

A SHIFT IN THE TRADITION OF HUMOUR MAGAZINES  
IN TURKEY:  
THE CASE OF *L-MANYAK* AND *LOMBAK*

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## **ABSTRACT**

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This thesis aims to analyze the humour magazines *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* as constituting a shift in the tradition of humour magazines in Turkey. It evaluates these magazines in their historical, political and cultural contexts. It argues that regardless of their apolitical stance, these magazines have an attitude of symbolic resistance to the the signifying practices of the dominant culture, like a youth subculture. It discusses the humour style of these magazines in terms of their relationship with the neighbourhood of Cihangir; American underground comix, Punk subculture and Bakhtin's concept of grotesque realism. The study also analyzes the position of these magazines in the culture industry of Turkey and claims that their content have been gradually appropriated by the market and turned into convenient products for reconsumption.

Keywords: humour magazines, symbolic resistance, shift, subculture, grotesque.

## ÖZ

### TÜRK MİZAH DERGİLERİ GELENEĞİNDE BİR DEĞİŞİM: *L-MANYAK* VE *LOMBAK* ÖRNEĞİ

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Bu çalışma mizah dergileri *L-Manyak* ve *Lombak*'ı, Türkiye'deki mizah dergiciliği geleneği içinde bir değişim teşkil eden yayınlar olarak incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Burada, söz konusu dergiler tarihsel, siyasi ve kültürel bağlamları içinde değerlendirilmiştir. Çalışmanın iddiası, bu dergilerin, apolitik duruşlarına rağmen, bir gençlik altkültürü gibi, baskın kültüre karşı sembolik bir direniş sergiledikleri yönündedir. Çalışma, bu dergilerin mizah tarzlarını Cihangir semti, Amerikan underground çizgi romanları, Punk alt kültürü ve Bakhtin'in grotesk gerçekçilik kavramı ile olan ilişkileri çerçevesinde ele almaktadır. Ayrıca, bu dergilerin Türkiye'deki kültür endüstrileri içindeki konumu analiz edilmiş ve içeriklerinin aşamalı bir şekilde pazar tarafından temellük edildiği ve yeniden tüketime elverişli ürünler haline getirildikleri öne sürülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: mizah dergileri, sembolik direniş, değişim, altkültür, grotesk.

*To My Family*

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Humour has been a subject for study since antiquity. Plato and Aristotle, for example, lay connotations of lowliness on laughter and comedy. Plato (1971) would not allow depiction of famous characters and/or gods in laughter or representations of sex, childbirth and madness in literature in his *Republic*. Aristotle (1997), on the other hand, defined comedy in terms of the theory of mimesis, saying that comedy is an imitation of low characters. Aristotle placed comedy in a lower position than tragedy in a hierarchical order.

On the other hand, according to Bakhtin (1984), antique culture did not discriminate between tragedy and laughter. Seriousness and laughter were not binary oppositions but they were in an organic unity. However, during the Middle Ages, dogmatism and intolerance became dominant in the public sphere. Anything which can cause people to lose control on their feelings was deemed forbidden by the church ideology, except on a few occasions, like carnivals. Bakhtin claims that popular laughter of the folk culture undermined the seriousness of the church and turned the hierarchy of things upside down in people's own sphere through the grotesque and carnivalesque.

Vološinov (1996) claims that language may be perceived as an arena for battling ideologies. According to Vološinov, everything ideological can be associated with a sign and vice versa. Signs which threaten the seriousness, the uniformity, and the dogmatism of the ruling elite through laughter are powerful weapons of the lower classes against the dominant ideology. The ruling class is obliged to reproduce the

conditions essential for its survival. If these conditions become subject to ridicule by those who are ruled, and the ruling class loses respect, it is possible that the foundations of the current state of affairs might rumble.

Of course, humour and laughter, by themselves, cannot be expected to have much revolutionary potential. However, the emphasis of this study is not on *changing* the way of the world but rather on *resisting* it through humour. According to Stuart Hall (1981), the field of culture is a space of struggle in which there are both points of resistance and suppression. This resistance may only be on a symbolic level, but that does not change the fact that it opens a space that is far from being static and is open to constant change. Humour opens a space of resistance in the field of culture against powers of suppression.

Humour has deep popular roots in Turkey, in the oral tradition with jokes of Nasreddin Hoca, and in performative arts, such as the characters of the shadow theatre, like Karagöz and Hacivat and the *meddah* tradition. Necmi Erdoğan (1999/2000) evaluates such popular narratives as these within the framework of grotesque imagery defined by Bakhtin, and describes them turning the hierarchical order upside down through the use of language and imagery related with the lower bodily stratum.

The humour as practiced in humour magazines in the history of Turkish Republic, on the other hand, has not always been as obscene, explicit, or potentially oppositional as the humour of oral tradition. In an atmosphere, where even such folk narratives as Keloğlan tales, and Karagöz and Hacivat texts were subject to reconstruction to meet the requirements of the modernizing project of the Kemalist regime, by replacing scatological characteristics as well as the spirit of trickery with didactic guidelines to build model citizens (Erdoğan, 1998: 119-121), it was unthinkable, especially during the first years of the republic, that humour magazines display any resistance, let alone

employ elements of the lower bodily stratum, which have traditionally been encompassed in folk humour.

*Akbaba* (1922), as the first important humour magazine in Turkey of the above-mentioned tendency, generally remained loyal to whatever political party is in power until the end of its publication. *Gırgır* (1972), which is described by most critics as constituting a break in the tradition of humour magazines, changed *Akbaba*'s approach by turning to the humour, stories and language of the lower classes and its editor Oğuz Aral was highly criticized, by his generation of cartoonists especially, who claimed that *Gırgır* produced some banal, non-artistic humour. However, the succeeding humour magazines mostly followed its example and gradually increased the level of sexuality, obscenity, slang, oaths and curses, scatological images and language. *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* can be considered as the magazines in which this tendency reached its peak.

*L-Manyak* (1996) has been published by the producers of another humour magazine, *Leman* (1991), on a monthly basis. *Lombak* (2001) was founded by cartoonists who left *L-Manyak*. One significant difference between the humour magazines in general and *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* is the fact that the latter group does not feature any content on daily politics, politicians, or current events. They are basically monthly comics magazines of a humorous content, which generally revolves around all sorts of sexual intercourse, drug abuse, defecation, body liquids, exaggerated comic violence, madness, the life on the streets, billingsgate language et cetera. This aspect of *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* resulted in accusations of being depoliticized and producing some disgusting, degenerated humour devoid of any opposition. However, this study will claim that particular series in these magazines bear elements of resistance on a symbolic level, through the use of above-mentioned themes, in the way a youth subculture does.

