself has gradually created tensions between the secular and conservative segments of the society which would become apparent especially after the military coup in 1980.

The key factor was the emergence of the ‘identity politics’ as a major arena of contestation during the 1980s in Turkey and other parts of the world. In the meantime, Turkey has encountered with Muslim groups such as Islamists and Alevi movements, demanding religious freedom in the public, political and cultural sphere as well as the Kurdish movement, demanding ethnic freedom, recognition of their identities and their mother tongue (Dressler, 2015: 18). Therefore, after the 1980 military coup, these movements (major taboos of Islam, Kurds, Alevis) have challenged the official discourse and rhetoric of the state, which was based on a retrospective narrative holding the Muslim origin nation together. In other words, 1980s and 1990s have witnessed three major social movements challenging the official narratives of the state: political Islam, Alevi revivalism and Kurdish nationalism (Kaya and Harmanyeri, 2010: 400-403). These developments reflect Turkey’s long history of social and political tensions that became visible in various fault lines of the long-standing tensions between secularists and conservatives, Turks and Kurds, Sunnis and Alevis and the political right and left. The contemporary events such as 2007 Presidential election, 2010 Constitutional Amendment Referendum, Gezi Park Protests in 2013 and military operations in the southeast Turkey, increased the social, cultural, ethnic and political tensions even further (Kaya and Sunar, 2015: 5).

This is where the popular literary magazines enter the stage and try to generate a unifying narrative, both materially and discursively, against any kind of ‘marginalization’ within the society while questioning the validity of the official discourses as Hasan Saltık, a music producer with Zaza descent, wrote: “I think about the days we were making ‘Newroz’ album with Hasret. Kurdish is forbidden. Why is Kurdish forbidden? Why is headscarf forbidden? There are always these questions in my mind.<sup>14</sup>” (*OT*, August, 2016). The key concept that the popular literary magazines use and highlight is social, political and cultural ‘tolerance’ (*tahammül*).

The term tolerance’s equivalents in Turkish language can roughly be listed as; *tolerans*, *hoşgörü*, *tahammül* or *müsamaha*. Etymologically; the term ‘*tahammül*’ is derived from its Arabic root of a word ‘*haml*’, meaning ‘to pick’, ‘to bear’ or ‘to carry’. This root word is generally used, for instance, if one carries a load or burden but if one patiently bears a turmoil, or an affliction, or an oppression, the word ‘*tahammül*’ would be used. This etymological fact indicates that we cannot talk about ‘tolerance’ without some kind of a suffering of one party (Kaya and Harmaneri, 2010: 398). In a similar manner, Wendy Brown (2006: 45-46) critically argues that tolerance requires a certain level of withdrawal of the tolerated party from its demands or presence from the public or political sphere, resulting from its ‘difference’. In other words, the subject of tolerance is tolerated as long as it practices its ‘difference’ in a private or depoliticized sphere. However, the popular literary magazines seem to handle the issue of tolerance quite differently as Nurhak Kaya, ex-editor in chief of *OT* magazine states in an interview:

*OT* is a tolerance (*tahammül*) magazine... We are doing polyphonic magazine publishing in polarized Turkey. In Turkey, people approach each other with prejudices, people suspect each other. Nobody knows properly one another. In fact, the ones who suspect each other are the children of the

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<sup>14</sup> Original text: “Hasret’le Newroz albümünü yaptığımız günleri düşünüyorum. Kürtçe yasak. Kürtçe niye yasak? Başörtüsü niye yasak? Aklımda hep bu sorular.”

same neighborhood. There are more valuable unity zones than the reasons to polarize us: for example our common troubles. *OT* says this: even though we drink different things, we are on the same table and we have the power to tolerate each other. Tolerance leads to the sympathy at the same time. A religious-conservative person and an atheist person, a bourgeois and a person coming from a poor neighborhood, people from all ethnicities, all of these people are together both in our table and our pages. *OT* represents the ‘culture of living together’ of people coming from the different segments of society.<sup>15</sup> (Kaya, May, 08, 2016)

In this sense, contributing to these magazines does not require any kind of refrainment from the public or political sphere, quite on the contrary, the authors express their ideas and tell their stories each month within the cultural/symbolic sphere which are inevitably visible, ‘public’ and therefore ‘political’. For instance; Vartan Estukyan, a journalist of Armenian descent, wrote on the assassination of Hrant Dink: “...We woke up one morning, our life has changed. To be seen as the ‘other’, not being considered from this soil, treated as we do not belong here...” (*OT*, April, 2013). Once again, we hear the story of the ‘other’, who is demanding an equal citizenship and recognition through the narrative structure of the popular literary magazines on an incident that caused great social and political discontent among the society.

This kind of gathering of different narratives and people leads to the formation of distinct zones in the cultural field. The popular literary magazines seem to form a particular environment where the previously set boundaries between different subjects, subjectivities and groups living in the same society are

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<sup>15</sup> Original text: “*OT*, bir tahammül dergisi... Kutuplaşan Türkiye’de çok sesli dergicilik yapıyoruz. Türkiye’de insanlar birbirine önyargıyla yaklaşıyor, herkes birbirinden şüpheleniyor. Kimse birbirini tam anlamıyla tanımıyor. Oysa, birbirine önyargı besleyenler aynı mahallenin çocukları. Hayatta bizi kutuplaştıran sebeplerden çok daha değerli birleşme alanları var: örneğin ortak dertlerimiz. *OT* şunu söylüyor: Hepimiz farklı şeyler içsek de aynı sofradayız, birbirimize tahammül etme gücümüz var. Tahammül, aynı zamanda sevgiyi de doğuruyor. Tamamen inançlı biriyle ateist biri, bir burjuvayla varoşun bağrından gelmiş biri, tüm etnisitelerden insanlar masamızda da, sayfalarımızda da bir arada. *OT*, farklı kesimlerden insanların bir arada yaşama kültürünü temsil ediyor.”

blurred at first sight. The boundaries between ‘differences’ may seem ambiguous as we read the narratives of, for instance, an author with a left-wing background and the other with a conservative background, or an author of Kurdish descent and of Armenian descent, in the same magazine. This fact evokes Nilüfer Göle’s (2008) effective terminology, as it may lead us to think that the popular literary magazines form distinct zones of ‘*interpenetration*’ within the cultural sphere. However, is this really the case? On the other side of the coin, authors’ tendency to use ‘identity politics’ in the formation of their narratives demonstrates that the differences and boundaries between various identities are not disappeared, yet, these identities become integral tools for telling the human stories. That is to say, rather than dissolving the boundaries, the popular literary magazines seem to emphasize the possibility and the capacity of different identities to live together peacefully. Therefore, they seem to form distinct zones of ‘coexistence’ by manifesting the ‘culture of living together’ on Turkey’s multi-ethnic/religious/cultural soil. At the same time, this allows us to penetrate into different narrative structures and life trajectories that we may not be able to reach in our practical life because of our own visible or invisible boundaries. In the same vein, Ferhat Kentel (2004: 5-10) has spotted a similar approach in his analysis of the 1990s Islamic reviews, where authors from different (and sometimes antagonistic) backgrounds, dispositions and schools came side by side and became intertwined under those magazines. These Islamic reviews enabled two sources of knowledges/languages (spiritual/religious and secular/modern) to be appeared in one place, thus allowing the ‘pluralization’ of information by gathering authors with diverse orientations together such as Binnaz Toprak, Ali Bulaç, Tanıl Bora, Ömer Çelik, Ömer Laçiner and Dücan Cündioğlu. In this regard, as being the tools of knowledge production, both the 1990s Islamic reviews and the popular literary magazines try to contact with various political bases of the society by correlating different forms of knowledge with each other, thus challenging the previously given, whether it is modern, religious or identity-based, boundaries of knowledge monopolies. In this way, these zones of coexistence, humanistic as well as informational, formed by both type of

magazines, which allow the ‘others’ to come side by side (at least symbolically), not only contribute to the intellectual knowledge production but also create important experiences and valuable opportunities for the rest of the society.