This thesis aims to analyze *L-Manyak* and *Lombak*. These magazines will be discussed as constituting a shift in the tradition of humour magazines in Turkey. It will be argued that *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* stand apart from both its predecessors and contemporaries, in terms of their style of humour and their political attitudes. In order to illustrate this point of view, first of all, the said magazines will be evaluated in the contexts of the history of Turkish humour magazines, the particular political and cultural atmosphere in which they emerged, and political economy of cultural production. Secondly, their particular style of humour will be interpreted on a textual basis, through the influences of the neighbourhood of Cihangir in Istanbul, American underground comix, punk subculture and Bakhtin's grotesque realism on the popular characters and series of the magazine.

*L-Manyak* and *Lombak* continue to be published to this day. This study covers all the issues of *L-Manyak* between January 1996 and December 2006 and all the issues of *Lombak* between May 2001 and December 2006. As the scope of the thesis is relatively broad, these magazines will be evaluated mostly through the general structures of the ongoing series and characters instead of referring to each single story. The position of *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* within the field of culture and culture industry, the particular political and economic atmosphere in which they flourished, and their style of humour will be analyzed in a descriptive manner using concepts from cultural studies and literary criticism.

The recent criticisms against cultural studies in Turkey will not be ignored. Academicians and writers such as Necmi Erdoğan, Tuncay Birkan and Belkıs Tarhan have recently produced articles which question the nature of the object of study in Cultural Studies. According to Birkan (2002), academicians are racing with each other in order to analyze more and more works of popular culture, which had been widely neglected before cultural studies became an academic trend. The studies produced in this manner tend to reveal the utopian and subversive subtexts of, for

example detective fiction, science fiction and fantasy, soap operas, music videos, which, according to the producer of such studies, resists the hegemony of the “high” in the cultural arena. Tuncay Birkan half-jokingly uses the metaphor “finding beads in one’s shit”, which is an idiomatic saying, used to emphasize giving too much worth to worthless subjects.

“Shit”, actually, constitutes an important part of this thesis. It is one of the leitmotifs of the magazines which are examined here. However, this study will try not to find only beads of cultural resistance, subversive elements and utopia in it. If the texts at hand were evaluated for only their ideological subtexts of resistance it would be acting half-blindly. It should be emphasized that the texts in these magazines do not constitute a monolithic whole in their approaches towards dominant ideology. None of the cartoonists in these magazines consistently subvert the dominant ideology and culture. Sometimes, their works even reflect dominant values. Therefore, these instances will be exemplified as well. A frame of political economy will also be employed while casting eyes on the subject of study and regard it as a product of culture industry, produced by professionals and subject to exchange value. Hence, a multi-perspectival approach, as suggested by Douglas Kellner (1997) will be adopted.

To this end, the randomly selected issues of such humour magazines as *Gırgır*, *Limon*, *Leman*, *Pişmiş Kelle*, *Hıbrır*, *H. B. R. Maymun*, *Atom*, *Kemik*, *Penguen*, and *Fermuar* have been scanned. Moreover, all the issues of *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* between the years 1996-2006 have been subject to a close reading. Apart from the theoretical literature, the articles, books, interviews, and pieces of news concerning these magazines have also been used to form the body of the thesis. However, the cartoonists themselves have not been interviewed as it has been realized from their interviews in the media and panels that they tend to either overestimate their position, taking themselves too seriously, or underestimate it in a careless way. It should also be stated that the reception of these magazines by their readers will not be examined.

This thesis is primarily a monographic study on *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*, so their humour will not be compared with the humour in other areas such as television and cinema.

The study of humour magazines, *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*, is important due to the fact that they are among the best-selling monthly magazines in Turkey, with a circulation rate of approximately 50.000 copies each month. Although humour magazines are independent publications which do not take advertisements, and are not attached to any media group, they are able to survive financially merely through their sales. Therefore, they constitute a specific example in the history of media in Turkey.

The significance of such a study also lies in the fact that these magazines have not been analyzed previously in an extensive way. This is not only the case for *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*, but for all humour magazines. There is not even a monographic study on *Gırgır*, which was probably the best-selling magazine of all times in Turkey. The only monographic studies on humour magazines are Levent Cantek's *Markopaşa: Bir Mizah ve Muhalefet Efsanesi* and Mehmet Saydur's *Markopaşa Gerçeği*. Humour magazines and comics are not generally regarded worthy of academic interest, because they are not considered a serious subject of study. They are not kept regularly in National Libraries, either, because they are viewed as pulp and degenerate publications. As a contrast to the attitude of institutions like the academy and libraries, they attract thousands of readers and evidently reflect some cultural tendencies in the society, which makes them worthy of studying on an academic scale. This study might be a source for further studies on humour magazines, and particularly studies which might handle *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* from different perspectives.

This thesis searches answers for the following questions: How do *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* present a shift in the tradition of humour magazines in Turkey? What are the

subversive elements in these magazines, and are there any exceptions? What are the sources of the style of humour in these magazines? How and why have these magazines changed their style of humour?

In order to discuss these questions, the second chapter will start with a history of humour magazines in Turkey, with particular emphasis on *Gırgır* and its successors. It will be followed with a general outlook on *L-Manyak* and *Lombak*. Afterwards, these magazines will be discussed in the context of political and cultural atmosphere of the 1980s and 1990s. In the last part of the second chapter, these magazines will be evaluated through the concepts of political economy and culture industry.

The third chapter will focus on the textual analysis of *L-Manyak* and *Lombak*. In the first part, the significance of Cihangir as the setting of popular comics in these magazines and its influence on the cartoonists will be dwelled on. In the second part, American underground comix will be handled as a source of the aesthetics and attitude of *L-Manyak* and *Lombak*. In the third part, these magazines will be analyzed with an emphasis on the styles of Punk subculture, and its philosophy of gleeful negation. In the last part, the content of the magazine will be interpreted in the light of Bakhtin's concept of grotesque realism and the recurrent themes related to the lower bodily stratum.

## CHAPTER II

### *L-MANYAK AND LOMBAK IN CONTEXT*

This chapter aims to evaluate the humour magazines *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* in several contexts. These magazines constitute a shift in the style of humour practiced in humour magazines. In order to understand what kind of a shift took place with the emergence of *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*, the history of the tradition of Turkish humour magazines until these magazines will be summarized in the first part. The second part will present a general outlook on *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*, with their origins, creators and characters. In the third part, the particular political and cultural atmosphere in which *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* have flourished will be dwelled on. The last part in this chapter will view humour magazines with a perspective of political economy.

#### **2.1 The History of Humour Magazines in Turkey**

In this part, the history of Humour magazines in Turkey, starting from *Akbaba* (1922), will be summarized as a history of shifts of style. The part is divided into three sections, taking *Gırgır* into its focus: “Pre-*Gırgır* Period of Humour Magazines 1922-1972”, “The Paradigm of *Gırgır* 1972-1989” and “Post-*Gırgır* 1990-2001”. The last section is also divided into three subsections, “*Pişmiş Kelle*”, “*Hıbr* and *H. B. R. Maymun*” and “*Leman*”. The reason for *Gırgır*’s being in central focus is that it was the best-selling and most influential humour magazine of all times in Turkey; it changed the understanding of humour magazines fundamentally; and it still maintains its influence on current humour magazines in Turkey, in terms of format, mise en

page and, to some extent, the visual style. Other important humour magazines of the periods mentioned in the titles of the sections will also be mentioned

### **2.1.1 Pre-*Gırgır* Period Humour Magazines 1922-1972**

*Akbaba* is the first important humour magazine of the Turkish Republic. Its roots can be found at a pre-Republic humour magazine called *Aydede*. After the Republic was founded, a former writer of *Aydede*, Yusuf Ziya Ortaç, thought the time was ripe for a new humour magazine. He asked İsmet İnönü, a veteran of the War of Independence and prime minister between the years 1923-1937, for a government loan to publish this humour magazine which was to be named *Akbaba*, a name reminiscent of *Aydede* (Süpahioğlu, 1999: 24-25).

The years following the War of Independence were a time of great change for the country. The ruling elite were planning to build a new nation, one which was desired to reach the level of modern civilizations. One revolution was following the other, without really allowing time for the people to adapt to the new lifestyle the ruling elite was aspiring. Of course, the revolutions by themselves were hardly sufficient to build a new nation. The government needed mouthpieces from all areas of culture. The air of didacticism, and “Kemalist Pedagogy” had spread to all media of the time. Even popular narratives such as Keloğlan, Karagöz and Hacivat were extracted out of their original grotesque nature and turned into tools of educating the public (Erdoğan, 1998: 120-121).

*Akbaba* became the humour magazine end of this tendency. From its first issue in 1922 until its closing in 1949, the magazine supported İsmet İnönü and the single party rule, wildly criticized anyone opposing that state of affairs, and firmly did the propaganda of the current regime. After Democrat Party (DP) came to power in 1950, Yusuf Ziya Ortaç started looking for ways to republish *Akbaba* and went to meet the

prime minister, Adnan Menderes, who accepted supporting the magazine financially. As a result of this, *Akbaba* became a supporter of Menderes and DP until the Coup d'État of 27 May 1960. After that date, Ortaç wrote articles accusing the former government of oppression and published cartoons on the themes of gallows and Yassıada, cheering for the idea of execution (Sipahioğlu, 1999: 136). *Akbaba* steered towards the Justice Party (JP), when it became clear that they will be the leading party in the upcoming elections. Starting from 1965, *Akbaba* published cartoons praising the party's leader, Süleyman Demirel, who came to power in the 1965 elections. This (lack of) political attitude continued to be one of the main characteristics of the magazine until its demise.

*Akbaba* was the longest running humour magazine of the Turkish Republic (1922-1977 with a few intervals) and its record has not been broken yet. It has published the works of several generations of humourists, including Cemal Nadir, Ramiz, Turhan Selçuk, Semih Balçioğlu, and even Aziz Nesin, whose political views are in opposition with the general attitude of the magazine. *Akbaba*'s problem, as a humour magazine, was its constant affinity with the ruling parties, which prevented its writers and cartoonists from efficient criticism of the power elite. This indecisive and spineless tendency of the magazine cost it its readership. *Akbaba* definitely stands for the first phase of the humour magazine tradition in the Turkish Republic; however, it had to open way for the new style of humour, as it no longer answered the tastes of the new generation of readers.

Among the other active humour magazines of the single party period were *Karikatür*, *Amcabey*, *Köroğlu*, *Köylü* and *Markopaşa*. *Markopaşa* was the most influential humour magazine of the post-World War II period (Sipahioğlu, 1999: 23). Published by such intellectuals as Sabahattin Ali, Aziz Nesin, Mustafa (Mim) Uykusuz, and Rifat Ilgaz between the years 1946-1949 in the form of a weekly newspaper, *Markopaşa* bore a critical stance against the Republican People's Party (RPP)

government and İsmet İnönü. Although there were no overt messages regarding communism in the newspaper, it was condemned to be affiliated with the Soviet Union and a propaganda tool for communist ideology. However, the newspaper actually had a political outlook combining populism, peasantism and anti-imperialism against the more racist/Turkist face of Turkish nationalism (Cantek, 2001: 20-22).

*Markopaşa* was the most effective opposing voice of its time and was subject to oppression from the government. As it was closed down and banned several times, and due to some disagreements among its publishers, it was published under different names such as *Malumpaşa*, *Alibaba*, *Bizim Markopaşa*, *Merhumpaşa* et cetera. Its style was copied by other newspapers, none of which was able to survive after the end of the 1940s. Although *Markopaşa* was a weekly newspaper, its publishers managed to publish only about eighty issues due to several trials against them and closing-downs (Cantek, 2001: 20). Cantek asserts that *Markopaşa* was neither as long-lived as *Akbaba*, nor able to create a school of humour like *Gırgır*; however, its importance lies in its oppositional character. *Markopaşa* employed the repressed language of the street, which was not liked by the power elite. It proved that humour is not just a way of entertainment but also a way of resistance against the political power. According to Cantek, humour magazines tended to feature more erotic content and “beach special issues” starting from the 1950s, which ended the era of political opposition via humour newspapers like *Markopaşa* (Cantek, 2001: 182-185).

On the other hand, the 1950s are also regarded as the years in which a rise of artistic concerns among cartoonists can be observed. The cartoonists of the 1950s are considered as a “generation” (Koloğlu, 2005: 321; Sipahioğlu, 1999: 109). “They hailed Cemal Nadir as their master and *Akbaba* as their area of experience” (Koloğlu, 2005: 327). Koloğlu states that the generation of 50s continued drawing political cartoons yet they also started drawing “non-verbal, more durable” ones, which are thought to be more universal (Koloğlu, 2005: 326). According to Turhan Selçuk, a

representative of the 50s generation, the origins of modern cartooning in Turkey are between the years 1950-1952 (Selçuk, 1998: 38). Ferit Öngören defines the decade of 1950-1960 as the golden age of Turkish humour, in which all genres of humour matured (Öngören, 1998: 96). Turgut Çeviker claims that an authentic Turkish cartooning reached its highest level of aesthetics before *Gırgır* started to be published and was practiced by the 50s generation of cartoonists and *Akbaba* (Çeviker, 2005: 44).