On the other hand, certain literary/cultural magazines prefer to form unilineal discursive formations, such as *Cins* magazine. Under the editorship of İsmail Kılıçarslan, *Cins* has chosen to gather authors coming from the Islamist/conservative backgrounds. In this regard, as Bourdieu (1993) reminds us, the sphere of cultural production is not free of power and capital relations. Kılıçarslan and his colleagues have decided to combat the narratives of the other magazines to gain ‘positions’ within the cultural/symbolic sphere. Again, we cannot think of this sphere separately from the socio-political context of Turkey since the sides have been chosen up not only in political sphere but also in cultural sphere as various newspapers, magazines and other cultural products tend to generate unilineal narratives, especially in the last 10 years, due to Turkey’s specific context. İsmail Kılıçarslan summarizes *Cins*’ aims in an interview:

*Cins* is being published to become a magazine of first-class culture, first-class thought, and first-class sensibility. Today, culture is a phenomenon that can be produced through the media as well. If you look beneath the every political rhetoric; what you will find is the very culture itself. From this point forth, *Cins* also aspires to open a new spaces of movement in terms of developing political discourses...Our biggest sphere of struggle, one of our principal ideas’ is to struggle the cultural hegemony that the ‘*Kemalist whites*’ have previously constituted. On the other hand, we are thinking to convey the first-class cultural products, literature and thoughts to the people. In fact, cultural hegemony progresses like a myth. It can produce the proper discourse and environment to make a political movement with a history of terrorism look like peace apostle. This is why culture’s psychological superiority is needed....*Cins* is a ‘war of position’ magazine

(*mevzi dergisi*) that combats against the previously given hegemonic cultural discourse with all of its lines.<sup>16</sup> (Kılıçarslan, October, 02, 2015)

As one can see, *Cins* prefers to contact with its other opponents (magazines) in a critical way and tries to counter their polyphonic discursive formation through its unilineal narrative which can be considered closer to the government narratives regarding its Islamist/conservative framework. For instance; İrfan Tabanca criticizes Levent Gültekin, who is an Islamist journalist (former employee of Yeni Şafak) but currently critical to some of government's political actions, for being “Kemalist and critical (*muhelif*)” and accuses him for “cheating the Islamist children in the past and cheating the leftist children now” (*Cins*, April, 2017). Thus, it is clear that *Cins*' narrative is ‘unified’ around Islamist/conservative discourse and this narrative contributes to the societal polarization as opposed to the other popular literary magazines’ ‘fragmented’, but ‘unifying’ polyphonic discourse against the marginalization in society. Tarık Tufan, who is a novelist widely read in Islamic circles, and has written in both *OT* and *Cins* magazines notes conspicuously after the failed coup attempt:

It is strange to write in *OT*. Some people are getting heartbroken, some people are getting angry to me, and others hate me. They tell me that these are ‘*Gezici*’ (Gezi Park Protest Supporters), ‘why are you writing in their magazine?’ On the other hand, there are people who are saying ‘this man is an Islamist, conservative, why are you allowing him to write in your magazine?’ Each time I say; look, if we cannot manage to live in this country together, there will always be some people who want to kill all of us

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<sup>16</sup> Original text: “*Cins*, birinci sınıf bir kültürün, birinci sınıf bir düşüncenin, birinci sınıf bir duyarlılığın dergisi olmak için yayında. Kültür, medya üzerinden de üretilen bir olgudur artık günümüzde. Bütün siyasi retoriklerin altını kazıdığımızda ulaşacağımız şeyin ta kendisi kültürdür. Bu noktadan hareketle siyasi söylem geliştirme açısından da yeni bir hareket alanı açmaya taliptir... Bizim en büyük kavga alanımız ve derginin başat fikirlerinden biri, Türkiye’de Kemalîst beyazların oluşturduğu kültürel iktidarla mücadele etmek. Diğer taraftan birinci sınıf kültür ürünlerini, edebiyatı, düşünceyi de insanlara aktarmayı düşünüyoruz. Aslında kültürel üstünlük bir mitoloji gibi ilerler. Terör geçmişi olan bir hareketi, barış havarisi yapabilecek söylem ve ortamı üretebilir. Bunun için kültürün psikolojik üstünlüğü gereklidir... Verili kültürel iktidar diline karşı tüm satırlarıyla savaşan bir mevzi dergisidir.”

together. We will die with all our hatred, loneliness and poverty. There will be no place to go for any of us, do you understand?<sup>17</sup> (*OT*, September, 2016)

Instead of accusing the other parties as ‘Kemalist’, ‘leftist’, or ‘Islamist’, the popular literary magazines’ discourse seems to embrace different groups and the authors emphasize plurality in their articles, memoirs, short stories or poems, all of which carrying an implicit or explicit political criticism towards the efforts of marginalization, ‘othering’, and polarization. Rather than standing up for one specific cultural, economic or political groups’ rights, discourse of the popular literary magazines seemingly includes –almost– all segments of the society that have faced marginalization due to their ethnic, religious or cultural identity, including the conservatives, for instance, the girls who cannot attend to their universities due to headscarf ban.

Historically, ‘the Turkish politics of doxa’ has always tended to use the homogenizing policies which are embedded in Turkish politics, though with different interpretations in different periods, and the authorities, using these homogenizing policies, consistently have regarded ‘difference’ as a problem to overcome. In response to this, narratives of the popular literary magazines are often presented as human stories/memoirs or short stories, having their roots in ‘identity politics’ in the beginning in order to tell the story which later on develop into complex humanist discourses that highlight the main causes of anti-polarization, plurality, respect for ‘the other’ and ‘the joy of living together’ in Turkey’s multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural soil. In order to increase the effectiveness of their discourses, the authors tend to present and use various examples, cases, figures, signs and interviews with victims and certain historical or contemporary events such as Sivas massacre, Dersim rebellion, Maraş massacre or Istanbul pogrom to refresh the collective memory by showing the

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<sup>17</sup> Original text: “*OT*’a yazmak da bir tuhaf. Bazılarının kalbi kırılıyor bana, bazıları öfkeleniyor, bazıları nefret ediyor. ‘Bunlar Gezici, ne işin var bu adamların dergisinde’ diyorlar. ‘Bu adama niye yazdırıyorsunuz, bu adam İslamcı, dinci’ diyenler de var öte tarafta. Bakın diyorum her seferinde, bakın bu ülkede birlikte yaşamayı başaramazsak, hepimizi birlikte öldürecek birileri eksik olmayacak etrafımızda. Bütün nefretimizle, yalnızlığımızla, yoksulluğumuzla öleceğiz. Gideceğimiz bir yer olmayacak, anlıyor musun?”

tragic consequences of such marginalization and polarization in society. Against the divisive discourse of the state, the popular literary magazines' discursive formation puts the common humanistic and pluralistic features forward and struggle discursively against any type of 'hate speech' or an act of marginalization towards any specific group within the society. Ayşe Kurucu, who is a 60 years-old, ex-house wife, being famous for travelling 25 countries in 10 years, told in an interview that:

Now, people are talking about something called 'polarization'. This is what my struggle is all about. Alevi-Sunni, head-scarfed-bare-headed, Turkish-Kurdish... Is not there being a rupture when you marginalize me within the family, nation? When you try to change me, whether you are my spouse or my father or mother, you hurt my personality, humanity...<sup>18</sup> (*OT*, February, 2017)

In a similar vein, Dressler (2015: 21-22) argues that the predicament of other ethnic, religious, cultural or political groups (Alevi, Christians or Kurds) that marginalized from the perspective of hegemonic national (Turkish-Sunni) subject and discourse could only be overcome through an alternative framework of fellow-citizenship that dispose every single ethno-religious distinctions and boundaries, allowing instead for a dialogue based on pluralism that does not reproduce hierarchies between different groups of people. This kind of a social construct/imaginary has illustrated with the formation of the popular literary magazines as they are able to gather various authors coming from different circles/backgrounds, such as conservatives, seculars, socialists, Kurds, Armenians, Greeks, Jews, Alevis, Christians etc., in one magazine (See Figure 1 and 2).