Other influential humour magazines of the decade were *Kırkbirbuçuk* (1952), *Tef* (1954), *Dolmuş* (1956), and *Taş-Karikatür* (1958). Ferit Öngören states that *Tef* and *Dolmuş* were the most important humour magazines of the period in that besides their political attitude, they published the works of a rich cadre of writers and cartoonists, who introduced new subjects nurtured by a large social spectrum related to all human conditions, apart from the traditional ones, like politics, parties, municipalities et cetera. *Karikatür*, which was a successor of *Kırkbirbuçuk* and *Dolmuş* published by Turhan and İlhan Selçuk, converged with *Taş*, which was published by Semih Balcıoğlu and assumed the name *Taş-Karikatür*. Unlike *Akbaba*, which supported DP, these magazines supported RPP's opposition. As DP took extreme precautions against the press in 1956, humour magazines were affected from this attitude (Öngören, 1998: 95, 96). Sipahioğlu puts forth the fact that *Dolmuş* was seized several times with the government's orders (Sipahioğlu, 1999: 100).

The coup d'État of 1960 brought a period to end and opened a new decade. The new Constitution issued in 1961 was more democratic than the 1924 Constitution, and aimed to prevent the monopoly of power practiced by RPP and DP governments previously. The autonomy of the Jurisdiction, universities and mass media was secured (Zürcher, 1995: 357). There was an atmosphere of "national unity" and content, which, according to Levent Cantek, took away the weapon of opposition from the cartoonists (Cantek, 2002: 170). At first, such humour magazines as *Zübük*

and *Akbaba* attacked DP, which did not last very long. After DP was closed down, humour magazines ran out of material. In the 1960s, *Akbaba* was almost the only humour magazine which was able to survive, who supported the JP government starting from 1965. Other humour magazines were rather short-lived. This situation did not change until *Gırgır* started to be published in 1972.

### **2.1.2 The Style of *Gırgır* 1972-1989**

The history of humour magazines in Turkey is a history of shifts of style. In particular periods in the history of the Turkish Republic, some humour magazines have been obliged to and have been able to challenge the type of humour their predecessors have practiced and bring their own type of humour. The reason for that is, among other things, the fact that humour magazines have an audience consisting basically of young people whose taste of humour can show drastic changes from generation to generation and cannot be satisfied with the same type of humour for a very long time. As Levent Cantek states, humour magazines should be able to keep up with the street and the calendar (Cantek, 1997: 61).

The major shift in the tradition of humour magazines in Turkey was due to the launching of *Gırgır* in 1972. According to Sipahioğlu, such magazines as *Akbaba*, which had been published since 1922, were insufficient to respond to the needs of a new urban youth, whose parents had started to move to large urban areas from the 1950s onwards and who started to form their own hybrid culture in the shantytowns and slum areas, stuck in between the rural and the urban – an “arabesque” culture. *Akbaba* did not speak the language of these “common people” (Sipahioğlu, 1999: 178). It was somewhere in between making an effort to elevate cartoon to the state of a high art form and being the mouthpiece of whatever political party is in power.

*Gırgır* started to be published as a magazine by Oğuz Aral in August 1972. Prior to that, it appeared as a page in the newspaper, *Gün*, owned by Haldun Simavi. According to Öngören, *Gırgır* flourished in an atmosphere in which neither RPP nor JP was in power and therefore was not obliged to support either of them. As a consequence, the magazine had the chance to focus on social themes, and deem political issues as the second priority. Moreover, *Gırgır* was able to criticize the impartial prime ministers, like Nihat Erim and Ferit Melen, although it was regarded impossible. Hence, for the first time, the supporters of JP and RPP started to laugh at the same cartoons (Öngören, 1998: 116). At first, *Gırgır*'s humour was far from being political; it featured photographs of naked women on the covers, and Oğuz Aral's comics such as "Utanmaz Adam" (The Shameless Man) and "Hafiyesi Mahmut" (Mahmut the Detective). Levent Cantek defines the humour of *Gırgır* in its initial years as "somewhere in between the moderate opposition of *Akbaba* and naughty (and erotic) *Salata*" (Cantek, 2002: 212). The magazine gained a more political outlook after Oğuz Aral and his brother Tekin Aral started to publish another humour magazine called *Fırt* in 1976, and transferred most of its erotic content to it.

*Gırgır*'s sales increased rapidly. It sold 100.000 in 1973 and reached its peak in its tenth year, when it started to sell 500.000. There are several factors which led to the huge success of the magazine. According to Öngören, apart from the political atmosphere of the period, the beginning of television broadcasting was influential in *Gırgır*'s popularity. Television provided shared experiences and information for the audience, which *Gırgır* used to produce humour. The readers of *Gırgır* enjoyed seeing cartoons of popular actors, singers and footballers in the magazine. Öngören also mentions offset printing technology as one of the sources of *Gırgır*'s popularity. In the humour magazines of the past, most of the space was filled with words, whereas offset printing made it possible to increase the amount of images. *Gırgır* became the most visual humour magazine to have ever been published thanks to the offset printing technology (Öngören, 1998: 117-118).

Ahmet Sipahiođlu believes that *Girgir*'s popularity also stems from the fact that *Girgir* assumed the role of a magazine for the masses. It never claimed to be an art magazine. Unlike the previous generation of humourists in Turkey, who defined their styles as graphic, non-verbal humour and strived to produce universal works of art, Ođuz Aral and his followers preferred a local humour rising from the streets. *Girgir* encapsulated the culture and sense of humour of the shantytowns and slum areas and employed the language of the people, with a heavy use of slang. This tendency of *Girgir* resulted in a break between Ođuz Aral and his own generation of cartoonists of the Cartoonists Society (1969), who accused Aral of producing a facetious and lumpen humour, and of avoiding the portrayal of real conditions of people (Sipahiođlu, 1999: 182). According to Turgut eviker, who claims that *Girgir* was produced for the perception of a five-year-old, *Girgir*'s humour is an irreparable counter-revolution against the Turkish cartoon (eviker, 2005: 44-45). Tan Oral, a member of the 50s generation, opposes even labeling *Girgir*'s style as "humour" and prefers to call it "entertainment" (Engin, 2006: 384). On the other hand, Aral responded to their accusations by saying that they were detached from the people and imitating the West with riddle-like cartoons (Sipahiođlu, 1999: 182).