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<sup>18</sup> Original text: "Şimdi kutuplaşma diye bir şeyden bahsediliyor. Onun için benim mücadelem işte. Alevi-Sünni, başı kapalı-başı açık, Türk-Kürt... Ama şimdi beni ötekileştirdin mi ailede, millette kopukluk olmuyor mu? Sen beni değiştirmeye kalktığın zaman eş de olsan, ana-baba da olsan, kişiliğimi, insanlığımı yaralarsın."

Sevan Nişanyan - İlhan İrem - Etgar Keret - Düccane Cündioğlu - Burak Aksak - Hakan Günday - Yekta Kopan - Oruç Aruoba  
 Zülfü Livaneli - Murat Uyrkulak - Pınar Öğünç - Tarık Tufan - Selçuk Aydemir - Hasan Saltık - Bülent Somay - Tuğrul Eryılmaz  
 Gündüz Vassaf - Enis Batur - Sinem Sal - Cahit Berkay - Ayça Şen - Murat Menteş - Altay Öktem - Caner Cindoruk - Osman Sınay  
 Ali Lidar - Seray Şahiner - Ertuğrul Mavioğlu - Doğu Yücel - Jehan Barbur - Hakan Bıçakçı - Ayça Örer - Işıl Cinmen  
 Nebil Özgentürk - Haydar Ergülen - Nermin Yıldırım - Kemal Varol - Başak Buğday - Onur Gökşen - Birol Tezcan - Sinan Sülün  
 Mahir Ünsal Eriş - Siddik Akbayır - Erdem Aksakal - Sevim Gözay - Ömer Göksel - Sinan Taşcı - Evrim Kuran - Cemil Cahit  
 Ali Çetinkaya - Levent Gönenç - Batuhan Dedde - Turgut Yüksel - Emre Orhun - Armağan Yılmaz - Tevfik Merkut  
 Şenol Bezci - Muhsin Topyıldız - Haluk Ecevit - Kadir Erten - Doğu Demirkol - Rewhat - Nurhak Kaya

Tomris Uyar - Leylâ Erbil - Selda Bağcan - Düccane Cündioğlu - Zülfü Livaneli - Sevan Nişanyan - Murat Uyrkulak - Burak Aksak  
 Koreli Plakçı Seogu Lee - Yüksel Aksu - Gündüz Vassaf - Enis Batur - Tarık Tufan - Pınar Öğünç - Oruç Aruoba - Yıldız Ramazanoğlu  
 Levent Erden - Barış Pirhasan - Ali Lidar - Ertuğrul Mavioğlu - Doğu Yücel - Jehan Barbur - Hakan Bıçakçı - Haydar Ergülen  
 Angutyus - Mahir Ünsal Eriş - Kemal Varol - Seray Şahiner - Nermin Yıldırım - Ayça Örer - Işıl Cinmen - Başak Buğday - Gaye Su Akyol  
 Birol Tezcan - Sinan Sülün - Nevzat Şayın - Siddik Akbayır - Turgut Yüksel - Mustafa Becit - Onur Gökşen - Erdem Aksakal - Ömer Göksel  
 Bahadır Mermut - Tevfik Merkut - Sinan Taşcı - Cemil Cahit - Levent Gönenç - Şener Öztop - Kadir Erten - Rewhat - Nurhak Kaya

**Figure 1** The popular literary magazines as a common sphere of appearances: list of authors with diverse backgrounds contributing to *OT Dergi* (cover page)

Cahit Berkay • Haluk Levent • Gökhan Özoguz • Ataol Behramoğlu • İlber Ortaylı • Enis Batur • Sema Kaygusuz • Emrah Serbes  
 Sunay Akın • Alper Canıgüz • Vedat Özdemiroğlu • Mahir Ünsal Eriş • Cem Davran • Rıdvan Akar • Akgün Akova • Coşkun Aral • Özgür Amed  
 Zafer Algöz • Umay Umay • Levent Cantek • Aylin Balboa • Levent Erden • Nilay Ömek • Can Yılmaz • Celil Nalçakan • Zeynep Miraç  
 Metin Uca • Gökhan Dağıstanlı • Bedia Güzelce • Başar Başaran • Feyyaz Yiğit • Nihat Sırdar • Melih Anık • Kerimcan Kamal  
 Can Baytak • Şermin Çarkacı • Murat Özer • Can Bonomo • Murat Meriç • Erhan Karadağ • Dilan Bozyel • Candaş Tolga Işık

Vedat Türkali • Adalet Ağaoğlu • Raket Dink • İlber Ortaylı • Sunay Akın • Orhan Ayhan • Rıdvan Akar  
 Nedim Şener • Cüneyt Özdemir • İclal Aydın • Hayko Bağdat • Özge Mumcu • Zafer Algöz • Metin Uca  
 Ali Ece • İbrahim Büyükkak • Nihat Sırdar • İsmail Saymaz • Güçlü Mete • Umay Umay • Başar Başaran  
 Ebru Cündübeyoğlu • Simge Fıstıkoğlu • Oktay Kaynarca • Dilan Bozyel • Serkan Ocak • Candaş Tolga Işık

**Figure 2** List of authors, coming from different circles, contributing to *KAFA Dergi* (cover page)

The popular literary magazines' social imaginary also corresponds to what Hannah Arendt (1958) identified as "the common sphere of appearances" in her conceptualization of the public sphere since the common gatherings and appearances of the authors itself generate a certain discourse against the hegemonic narrative as many people may still think that an Islamist and a socialist person cannot coexist in the same environment while preserving their unique subjectivities and individualities for a public discussion based on common sense.

This kind of a social peace and the theme of anti-polarization have also become widespread during the Gezi Park Protests and practiced within the park during the events as people from different ethnic, cultural, religious and political backgrounds gathered to protest all together. Both inside the Gezi Park and within the popular literary magazines (as well as among the readers), an alternative narrative and social imaginary, as Taylor (2004) and Anderson (2006) use it, have been experienced as opposed to the fierce environment of boundaries of Turkish politics through the construction of an imagination and/or alternative reality. Strikingly, *OT* magazine (as the only magazine of its kind in 2013) has boosted its reputation and became widespread especially during the Gezi Park events. Particularly, the use of the theme of anti-polarization by the popular literary magazines also escalated during two major social events of Gezi Park Protests and the failed coup attempt.

In both events, the popular literary magazines laid the emphasis on 'democracy' and called for solidarity against anti-democratic values in society. For instance, *OT* presented images of the Gezi Park protestors who were subject to the police brutality in its July 2013 volume's cover page (See Figure 3). After the failed coup attempt in July 2016, *OT* used an illustration of the Bosphorus Bridge with people walking on it with their flags, along with few lines of Nazım Hikmet's poem, 'A Plea', which also highlights the notion of anti-polarization, in its volume of August 2016 (See Figure 4). Strikingly, during both the Gezi protests and the aftermath of the failed coup attempt, the people walked on the bridge to show solidarity against the coup plotters and the police brutality.



**Figure 3** OT's representation of police brutality during Gezi Park Protests (cover page)



**Figure 4** OT's representation of the failed coup attempt and anti-polarization message (cover page)

Besides, the authors of the popular literary magazines often claim that the politicians are the ones who are creating troubles among fellow-citizens and provoking them for political gains. For example; musician Haluk Levent, who is known for his charity concerts and protest manners (especially on environmentalism) wrote that: "...unfortunately the politicians force people too much to take sides. We are resisting this partisanship with 'saz' and guitar in our hands." (*OT*, March, 2017).