When Ođuz Aral's own generation denied their support, he mostly turned to the younger generation, comprised mostly of *Girgir*'s readers, by opening a page called "ieđi Burnunda Karikatrcler" (Fresh Cartoonists), where he received the cartoons of amateur cartoonists and gave them advice about drawing. He also paid a relatively large amount of money to those whose cartoons were published in the magazine. Thus, the new cadre of *Girgir* was formed by the young, former readers of the magazine, like İrfan Sayar, Behi Pek, Hasan Kaan et cetera. The magazine created its own stars in comics such as Nuri Kurtcebe, Engin Ergnltař and İlban Ertem, who are now considered among the most influential comic artists in the history of the Turkish Republic.

The fact that *Gırgır* provided new cartoonists to publish their works and Oğuz Aral “taught” them how to draw earned the magazine the label of “school”. Most of the cartoonists who publish humour magazines today deem Oğuz Aral as their teacher, or master, even the ones who have not actually worked in *Gırgır*, such as Bahadır Baruter, the editor of *Lombak* and co-editor of *Penguen*. However, there were other arguments concerning the school-like quality of *Gırgır*. Necdet Şen, who started his career in *Gırgır*’s “Çiçeği Burnunda Karikatürçüler”, claims that *Gırgır* was not a school but a “workplace”, where cartoons were drawn in a hurry, and the empty spaces were filled with funny stories and articles for a weekly periodical. He draws an analogy between the atmosphere of a textile manufacturing workshop and *Gırgır*, with a strict craftsman-apprentice relationship (Şen, 2004: 55).

The authoritarian attitude of Oğuz Aral has also been discussed by some of his students. It is frequently articulated that Oğuz Aral made “corrections” on the works of the young artists and tried to create a uniform visual character in the magazine. There were also some forbidden subjects in *Gırgır*, such as depiction of genital organs or using curses, as Kemal Aratan states (quoted by Cantek, 2002: 214). This atmosphere was one of the elements that resulted in the separations from the magazine. In 1978, seven cartoonists from *Gırgır* quit and came up with *Mikrop*, led by Engin Ergönültaş. Its political stance was more left wing compared to *Gırgır*’s and it produced a rougher humour, depicting sex more explicitly than its predecessor. Engin Ergönültaş, who published another humour magazine called *Pişmiş Kelle* in the 1990s, narrated stories set in shantytowns and unlike the similar stories published in *Gırgır*, his stories were far from being likeable, but rather disturbing and realistic (Şenol and Cantek, 2005: 67). The *Mikrop* experiment turned out unsuccessful and the cartoonists had to return to *Gırgır* one year later. However, as Cantek puts forth, it paved the way for other humour magazines and showed them how a different humour from that of *Gırgır*’s can be practiced and set an example for such magazines as *Limon*, *Nankör* and *Deli* (Cantek, 2002: 222).

After the coup d'État of 1980, it became impossible to criticize the state of affairs. *Gırgır* was closed down for five weeks. It had to downplay the dose of political opposition for three years until the Motherland Party and Turgut Özal came to power (Öngören, 1998: 120). On the cover of issue 424, dated 21 September 1980, the classical fat businessmen type of *Gırgır* was portrayed as nailing a portrait of Kenan Evren throwing away the portrait of Süleyman Demirel on top of Bülent Ecevit's portrait which had been thrown away long before. An arrow pointing at the man says "The Man of Every Period". It is striking that Evren was not caricaturized at all. It was not Evren who was criticized but the mentality who hailed the new regime no matter how oppressing it is. In the following issues, *Gırgır* was not able to criticize the military or portray Kenan Evren on the covers. On the other hand, it continued to comment on unemployment, inflation, bankers, problems of the workers et cetera. It was able to publish cartoons of Turgut Özal during the three year period, and increased its dose of criticism even more after the Özal administration came to power.

In 1986, *Gırgır* experienced another separation, when some of the young cartoonists started publishing *Limon*, which presented a different approach to humour from *Gırgır*'s. Levent Cantek defines *Limon*'s approach as a more "disturbing, radical (and desperate) criticism". Unlike *Gırgır*, *Limon* did not even favour left wing politicians, and was displeased with the concept of politicians and bosses. Oğuz Aral did not worry about the emergence of the new humour magazine, because their humour was not similar to that of *Gırgır*, and could not address as large an audience as *Gırgır* because of its radical stance. Moreover, the producers of *Limon* were not among the stars of *Gırgır* (Cantek, 1994: 80). A cartoonist from *Limon* (and its follower *Leman*), Kaan Ertem evaluates the emergence of *Limon* as follows:

(...) as an amateur cartoonist, the atmosphere I observed in *Gırgır* had a highly *negative* effect on me. The concerns of producing depending on the taste of one person were just the contrary of what I wanted. I found the ideal working atmosphere in *Limon*, because there was a freer environment, there, in comparison to *Gırgır*. Nobody interfered with anybody, saying "you should draw like this".

Therefore, the comfort of thinking and drawing freely enabled us to produce much more radical works (Ertem, 2004: 59)<sup>1</sup>.

*Gırgır* was shaken when more than twenty other cartoonists left the magazine in 1989 to publish *Hıbrır*. This time, the goners were among the ones who kept *Gırgır* going. *Hıbrır* shared *Gırgır*'s political attitude as a central left, populist magazine and its content was almost the same as *Gırgır*'s. Oğuz Aral got very angry about this situation and arguments between the two magazines even became news material for the media. As a counter-attack, Oğuz Aral started to publish a magazine called *Dıgıl*. Through the end of 1989, *Gırgır* was sold to Ertuğrul Akbay and it brought the end of the *Gırgır* phenomenon. Aral Brothers left the magazine in frustration and joined another media group. *Gırgır* continued its publication without them, but it was never the same.

During the period of *Gırgır*, other humour magazines were published as well. Suavi Süalp's *Salata* (1972) featured mainly erotic humour. *Çarşaf* (1975) carried the flag of *Akbaba*, which was to close down in 1977. *Çarşaf* tried to assume the style of *Gırgır* and, as a result, was able to increase its sales considerably; however it did not contribute to the humour style of *Gırgır* in any way (Öngören, 1998: 120). *Çarşaf* closed down in 1992. The impact of *Gırgır* remained insurmountable for two decades until the 1990s, when another shift in the tradition of humour magazines occurred, which was rooted in the emergence of *Limon*.

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<sup>1</sup> (...) amatör bir çizer olarak *Gırgır*'da gördüğüm ortam, beni *olumsuz* anlamda fazlasıyla etkiledi. Tek bir kişinin beğenisine bağlı olarak üretmek endişesi, benim istklerime tamamıyla ters bir durumdu. Aradığım ideal çalışma ortamını *Limon* dergisinde buldum. Çünkü orada *Gırgır*'a oranla çok daha rahat ve özgür bir ortam vardı. Kimse kimseye "Bunu böyle çizeceksin!" diye karışmıyordu. Böylece özgür düşünüp özgür çizmenin yarattığı rahatlık, bizim çok uç noktalarda işler yapmamız olanak tanıdı.