Along the same line, actress Ayşen Gruda emphasizes the multi-ethnic/cultural/religious composition of Turkish soil and draws attention to external factors:

Alevi, Sunni, religious, secular... Turkey consists of several different compositions of people. I think there is no such thing as 'polarization'. Everyone is getting along very well. Somebody throws a word into the pot; 'look, they are polarized like this, the other is like this...I am not becoming polarized with anyone, why? If a human being thinks for five minutes, he/she will never bear enmity to anyone. Of course not!<sup>19</sup> (*OT*, February, 2017)

Lastly, the latest popular literary magazine that was published, *Tuhaf*, which literally means 'strange', has come out in April 2017 with similar intentions, following the discursive pattern of its antecedents. One of *Tuhaf*'s founders, actor Ahmet Mümtaz Taylan explains their authorial formation and their aims under the Turkish political context in an interview:

[*Tuhaf*] is a magazine which the authors with different views contribute by coming side by side, smilingly and without hustling. It was our aim to spend time together, write together and publish a magazine where people with different views express their views in a civilized manner around this

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<sup>19</sup> Original text: "Alevi, Sünni, dindar, laik birçok farklı insandan oluşuyor Türkiye. Bence kutuplaşma diye bir şey yok. Herkes birbiriyle gayet güzel geçiniyor. Bir söz atılıyor ortaya, bir laf 'bak bu böyle kutuplaştı, şöyle oldu, böyle oldu'. Ben kimseyle kutuplaşmıyorum, neden? İnsan kafasını beş dakika çalıştırsa hiç kimseye düşmanlık beslemez. Ne münasebet düşmanlık!"

publication, especially in this period that we are forced to choose certain tribunes, take sides and moving away from the culture of living together... In this sense, this magazine that you are holding in your hands represents the ‘culture of living together’.<sup>20</sup> (Taylan, April, 14, 2017)

This particular emphasis on the ‘culture of living together’ is also present in other popular literary magazines, specifically in *OT*. Considering that many of the authors contributing to *Tuhaf* were previously part of *OT*’s authorial crew, it is possible to argue that they continue the discursive tradition of the popular literary magazines, perhaps with slight revisions. Additionally, *Tuhaf* also prefers an ironic/sarcastic language in selecting their name and motto, namely; “Strange, does not it seem so to you?” (“*Tuhaf, sana da öyle gelmiyor mu?*”). This phrase represents the unusual levels of marginalization and othering in the current Turkish context. Accordingly, it also ironically points to the fact that gathering authors from different segments of the society seems ‘strange’ and extraordinary under tense and ‘polarizing’ social and political conditions, even though it should be considered something ordinary in this multi-ethnic/cultural/religious soil. *Tuhaf*’s cover page design illustrates their purpose almost perfectly in this sense (See Figure 5). Rather than just mentioning the names of its authors each month, *Tuhaf* has choose to represent them with their illustrations on their inner cover page along with their motto to be more effective visually. Through this image, the magazine cements the perception, or the social imaginary, of peaceful coexistence of people within this alternative sphere, at least symbolically, even though they have different views. Visuals also help to emphasize different identities as they allow representations of certain items, such as headscarf. This modification demonstrates that the popular literary magazines have started to transform, while keeping their main theme for now.

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<sup>20</sup> Original text: “Farklı görüşlerden yazarların yan yana, gülümseyerek, itişip kakışmadan yazdığı bir dergidir. Bu kadar çok tribünleşmenin, saflaşmanın hakim olduğu bir dönemde, birlikte yaşama kültüründen uzaklaştığımız intibainı kapıldığımız bu dönemde, birlikte oturup kalkmak, birlikte yazmak, farklı görüşlerden insanların bir yayın etrafında, uygar bir biçimde meselelere yaklaşımını anlatabildiği bir yayın çıkartmak hedefimizdi zaten... Elinizde tuttuğunuz dergi, birlikte yaşama kültürünün de bir göstergesidir.”



**Figure 5** *Tuhaf*'s diverse authorial formation coming side by side symbolically, along with the magazine's ironic motto (inner cover page)

To make it clear, Ahmet Mümtaz Taylan indicates where their name and motto came from:

Generally, we think that we are passing through ‘strange’ times. Conceptually, people who are writing, drawing and reading have something to do with the notion of ‘strange’. We will mention things that we find ‘strange’. We also find this team, this broad togetherness a bit ‘strange’, but in a good way...<sup>21</sup> (Taylan, March, 25, 2017)

All in all, there is a fact that can be easily forgotten when positioning the social, political, ethnic or religious groups within antagonistic boundaries of identity politics. Each and every group or minority shares many common values and practices with the rest of society and they are as much part of the local community as the other groups as they live together within the country for centuries now (Longva, 2012: 3-4). Therefore, what the popular literary magazines promote through their discourse seems vital for social peace. Inter-paradigmatic dialogue, conversancy and exchanging ideas are not just pure intellectual efforts but also they are concrete, meaningful and decisive activities towards the formation of a base for social union consisting of different groups (*Bilgi ve Hikmet*, 1994: 108 cited in Kentel, 2004: 15). Strikingly, *OT* has opened its pages also to taxi drivers, students, workers, homeless people and other ‘ordinary citizens’ during the Gezi Protests and let them express their opinions – both critical and supportive– inter-subjectively through interviews. This sphere of symbolic interactions may contribute to societal dialogue by making different voices visible even if they are conflicting in some ways. The phenomenon of the popular literary magazines is still ever-developing and the years ahead will show us how they can contribute to the social peace for different segments of Turkish society.

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<sup>21</sup> Original text: “Tuhaf bir dönemden geçtiğimizi düşünüyoruz genel olarak. Tuhaf mefhumuyla yazan, çizen, okuyan insanların bir ilişkisi var, kavram olarak. Tuhafımıza giden, tuhaf şeylerden bahsedeceğiz. Bu birlikteliği de, bu geniş birlikteliği de, takımı da biraz tuhaf buluyoruz, ama iyi bir yerden...”

### **3. 2. Peace Discourse: “The Sacredness of Human Life”**

Another central theme that the popular literary magazines emphasize in their discursive formation is the issue of ‘peace’ as Turkey has been actively involved in armed conflicts, most notably against the Partiya Karkeyren Kurdistan (PKK; Kurdistan Workers’ Party) since 1984, and including the most recent involvement in the Syrian Civil War. As I have mentioned previously, the Turkish state has been able to manage its supremacy over the political and social realms until the 1980s. However, after the 1980s, in conjunction with the developments in the global scale, the ethno-cultural and religious sub-groups have mobilized a politics of identity in reply to the state’s domestic policies towards the restriction of political participation. Consequently, towards the end of 1980s, the political formations and parties, which advocated the cultural and political rights of Kurdish identity, have begun to appear within the Turkish formal political sphere. These formal political efforts for representation were undermined by closure cases of the Constitutional Court which demonstrated the social and political intolerance against the Kurdish ethnic identity. Thus, as a result of the armed struggle since 1984 between the PKK and the Turkish Armed Forces in the southeastern region of Turkey, there has been a Martial Law proclaimed in concerned cities in 1987 and lasted until 2002 (Kaya and Harmanyeri, 2010: 402-406). The government has started to conduct a new series of military operations in 2015 in the region after a failed peace process with Kurdish armed groups, which led to the continuation of the long-lasting Kurdish question in Turkish politics. Due to the armed conflict, many people died from both sides and there has been a continuing discontent in the Southeastern regions of Turkey. Most recently, under the discourse of anti-terrorism, the Turkish government has imposed curfews in many districts, towns and cities (such as Sur, Lice or Silopi) which led to human tragedies since the innocent people living in the region have also affected by this brutal process. In addition to this, the Turkish state has also been carrying military operations outside of Turkey, in Syria, as a part of the Syrian Civil War that has

been continuing for six years. Due to the state's involvement in both fronts, Turkey's most populous cities, such as Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir or Diyarbakır, have become a target for several terrorist attacks and bombings that affected citizens, as many people lost their lives or injured, which caused a great discontent within the society.

In this regard, the authors of the popular literary magazines have chosen to generate an 'anti-militarist' discourse in their articles, focusing and demanding 'peace' as opposed to the aggressive state policies and the 'terrorist' discourse used by the state officials as it further contributes to the strong affiliation of all Kurdish community with the PKK and the rise of tensions, violence, racism and discrimination within the Turkish society which threatens the social peace. The popular literary magazines' discourse, again, puts the emphasis on the common features of both communities and represents Kurds and Turks as brothers and sisters. Journalist Kerimcan Kamal promotes this 'brotherhood' and common history by remarking: "Oh the people of the same country, same history and same land, you have been fighting for too long. Perhaps, it is the time for peace now." (*KAFA*, March, 2017). In order to draw attention to the seriousness of the situation and engage in a discursive struggle against the state's discourse on 'fight against terrorism', some authors prefer to use the sign 'civil war' as actor Cem Davran wrote: "We do not have a single day without war or massacre. Who are fighting? Brothers, yes brothers are fighting. You would say that all the human beings are brothers; this is why there is a huge civil war going on in here, in this exhausted world." (*KAFA*, January, 2017). Besides, due to the widespread self-censorship in the mainstream media, the authors of the popular literary magazines show alternative representations of the events in the southeast to illustrate the brutality of the armed struggle and its tragic consequences, especially for innocent people (mostly children), while underlying humanist notions such as 'mercy'. For instance, Sema Kaygusuz wrote: "When will the mercy take over? After waiting for seven days to bury the dead body of Taybet Inan in the streets of Silopi? After putting the dead body of 11 years old Cemile Çağırğa into the freezer due to the

curfew in Cizre?” (Kafa, January, 2017). Similarly, Ertuğrul Mavioğlu, again, uses both the narratives of the past and present events to refresh the collective memory and raise awareness on the ruthlessness in the region, while criticizing the coup attempt, as he wrote:

In fact, the soldiers are not opening fire on people for the first time in this country. For example; the ones who bombed 35 people, including children, from the air, the ones who shattered 14 years old Ceylan Önkol with mortar shells, the ones who fired 13 bullets to the tiny body of 12 years old Uğur Kaymaz, the ones who demolish Sur with tanks and artillery, the ones who devastate Nusaybin, Cizre and Silopi, the ones who level Şırnak and Hakkari to the ground with warplanes, are not these ones the military of this country?<sup>22</sup> (OT, September, 2016)

As it is seen, representations of children who are suffering are trying to be used as an effective tool for peace. In addition to them, those children’s mothers are also used as these are the most vulnerable groups in society as opposed to adult men who can more actively be involved in the armed struggle for both sides. OT published one of Ahmet Kaya’s, who was a Turkish-Kurdish singer/important public figure that went to exile because of his political views, earlier articles on the issue: “I am waiting for the day that the Kurdish and Turkish mothers will go out on the streets with the pictures of their lost children. The mothers will bring peace to Turkey. Peace is not the business of the state, it is the mothers’.” (OT, March, 2017).

The authors of the popular literary magazines try to generate an alternative peace-based discourse against violence while contesting the state’s official/historical narrative on ‘martyrdom’ (*şehitlik*), which is one of the core elements of the state’s religious-nationalist discursive practices for political

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<sup>22</sup> Original text: “Oysa askerler, halkın üzerine ilk kez ateş açmıyordu bu ülkede. Mesela Roboski’de çoluk çocuk demeden 35 kişiyi havadan bombalayanlar, 14 yaşındaki Ceylan Önkol’u havan mermisiyle paramparça edenler, 12 yaşındaki Uğur Kaymaz’ın minicik bedenine 13 kurşun saplayanlar, Sur’u tank ve top atışlarıyla yıkıp, Nusaybin’i, Cizre’yi, Silopi’yi virana çevirenler, Şırnak’ı, Hakkari’yi savaş uçaklarıyla yerle yeksan edenler de bu ülkenin askerleri değil miydi?”

purposes for a long time. This kind of pragmatism of the Turkish state can be captured in the efforts of projecting Islamic values onto the –so-called– most secular institution of the modern regime; the Turkish military. The cultural residues of the Islamic past can be exemplified discursively with the use of honorific titles and names in the Turkish military as it is conventionally referred to as “Peygamber Ocağı” (Hearth of the Prophet) and with the titles of *gazi* (warrior fighting for Islam) and *şehit* (religious martyrs) to refer to injured or deceased members of the military. In fact, this kind of a discursive formation has not generated lately, since from the beginning, the secular nationalists’ of the early Republican period have depicted the Turkish War of Independence as a jihad against the invading forces of non-Muslims. Moreover, the status of ‘martyrdom’ is the highest honor to receive for soldiers within the military as it comes right after the rank of the Prophet. This being the case, every soldier in the military has to be ready for sacrificing their lives for the nation to achieve this glorious status. In this sense, the Turkish state’s discourse of martyrdom operates as a powerful tool since it provides the necessary psychological strength and convenience for not just the patriotic soldiers, but also for their patriotic families and the society in general, especially when the lives are lost in the line of duty. This discursive formation of martyrdom seems particularly effective in the armed struggle against the PKK, since the army promises immortality to those who lost their lives while reminding the broader Turkish community of the value of national sacrifice (Kemerli, 2015: 283-285).

Authors engage in a discursive struggle with this powerful tool of ‘martyrdom’ as Ertuğrul Mavioğlu wrote:

The learned life sequence is all about to be ‘the dutiful child for the homeland and the nation’ (*vatana millete hayırlı bir evlat olmak*). These dutiful children will be sent to the military alive, some of them will be

reached to the position of martyr since they are better than the others and they will be sent back to their homes within a coffin.<sup>23</sup> (*OT*, August, 2016)

Mavioğlu has continued to generate an ironic and sarcastic discourse on martyrdom, suitably for the general discursive formation of the popular literary magazines, as he stated in another article that "...because they [soldiers] are martyrs and they guaranteed their place in heaven. Martyrdom is not a loss, but rather, it is the 'great salvation' which promises the heaven." (*OT*, September, 2016). Similarly, Aylin Balboa also ironically criticizes the official martyrdom discourse: "The dead are so lucky because they are martyrs. Martyrdom is such a great invention, it normalizes everything." (*KAFA*, January, 2017). Therefore, the official state discourse categorize and classify the dead as 'terrorist' or 'martyr' for political pragmatism regardless of their status as an ordinary citizen or soldier from both sides. The authors emphasize the 'common humanistic' aspects of both sides and they harshly criticize the martyr-terrorist dichotomy as Murat Menteş, an author who is popular among the conservative segments of society, states that:

According to them [the politicians], Uğurcan Koç is a terrorist and Burak Yıldız is a martyr. It is as easy as this. It does not matter that they are dead or killed. They have no sense of fidelity neither to the alive nor to the dead. They do not know anything other than stigmatizing, labelling, sacking or packaging everyone.<sup>24</sup> (*OT*, February, 2017)

In this way, the authors, again, generate a humanistic discourse against violence and war by emphasizing 'the sacredness of human life' regardless of ethnic, religious or cultural differences. Thus, the popular literary magazines strongly oppose the comparison of the dead or injured people, on national or social media, according to their ethnic, religious, cultural or political affiliations.

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<sup>23</sup> Original text: "Öğrenilmiş hayat dizgesi ise 'vatana millete hayırlı bir evlat' olmaktan ibarettir. Bu iyi evlatlar, sağ olarak askere gönderilecek, bazıları muhtemelen diğerlerinden çok daha iyi oldukları için şehit mertebesine yükselcekler ve tabut içinde memleketlerine gönderilecekler."

<sup>24</sup> Original text: "Onların nazarında Uğurcan Koç terörist, Burak Yıldız şehit. Bu kadar basit yani. Ölmüş, öldürülmüş olmalarının bir ehemmiyeti yok. Ne diriye ne ölüye vefa gösteriyorlar. Damgalamaktan, yaftalamaktan, çuvala tıkmaktan, paketleyip etiketlemekten başka şey bilmiyorlar."

In this respect, Cem Davran noted that: “The invention of our century, internet, is the asocial market that the people are matching pains and dead with each other.” (Kafa, January, 2017). In a similar vein, Sema Kaygusuz draws attention to the actual suffering agents of the war: “Meanwhile, the actors of the death become invisible. Because the worthy narrative is not the peace or mercy, but rather, what is worthy is the holy martyrdom or the praise for revenge. In other words, every death is not equal.” (Kafa, January, 2017).