### 2.1.3 “Post-*Gırgır*”: 1990-2001

*Gırgır* was a model for most popular humour magazines during the management of Aral brothers and it continued to provide an example of mise-en-page for the succeeding magazines after its demise. The humour magazines of the 1990s maintained the size and yellow colour particular to *Gırgır*. They also kept on publishing political cartoons on the cover and the third page. Turgut Çeviker uses the metaphor of an island for *Gırgır*'s period, and likens the magazines which emerged from *Gırgır* to chains of islands (Çeviker, 1997: 407).

The 1990s started with the emergence of new magazines by Aral brothers, *Avni* and *Fırfır*, owned by the *Sabah* media group. Other magazines such as *Limon*, *Hıbrır*, *Dıgıl* and *Çarşaf* continued to be published. Another new magazine to be published in 1990 was *Pişmiş Kelle* which was edited by Engin Ergönültaş. *Avni*, *Fırfır* and *Dıgıl*, as magazines published by Aral brothers, were never able to reach the success of their former magazines, *Gırgır* and *Fırt*, although some cartoonists, like Oky, Cengiz Üstün and Memo who were to achieve fame particularly in the second half of the 1990s worked in these magazines from time to time. There was also an experiment for an Islamic humour magazine, called *Ustura*, by Hasan Kaçan, which was quite short-lived. The humour magazine market of the 1990s was dominated by *Limon*'s successor *Leman*, *Hıbrır*'s successor *H. B. R. Maymun* and *Pişmiş Kelle* and through the end of the decade was almost completely taken over by the first.

Although the new magazines looked like *Gırgır*, their content, except that of *Hıbrır*, generally differed. In the previous part, it has been mentioned that *Mikrop* (1978) pioneered a new mentality of humour in Turkey, however it was not successful in being a lasting project that would cause a change in the dominant style of humour of the time. *Limon* followed *Mikrop*'s steps in terms of its political stance and attitude

towards sex. Yet, it was *Limon*'s follower, *Leman* that forced a change in the taste of humour during the 1990s and became the best-selling magazine of the decade.

1990s were the decade when humour magazines started to become independent and form an industry for themselves. The first independent humour magazine was *Deli* (1991), which was published by a team who were made redundant from *Limon* by the *Güneş* group. Soon after, the remaining workers of *Limon* quit and started publishing *Leman* (1991). In 1994, *Hıbrır* also became independent and assumed the name *H. B. R. Maymun*. This tendency of publishing independent humour magazines were also transferred to the 2000s, when humour magazines are no longer detached from large media groups but from each other. In this part, the three major humour magazines of the 1990s will be focused on: *Pişmiş Kelle*, *Hıbrır (H. B. R. Maymun)*, and *Leman*.

### **2.1.3.1 *Pişmiş Kelle* (1990)**

*Pişmiş Kelle*, as another humour magazine published by Engin Ergönültaş, was a continuation of *Mikrop*. It took over the tough, raw attitude and the political stance of its predecessor. The dominant drawing style of *Pişmiş Kelle* was not as bright and clean as *Gırgır*. It was quite shabby-looking, which was in harmony with the content of the magazine. The dominant themes in *Pişmiş Kelle* were poverty, shantytowns, street life, and sex, and the dominant characters were prostitutes, pimps, drug addicts, poor and desperate people. In the first issues, it was easy to notice that Ergönültaş was responsible for most of the comics in the magazine. He wrote the script of “Terso”, which was illustrated by Oky (and then Ergönültaş himself) and continued for more than a year, along with stories and series he both wrote and illustrated, such as “İşsiz Ali” (Unemployed Ali), “Zalim Şevki” (Cruel Şevki), as well as one shot stories, such as “Bülbülcan”, “Mümin”, “Zaman Kötü” (The Times are Bad) et cetera. Other comics artists to contribute to the first issues were Necdet Şen, Sencer, Tuncer

Erdem, and Behiç Pek. Like *Gırgır*, *Pişmiş Kelle* was primarily a comics magazine, The initial cadre of comic artists were followed by such names as Celalettin Benzer, Erdoğan Dağlar, Kemal Aratan, Mehmet Coşkun, Yılmaz Aslantürk and Metin Demirhan.

Ergönültaş's vision of a dark, desperate world of poverty, hunger, unemployment, violence, prostitution, drug use, sadism and masochism, and the inherent evil in men, on a background of filthy, uncanny ghettos and gypsy neighbourhoods of a crooked, distorted and malevolent cityscape are the greatest contributions of *Pişmiş Kelle* to the tradition of humour magazines in Turkey. The contrast of his perception of people living in the poor neighbourhoods with the general perception of *Gırgır* regarding these people can be explained through drawing an analogy using the contrast between romanticism and realism/naturalism in literature. *Gırgır* handles poverty in a romantic and idealized way, depicting poor but honourable, honest people. On the other hand, Ergönültaş's approach is partly naturalist in essence. Naturalism as a literary form emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and was an extension of realism, with an extra emphasis on scientific objectivity and Darwinian concept of heredity. According to naturalist writers, "(...) the 'truth' of realistic art includes the sordid, the low, the disgusting, and the evil; and the implication is, the subject is treated objectively, without interference and falsification by the artist's personality and his own desires" (Wellek, 1987: 1814). Ergönültaş's voice as a writer is far from being objective. His narration style does not exclude narrator from the story; on the contrary, the narrator directly addresses the reader calling them "brothers". However, his attitude might be regarded objective due to the fact that he does not give any moral messages in his stories but depict the world "as is".

The pessimistic mood of Ergönültaş's work is prevalent in the works of other artists in *Pişmiş Kelle*, as well. It might be claimed that *Pişmiş Kelle* is one of the most melancholic humour magazines to have ever been published in Turkey. This spirit of

pessimism and melancholy can also be a result of the punk and rocker attitudes of most producers of the magazine. Ergönültaş even wrote an article describing the relationship between punk and comics in *Pişmiş Kelle*. The realist/naturalist tendency also appeared in Erdoğan Dağlar's "Cihangir Günlüğü" (Cihangir Diary) and Kemal Aratan's "Bi Gece Daha" (One More Night) among others, both of which presented slices from the life of their creators.

The importance of *Pişmiş Kelle* lies in its treatment of subjects such as poverty, life on the street and sex, all of which were reflected as explicitly and naturalistic as possible. *Pişmiş Kelle* is also significant due to the fact that most cartoonists who later formed the style peculiar to *L-Manyak* and *Lombak*, such as Bahadır Baruter, Oky, Cengiz Üstün, Mehmet Coşkun, and Memo Tembelçizer started their careers in it. Unlike the other two major humour magazines of the period, *Pişmiş Kelle* did not become independent and continued to be published by *Milliyet* until it was closed at the end of the decade. Most of its producers continue working at other humour magazines; however, such influential names as Engin Ergönültaş and Erdoğan Dağlar seem to have retired.