Therefore, human life and peace are the popular literary magazines’ priority against all kinds of ‘state-interest’, ‘terrorism’ or ‘martyrdom’ discourses as they consecrate the sacredness of human life over everything through their humanist discourse. In regard to the Kurdish question, the authors advocate the peaceful, diplomatic solution rather than the armed conflict. Özgür Amed, an imprisoned Kurdish journalist remarks that:

Political process should continue on a dialogue basis. Surely, the Kurdish question has been an issue for centuries, it is a long matter. It can be resolved only on the basis of the diplomacy and consensus, everyone should know this.<sup>25</sup> (Kafa, March, 2017)

The popular literary magazines have also published numerous interviews and articles from contributors coming from wide segments of the society, including the Kurds, conservatives, seculars and leftists for peace not only domestically but also for international conflicts such as Kosovo War or Syrian Civil War. In other words, their discursive practices aim to produce new meanings and opportunities for the resolution of conflicts concerning the Kurdish question and other aggressions. This is because the authors of the popular literary magazines believe that the wars have been carrying due to the interests of states, politicians, big companies and their barons, not due to the gains of the ordinary people. In this sense, Selçuk Orhan tries to clarify the situation of war:

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<sup>25</sup> Original text: “Siyasal süreç diyalog temelinde sürmelidir. Tabii Kürt sorunu yüzyılların sorunudur, uzun bir meseledir. Ancak siyaset ve uzlaşa temelinde çözülebilir. Herkes bunu bilmelidir.”

It is easy to understand what the aggressor wants from the war. The aggressor is the chancellor whom is the puppet of the cartel that wants to control coal mine, it is the pawn with shoulder straps of the finance baron, it is the greedy grand vizier who signed the deportation order, or it is the energy oligarch that brings democracy...<sup>26</sup> (*OT*, January, 2017)

Ultimately, the popular literary magazines form a certain kind of discourse about the specific issues such as anti-polarization, freedom of expression or peace that concerns the majority of the population. This is what Taylor (2004) called ‘extra-political’ debates, which cannot be considered as completely subjective or individual wishes. Although the authors reflect their own views on certain issues, they, at least, generate new meanings and they engage in a discursive battle with the hegemonic, official state narratives and this battle provides the proper ground for public discussion on those crucial topics which is essential for an appropriate public sphere in society. Furthermore, by developing new discourses about peace, the popular literary magazines act as ‘new social movements’ within the cultural sphere, in this case, focusing on peace. They open the legitimacy of hegemonic discourses on terrorism, war, martyrdom and peace to dispute so that the people are able to have multiple channels of information which is highly necessary for democracy.

### **3. 3. Freedom of Thought and Expression: Reactions against “Silencing the Opposition”**

One of the prominent topics that the popular literary magazines cover in their articles is the issue of ‘freedom of thought and expression’ in Turkey. Even though the democracy and freedoms in Turkey have always been problematical

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<sup>26</sup> Original text: “Savaşı başlatanın ne istediğini anlamak basittir. O, kömür madenlerini isteyen kartelin kuklasına dönüşmüş şansölyedir, bir finans baronunun omuzları apoletli piyonudur, tehcir emrini imzalayan muhteris bir sadrazamdır ya da demokrasi getiren bir enerji oligarşisi...”

throughout history, developments in the last 10 years have worsened the situation with the criminalization and prosecution of critical journalists through political investigations, surveillance policies, increasing number of partisan media organs, imprisonment of writers, journalists, academics and self-censorship. According to the data of the Committee to Protect Journalists in 2016, especially after the failed coup attempt in July 2016, at least 81 journalists have been imprisoned in Turkey, the highest number in any one country at any time, all of them facing anti-state charges, along with the firings and resignations, shuttering of more than 100 news outlets and publishing houses, censoring the internet (websites such as Twitter, YouTube and recently Wikipedia) and investigating internet users without court orders by using the state of emergency powers. Additionally, 25 journalists were killed in Turkey since 1992 (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2016). Furthermore, according to the Reporters without Borders' World Press Freedom index of 2017, Turkey is ranked at the 155<sup>th</sup> position in the world out of 180 countries, falling behind the countries such as Gambia, Pakistan, Russia or Honduras (Reporters without Borders, 2017). Turkish Journalists' Association's report of November 2016 claims that there are 145 journalists imprisoned in Turkey (Turkish Journalists' Association, 2016).

As I have mentioned, the current state discourse relies on the criminalization of the dissident groups by linking them with the anti-state charges, particularly terrorism. These efforts made by the state can be considered with what Foucault called 'power/knowledge' as the state tries to define 'terrorism', link certain people with it, and thus tries to produce a reality about this issue. For instance, President Erdoğan recently stated that the imprisoned journalists were involved in espionage activities and connected to terrorist organizations and claimed that 144 of them were imprisoned because of terror accusations and 4 of them were jailed because of petty offences, not because of their journalistic activities (Erdoğan, March, 22, 2017). Moreover, the Justice and Development Party's deputy of Ankara, Aydın Ünal indicated that:

There is not any imprisoned journalist there is only fight against terrorism... The rag papers that are being publishing as leaflets of terrorist organizations are rapidly losing ground every day. Terrorists or terror-lovers dressed as journalist, novelist or artist are being rendered ineffective.<sup>27</sup> (Ünal, September, 05, 2016)

In another example, where President Erdoğan used terrorism discourse once again, but this time against the group of academics who signed a declaration on peace:

[...] A group called ‘academics’ accuses the state... You either stand by the state and nation or you stand by the terrorist organization. We are not going to get permission from these ‘so-called’ academics. They have to know their place.<sup>28</sup> (Erdoğan, January, 12, 2016)

This kind of fear-based state discourse and propaganda seem to be very effective in mobilizing the masses, forming a (nationalistic) common identity and gaining political support, especially in today’s ‘post-truth’ age. It is so popular in today’s socio-political context as the media constantly and constantly reinforces it. Michele Milner (2010: 177) implies that the conceptual frameworks of national security, terrorism and patriarchy are consolidated by their frequent use by state officials and their representation in the media. Wars, terrorist attacks (especially after 9/11), violence and stereotyping have further accelerated the spreading process of fear and reflected cultural-political anxieties all over the world in which for a regular citizen, it is nearly impossible to escape this discourse. Furthermore, in our era of hyper-reality, there have been various images, videos and signs of death, torture and destruction, all of which has become part of our daily lives (Bryan, 2012). Thus, generating meanings and discourses on these

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<sup>27</sup> Original text: “Tutuklu gazeteci yok, terörle mücadele var... Her gün terör örgütü broşürü gibi çıkan paçavralar hızla zemin kaybediyorlar. Gazeteci, romancı, sanatçı kılığındaki terörist ya da terör seviciler etkisiz hale getiriliyorlar.”

<sup>28</sup> Original text: “Kendisine akademisyen diyen grup devleti suçluyor... Ya milletin ve devletin yanında olursunuz ya da terör örgütünden yana olursunuz. Bizim bu sözde akademisyenlerden izin alacak halimiz yok. Bunların haddini de bilmesi lazım.”

issues to control populations by the mainstream media and political elites has become relatively more sensitive, yet easier.