### **2.1.3.2 *Hibir* (1989) and *H. B. R. Maymun* (1994)**

As it has been mentioned before, *Hibir* was a magazine prepared mostly by the then popular cartoonists of *Gırgır* who left the magazine. Therefore, the content of the two magazines were quite similar. Levent Cantek describes the situation as: "There were two *Gırgırs* now. To put it more correctly, there were two central-left wing magazines" (Cantek, 2002: 260). *Hibir* became quite popular among the new urban middle class youth and sold 300.000 copies in 1989. However, its circulation rates decreased due to the fact that they were constantly sold and resold and ended up in the ownership of Özal family, which cost them their credibility in political opposition.

The workers of *Hibir* had to leave their publisher due to some economic problems and started to publish an independent humour magazine called *H. B. R. Maymun*. The magazine maintained its attitude in terms of humour style and political stance. According to Cantek, *Hibir* and *H. B. R. Maymun* were able to reflect the mentality of the free market economy generation, by asserting that not all the raises of price are necessarily bad, nor all strikes are necessarily good (Cantek, 2002: 271). The young generation of readers and cartoonists, suggested Cantek, displayed their oppositional attitude to those who interfered with their wishes to live as freely as they desired. Therefore, they reacted against “parents, landlords, the police, teachers, fundamental Muslims; in short everyone who interfered with their hairstyles, clothing, kissing et cetera” (Cantek, 2002: 273).

One of the most significant cartoonists whose work revolves around the above-mentioned tendencies was Abdülkadir Elçioğlu (Aptülrika). In his comic strip series, “Grup Perişan” (The Band of Miserables), which is about three university students sharing an apartment, he focuses on the problems and lifestyles of university youth in a humorous way. His political outlook is a mixture of Kemalist left (as represented by *Cumhuriyet*) and rocker sensibilities. He satirizes Islamic fundamentalists, the fascist youth of NMP and Grey Wolves, landlords, et cetera, particularly in the context of how they interfere with the lifestyles of the young people and rockers.

On the other hand, another tendency was flourishing in *H. B. R. Maymun*, which avoided such social commentary, and a didactic, moral attitude on purpose. Bülent Üstün was the most important figure of this tendency with his page “Kabız Kuğu” (Constipated Swan), which featured a hardcore, violent, overtly sexual, politically incorrect humour in the vein of Bahadır Baruter and Fatih Solmaz’s “Lombok” page in *Leman*. Other cartoonists, like Memo Tembelçizer and Cengiz Üstün, who previously worked in *Pişmiş Kelle*, and to some extent Emrah Ablak joined Üstün in *H. B. R. Maymun* in the production of this style, which had its roots in the punk

philosophy. The overt sexuality, and violence of their style can also be observed in the works of Kenan Yazar, another *H. B. R. Maymun* artist, whose style is otherwise different, as he does not emphasize humour, but portray a dark, twisted world filled with sexual perversity, evil, murder which sometimes even involved children. His work also displays a fondness of fantasy from time to time. These cartoonists joined the core group of *L-Manyak* and then *Lombok* during the second half of the 1990s, which damaged *H. B. R. Maymun*'s sales dearly. The magazine was closed and reopened under the name of *Hobor* but failed to become influential in the next decade.

### **2.1.3.3 *Leman* (1991)**

After *Limon* was closed in 1991, *Leman*, which replaced it, maintained the style, and attitude, developed by its predecessor, as well as pages and characters such as "Daral ve Timsah" (Daral and Timsah) by Mehmet Çağçağ, "Lombok" by Bahadır Baruter and Fatih Solmaz, "Komikaze" (Comicaze) by Erdil Yaşaroğlu, "Bezgin Bekir" (Weary Bekir) by Tuncay Akgün, "Firavunun Laneti" (Curse of the Pharaoh) by Güneri İçoğlu et cetera. *Leman* included the cadre of *Deli*, which had been closed, and it also opened more space for the young generation of cartoonists and comic artists in order to attract a young generation of readers with changing tastes of humour (Cantek, 2002: 276).

*Leman*, as the only popular independent humour magazine of the time, became the best-selling magazine soon, as readers turned their backs at *Hibir* due to problems of ownership mentioned in the previous part. *Leman* became the only humour magazine to be able to criticise anyone and everyone as radically as it pleased and the most popular magazine of political opposition. The pages which dealt with politics used to be limited to the cover and the third page in other humour magazines, whereas *Leman* increased the number of such pages and included such columns as "Lemanti-Medya",

where they adopted a critical and satirical approach towards the media, and “Haftanın (Göt) Laleleri” [(Ass) Tulips of the Week], where they declared people and institutions related to politics, business world, and media as “ass tulips”. The “ass tulips” ranged from the State (for applying sexual torture – 3.12.1995) to *Leman* itself (for failing to get rid of the attention of the media – 17.12.1995). Writers such as Cezmi Ersöz and Nihat Genç also contributed to the increasing number of pages focusing on politics, which also spread to the “Letters from the Readers” page. *Leman* and its readers appeared to be against all sorts of fascism and discrimination, in columns such as “Cinsel Faşizme Hayır” (No to Sexual Fascism), although some cartoonists kept on depicting women as sexual objects.

Levent Cantek states that *Leman* has been accused of several things throughout its career, which can be summarized as “Leftist Mumbo Jumbo, Kurdism, Anti-Kemalism, New World Orderism, authorized opposition (...), banality, pornography, greed et cetera”<sup>2</sup> (Cantek, 1997: 73). Ali Şimşek’s (2005: 87) claim that the language created in *Leman* privileges the new middle class, and turns the lower and traditional middle classes into an “Other” can also be added to this list. The variety of criticisms against *Leman* can be considered as a sign of the variety of humour styles in the magazine. Mehmet Çağçağ’s words regarding *Limon*, can also be used to describe *Leman*: “The attitude of *Limon* was not described only one label. There were no such classifications as political, lumpen, or marginal, because all of these existed in the magazine (...) In one column, we discussed the Calvin Klein underwear, and in another, we discussed the events in Hakkari” (Quoted by Cantek, 2002: 247)<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> “Solculuk edebiyatı, Kürtçülük, Atatürk Düşmanlığı, Yeni Dünya Düzenliliği, icazetli muhalefet, (...) bayağılık, pornografi, paragözlük vd.”