However, as I have discussed previously by citing Bakhtin, Foucault and others, these official state discourses on terrorism and other narratives do not go uncontested in the space of struggle for meaning. Many writers of the popular literary magazines have highlighted the discourse of ‘freedom of thought and expression’ in their articles in response to the official state narratives. In order to support their arguments, authors have been using various signs and representations of censorship, banning/shuttering of several publications and broadcasting operations, particularly of Kurdish and opposition media organs, imprisonments/dismissals of academics, authors, journalists and even politicians in today’s political atmosphere. In some articles, authors also provide statistical data in which Turkey has the most number of imprisoned journalists in the world, to sustain their arguments and to show the alternative picture of the society of the time. While the state has been trying to produce a counter-discourse about those people in prison and labelling them as ‘terrorists’, the popular literary magazines’ discourse tries to frame these events rather ‘political’ and ‘illegal’, claims that the accusations are just ‘fabricated’ which focuses on ‘silencing the opposition’. The cases of Necmiye Alpay, Aslı Erdoğan, Musa Kart, Ahmet Şık, Can Dündar and many others have been used to frame the imprisonment of journalists and authors. For instance, Sema Kaygusuz wrote: “[journalists] ... are smutted with fabricated crimes, serving an unrequited sentence. Like Necmiye Alpay and Aslı Erdoğan.” (*KAFA*, December, 2016). In another article, Vedat Özdemiroğlu wrote an open letter to his friend, imprisoned journalist Musa Kart, and gave statistical information to highlight the undemocratic situation by saying: “As of January 2017, we have 147 journalists in prison.” (*KAFA*, February, 2017). Furthermore, murdering cases of Uğur Mumcu, Metin Göktepe, Abdi İpekçi and Hrant Dink have also been frequently used by the authors to emphasize the ‘hate crimes’ and ‘intolerance to different ideas’ as all of them were murdered because of their critical ideas against the official state ideology. In respect to this, Ertuğrul

Mavioğlu, who is a journalist and spent 8 years in prison after the 1980 coup, contributes each month with political articles, mostly using leftist notions, wrote: "...our homeland is very fruitful in terms of tyranny to its own people. If you make an objection to something, you are either taken into custody, or arrested, or tortured, or murdered." (*OT*, August, 2016). Along with this kind of open political criticism to the state practices and narratives, ironic and sarcastic language is also widely used by authors of the popular literary magazines as Aslı Tohumcu wrote an article called "Dictionary of New Turkey" to generate a counter-discourse on accusations of terrorism and freedom of expression against the state's sharp position on these issues. Tohumcu ironically redefines 'terrorist' as "an author, drawer, academic, teacher or journalist who wants the brotherhood of the people or opposes the government. For example: Necmiye Alpay, Aslı Erdoğan and other friends..." (*OT*, January, 2017). The popular literary magazines also use illustrative visuals such as drawings or caricatures along with the articles, which allow easy dissemination of ideas, to highlight the current socio-political context of insecurity with limited freedoms as Cemil Cahit Yavuz used *OT*'s founder Metin Üstündağ's sarcastic phrase, "Every citizen is innocent until there is a fabricated crime on them!" in his drawings (*OT*, September, 2013).

Especially after the failed coup attempt in July 2016, there has been a social and political environment developed under restricted freedoms together with a fear of being associated with terrorist organizations in society. In this atmosphere, many academics in different universities have been dismissed from their work, due to their link with terrorism, using the statutory decrees under the state of emergency rule. However, many academics suffer from this practice and claim that they were dismissed not because of their link to terrorism, but because their critical opinions against the government and the state, particularly the ones who signed the "Academics for Peace" declaration (1128 people including non-Turkish academics such as Judith Butler, Immanuel Wallerstein, Noam Chomsky etc.) demanding an ending to the armed conflict in Southeastern Turkey. The various state officials and media organs using the official narrative framed these

events in an accusative way, as indicated previously, defining those academics as ‘traitors’ through the hegemonic discourse. On the contrary, *OT* magazine opened its pages to these academics to hear their voices and to convey their messages to society for an inter-subjective discussion. Prof. Dr. Yüksel Taşkın, who dismissed from Marmara University, noted that, “to see the opposition as traitor, separatist or terrorist means to break from the political culture. Opposition is not acknowledged as legitimate. Until we improve our political culture, we will keep stepping on each other’s feet.” (*OT*, March, 2017). In this case, the popular literary magazines are, again, acting as an alternative public sphere, by doing interviews with these academics, hearing and carrying ‘other’ voices into the scene and thus generating an alternative discourse on the current issues of public debate. In that vein, as an “extra-political” debate, in Taylorian sense, that concerns the whole society rather than being subjective or individual matters, the freedom of thought and expression finds its place on the pages of the literary magazines through memoirs, interviews or articles, in conjunction with the socio-political context of Turkey.

In general; it is possible to claim that many authors/contributors of the popular literary magazines regard this literary sphere as a space of struggle and they try to generate new meanings and discourses against Turkish official history and its narratives in various ways. The popular literary magazines’ articles, covering wide range of issues such as martyrdom, ethno-religious minorities, freedom of thought and expression or terrorism, aim to disturb realities and presuppositions injected/taught to people on these topics through official state narratives and education system. The authors generally prefer to use interviews, human stories or memoirs to express their opinion on these issues which leads to fast and easy dissemination of ideas, as a part of their discursive formation and strategy to combat official history-writing practices.

Indeed, the narratives of the popular literary magazines –usually– do not target a specific group or ruling class but rather they aim to combat with official discourses of war, violence or homogenizing state policies, all of which has

established historically as a state tradition in time. This is being done mostly through the –alternative– representations of certain historical events such as “6-7 September events”, “Dersim Massacre” or “1980 Turkish coup” along with more recent ones such as “Roboski massacre” or “Gezi Park Protests”. In this sense, the popular literary magazines adopt a distinctive method through bringing an alternative (discursive) history and repertoire again into question, yet carrying the discussion back into the public sphere. This method of re-telling the story of historical and contemporary events through memoirs, interviews, short stories and other literary forms shows similarities with “literary journalism”; an activity using literary or narrative techniques to report past and current events. This activity is adopting here in its broadest sense to refer simply any press content pertaining to creative literature in various forms (Kendall, 2006: 4). There is another definition of a specialist literary journal as:

a periodical corresponding to the actual literary production of the day, serving as a forum or a show-case for writers, enabling collective literary moods or fashions to acquire consistency, and protecting literary values against the encroachments of commercialism or politics. (Weightman, 1980: 638 cited in Kendall 2006: 5)

However, in our context, this activity must not be equated with avoiding politics, quite on the contrary, the popular literary magazines’ discursive formation is political and their narratives include political statements as they combine both practices (literature/story-telling and reporting of political events) in order to give the reader the most plain and accurate picture of the society.

This narrative repertoire may include certain simplifications, may depend on personal experiences rather than scientific facts, or it may not be represented with competent literary expressions but all of these will not make those narratives/ideas to circulate in collective scale and among masses difficult, quite on the contrary, their dissemination will be much easier in this way. In other words, this process of political dissemination of ideas through narratives, human

stories and memoirs of everyday life takes an active part in construction and maintenance of our identities since the narratives are always embedded in the stories of our communities, in the sense that MacIntyre (1981) indicated. Hence, each image, caricature, picture or word corresponds to a certain place and time in history which depicts and reminds a specific social, cultural, political or historical event. For instance; by reminding readers of Anatolian and Ottoman culture of tolerance, and their structure of multiculturalism through personal narratives to combat with hegemonic discourses of war, hostility or martyrdom provides an opportunity for a new social imaginary, the ways in which people imagine their social existence and interactions with one another in Taylorian (2004) sense, that depend more on peace. Furthermore, the popular literary magazines' discursive repertoire also includes issues such as 'women's rights', 'refugee crisis', 'environmental movement' or 'Turkish foreign policy' to raise awareness or combat the negative effects created by other discourses. These discourses are more effective in penetrating public's imaginary than the ideological sphere which occupied by a small number of elites and intellectuals, even though the narratives of the popular literary magazines are also political and ideological.

## CONCLUSION

Over the course of this study, I have analyzed the popular literary magazines, particularly *OT* and *KAFA*, in terms of their discursive practices, their polyphonic authorial, narrative and structural formation, which contain certain meanings and messages, and the prominent issues they tackle within their content, namely, anti-polarization, peace and the freedom thought and expression, in regard to contemporary Turkish social and political context. While doing my analysis, I have also taken the historical background and particular theoretical frameworks in consideration in order to situate the popular literary magazines' texts in broader context of Turkey.

The popular literary magazines have drawn public attention with their new linguistic code (sarcastic, ironic and humorous), which was unusual for the literary magazine publishing field, their narrative formation, which signified the informal (and easy-to-read) way of telling human stories and memoirs, their pluralistic (and mostly famous) authorial crew, which included contributors coming from different ethnic, religious and ideological backgrounds, and finally with their high monthly circulation numbers, which outnumbered any other type of literary magazine. All of these characteristics may seem fragmented at first sight, but quite on the contrary, they are very much interrelated with each other in the bigger picture. The popular literary magazines' humorous linguistic code has allowed them to reach the broader public, especially youth generations, as this particular use of language has become highly popular and widespread during the Gezi Park Protests in 2013 and has become an alternative political mode of communication as a whole, to a large extent, due to inadequate social and political platforms for discussing the matters of the country. The texts, stories and memoirs, which are written according to this linguistic code, have become an integral part of the magazines' story-telling and narrative techniques since they proved their ability to reach the large masses than longer, academically written

articles. Their famous and diverse authorial formation has enabled the popular literary magazines to appeal different segments of society as readers are so enthusiastic about seeing their ‘favorite’ authors’ or public figures’ –because of their cultural, ethnic or ideological backgrounds– articles on these magazines’ pages each month. In short, all of these interrelated characteristics have been the factors of what made these magazines ‘popular’.

Considering the power relations surrounding the cultural and other fields, the popular literary magazines have entered the ‘stage’, changed the structure of ‘positions’ and ‘position-takings’ and therefore have severely criticized by other actors, in other words the orthodoxy, who are also operating within the cultural field, due to the structural changes in power relations. As I have mentioned above, the popular literary magazines have brought several changes to the field of cultural production, in order to occupy a distinct and distinctive position within the field, and to get recognized –and to get consecrated– by the audience in Bourdieuan (1993) sense. Hence, this phenomenon actually tells a lot about the agents’ (artists or readers) changing ‘tastes’ and ‘trajectories’ regarding the field of cultural production and magazine publishing, as being zones of action and struggle, under the polarized socio-political context of Turkey.

Furthermore, the popular literary magazines have been acting as an alternative public sphere since the contributors, consisting of multiple voices, whether they are regular or temporal authors or interviewees, are discussing the current social and political issues in today’s intense context of Turkey, particularly in terms of freedom of expression. In this abstract/symbolic and inclusive public sphere, people with diverse perspectives are able to share their opinions as, for instance, *OT* opened its pages for a public discussion during the Gezi Park Protests both to people who supported the movement and to the ones who were critical about it. Such dialogues and inter-subjective interactions, through representational function of words, enable communicative actions among subjects which aim to reach a common understanding in society, regardless of agents’ diverse and subjective backgrounds (Habermas, 1984).

Besides, the popular literary magazines have preferred to include the stories of subaltern and subordinated groups, such as Kurds, Christians, Alevi or women, to make them visible through their humanistic narratives. In this way, members of the broader Turkish society have found an opportunity to ‘meet’ through narratives of the authors or interviewees, in other words, through ‘symbolic dialogues with the Others’. Thus, this kind of a plurality seems to provide rich opportunities for social peace, depending on mutual recognition and respect for difference. These pluralistic narratives (human stories) are being effective by relating various stories, lives and social surroundings with each other, emphasizing their common aspects, and therefore, they allow alternative identity formations relying more on sympathy rather than hostility.

Within this general framework, authors of the popular literary magazines have seemingly focused on three fundamental issues and emphasized some key concepts regarding the contemporary Turkish socio-political context. The first issue that they have tackled is the ‘anti-polarization’. Many authors have been trying to form their narratives against any kind of marginalization within the society. By doing so, they utilize concepts such as tolerance (*tahammül*) and polyphony (*çok seslilik*) in their representations in order to stress the importance of Turkish society’s ‘joy and culture of living together’ which have its bases in the multicultural Ottoman Empire. Narratives usually benefit from the identity politics to tell the stories and experiences of –mostly– subordinated social, ethnic, cultural, religious or political groups. To generate sympathy, the popular literary magazines lay the emphasis on society’s collective unity zones such as common troubles or feelings. Nevertheless, this special emphasis on collective characteristics and the zones of unity does not necessarily imply that the subordinated groups should refrain from Turkish political sphere for tolerance. On the contrary, use of identity politics in the popular literary magazines includes and demands recognition and equal citizenship. In other words, through this type of discourse, the popular literary magazines abstractly form certain zones of ‘coexistence’ for different identities (seculars, conservatives, socialists, Kurds and

all ethnic groups, all religious communities of Alevis, Christians, Jews etc.) both in the cultural and the public sphere. This humanist discourse tries to contain all segments of society that have faced marginalization, including conservatives, ethnic minorities, religious communities and political opposition groups. Thus, the polyphonic structure of the popular literary magazines, by gathering ‘others’ side by side and allowing them to coexist (at least symbolically), offer a valuable and concrete opportunity for social peace within the society. Furthermore, the popular magazines strategy of re-telling the story of historical events regarding marginalization and othering, refresh the collective memory and remind the tragic consequences of such incidents.

The issue of ‘peace’ is another crucial point that the popular magazines make in their discursive formation. By using an anti-militarist discourse, authors are expressing their desire for peace and political dialogue in Turkey, as well as in the world. They strongly oppose to the armed conflict within the country, particularly in the Southeastern Turkey. In many articles, there are also criticisms to Turkish state’s foreign policy regarding the involvement in the Syrian Civil War. In order to combat the official state narratives, particularly on martyrdom and war on terrorism, the popular literary magazines try to generate an alternative discourse and demystify the ‘sacred/holy’ status of the martyrs. In response to this, authors emphasize the ‘sacredness of human life’, as a counter-discourse, for each person, regardless of their ethnic, religious, cultural or political background. Additionally, the popular literary magazines frequently conduct interviews with various people, for instance a family living in Southeastern Turkey or a refugee from Syria, who have affected by the brutal process of war, to demonstrate the destructive impacts of war on people.

The third prominent topic that the popular literary magazines highlight with their articles is the freedom of thought and expression. As the political sphere’s tensions have been increased after numerous incidents such as Gezi Park Protests or the recent coup attempt, a ‘witch-hunt’ has commenced by the government. However, along with the actual criminals, a large number of

oppositional subjects have also criminalized during this process, including journalists, academics and teachers. The discourse of ‘terrorist/terrorism’ has been used by the state against –almost– anyone who objects the state practices and expresses their critical opinions. In response, the popular literary magazines have tried to generate a counter-discourse by remarking the importance of the opposition and critical thinking within the society. To strengthen their arguments and discourses on democracy and the freedom of expression, the popular literary magazines have conducted interviews with academics and provided statistical data of imprisoned journalists, thus, kept the discussion alive.

In conclusion, it can be argued that the popular literary magazines and their authors regard the cultural/symbolic sphere as a space of struggle and they frequently enter into discursive battles against hegemonic history-writing practices and narratives. According to the current political agenda, many authors have aimed to disturb certain presuppositions and open ‘realities’ into dispute by bringing an alternative discursive history and narrative repertoire back into question. This is being done through a unique mixture of humorous expressions, various literary and story-telling forms and the reporting of past and current political events. Therefore, it can also be argued that the texts and the content of the popular literary magazines are political, since the narratives convey political messages either implicitly or explicitly. The authors are seeking to constitute new and alternative ways to talk about particular topics. Moreover, as being monthly-issued cultural products, the popular literary magazines’ dynamic characteristics enable the rapid involvement and reaction of authors towards recent socio-political developments in society. In this way, easy and fast accumulation and dissemination of ideas are also made possible.

Finally, the popular literary magazines are a relatively new phenomenon but for now, this field seems to be developing. Despite their short history, this developing field has proved to be a part of the sphere of struggle over various social and political meanings. Moreover, their discursive/authorial formation shows certain ‘incongruences’ with today’s polarized socio-political context of

Turkey. Therefore, I firmly believe that these magazines offer valuable insights for us to think about the society that we live in and offer a great potential for further research.



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