<sup>3</sup> “*Limon*’uoluşturan tavır, tek bir şeyle adlandırılmıyordu. Politik, lümpen, marjinal gibi sınıflandırma yapılmıyordu. Çünkü dergide hepsi bulunuyordu (...) Bir sütunda Calvin Klein don tartışmasına, onun yanında da Hakkari’de yaşanan olaylara yer veriyorduk.”

Other than the political pages, *Leman* featured non-political cartoons of a much universal nature, by artists such as Erdil Yaşaroğlu and Selçuk Erdem; cartoons which reflect more social situations and details of everyday life, parodies of popular movie and comics characters, with a local sensibility, by Kaan Ertem, Ahmet Yılmaz and Mehmet Çağçağ, who satirize the “Turkish mentality” cliché, using the description “Yurdum İnsanı” (My Fellow Countrymen). The latter style was identified with *Leman* as a whole, and came to determine the humour practices and the language of the new middle class youth. *Leman* also featured scenes from the new city in Bahadır Boysal’s works, a nostalgic look at the old city in Güneri İçoğlu’s “Gönül Adamı” (The Man of Emotions), and scenes from the rural life in Feyhan Güver’s works, all of which, of course, are handled in a humorous way.

As *Leman* became the best-selling humour magazine, the producers went on to open a Café/Bar under the name of “Leman Kültür” (Leman Culture), sell t-shirts and mugs of *Leman* characters, publish the books of its cartoonists and found more magazines starting from the mid-1990s. *L-Manyak* (1996) became one of the significant humour magazines of the period, and was followed by *Atom* (2000), which was edited by Bahadır Boysal and featured the works of mostly young, previously unknown artists. A group of cartoonists, led by Bahadır Baruter, left *L-Manyak* and started to publish *Lombak* in 2001. As a consequence, *L-Manyak* lost a lot of blood. In 2002, Metin Üstündağ, Selçuk Erdem and Erdil Yaşaroğlu left *Leman* and joined forces with *Lombak* to publish a new weekly humour magazine called *Penguen*, which brought an end to the domination of *Leman* in the market. However, *Leman* still continues to be one of the two best-selling weekly periodicals of Turkey.

## **2.2 A General Outlook on *L-Manyak* and *Lombak***

*Leman* has put forth several magazines since the mid-90s and operated as more than a mere independent humour magazine. It has become a media group in its own right.

Before starting to publish other magazines, *Leman* had also published the books of its own writers and cartoonists under the name of Leman Yayıncılık (Leman Publications). *L-Manyak*, out in January 1996 as a monthly magazine after several months of announcements in *Leman*, was followed by *Git* (Go), a monthly magazine focusing on travel, with the subheading “Lemangeographic magazine” and *Öküz* (Ox) which was the “culture and art” magazine of *Leman*<sup>4</sup>.

*L-Manyak* stood out from the other *Leman*-related magazines, as the only other humour magazine *Leman* published. Its appearance was different from the *Gırgır* school of magazines. There were no political cartoons on the cover or on the third page. Its size was A4 and it had sixty-four pages. It consisted mostly of one to eight-page long comics. There were also humorous articles and stories at the beginning, whose number decreased as time went by.

The essence of *L-Manyak*, the spark that triggered its birth, was hidden in “Lombak” (which means “pop eyed” in gypsy slang) (Göktaş, 2005: 40), a title under which the writer Fatih Solmaz and the artist Bahadır Baruter collected their cartoons in *Leman*. Bahadır Baruter started “Lombak” in 1990 in *Limon* and worked with several writers – traditionally called “joke providers” – until he finally started to work with Fatih Solmaz. “Lombak”’s symbol is two lower bodies attached to each other from the waist and the cartoons it features are, in the words of its creators “taboo-breaking” (Göktaş, 2005: 40). They do not have any political concerns or a desire either to encapsulate the current daily events or to produce a universal humour. Their cartoons involve hardcore sex, orgasm, masturbation, toilet humour, disabled people, gay and lesbians, religion, and violence, and do not worry about being politically correct. Snow White can have sex with the Seven Dwarves, a man can urinate inside the vagina of a

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<sup>4</sup> Today, *Leman* publishes other magazines, such as *Kaçak Yayın*, a literature magazine, and *Yeni Harman*, a political magazine and *Atom*, a humour magazine prepared by one of the cartoonists of *Leman*, Bahadır Boysal.

woman, and muslims can find out that rape and murder is allowed in heaven in their cartoons.

When Bahadır Baruter was assigned to be the editor of *L-Manyak* in 1996, he gathered several like-minded cartoonists from *Leman*, *H.B.R. Maymun* and *Pişmiş Kelle*, who shared the same aesthetic vision with “Lombak”, in the creative team of the magazine. At first, several cartoonists from *Leman*, including Kaan Ertem, Can Barslan, Mehmet Çağçağ, Selçuk Erdem, Tuncay Akgün and Erdil Yaşaroğlu were included in the project. However, most of these cartoonists were not in harmony with the style *L-Manyak* was to take in the future issues. The comics Selçuk Erdem and Erdil Yaşaroğlu produced, for example, were almost like the longer, narrative versions of their harmlessly entertaining cartoons in *Leman*.

As time went by, some of the cartoonists from *Leman*, like Çağçağ, Erdem, Yaşaroğlu and Akgün stopped producing work for *L-Manyak*. The magazine’s future stars, such as Bülent Üstün, Cengiz Üstün, Alpay Erdem, Memo Tembelçizer (Memo the Lazycartoonist), Oky, Kenan Yarar, Emrah Ablak, Ersin Karabulut were from *H.B.R. Maymun* and *Pişmiş Kelle*. *L-Manyak* also created stars out of other less-known cartoonists, like Gürcan Yurt, Mehmet Coşkun (Memcoş), Andaç Gürsoy, and Göxel.

As mentioned above, *L-Manyak* was originally intended to be a side project for *Leman* cartoonists to get extra income. However, Bahadır Baruter, as the editor of *L-Manyak*, used his initiative to employ several cartoonists from other humour magazines, who, he believed, shared his views on humour. Therefore, *L-Manyak* was able to come up with its own unique humour. When Bahadır Baruter and more than half of the cartoonists of *L-Manyak* left the *Leman* group and started publishing their own magazine, which took up the name *Lombak*, Baruter stated that *Leman* was a highly established magazine whereas the team who produced *Lombak* thought and acted like a “gang” (Harani, *Hürriyet Pazar*. 29 April 2001).

The initial “gang” consisted of Bülent Üstün, Cengiz Üstün, Memo Tembelçizer, and to some extent, Memcoş, who also have become the most popular artists of *L-Manyak* and had a say in the editorial decisions related to the magazine, in the issues to follow. Bülent Üstün used to have a page in *H.B.R. Maymun*, called “Kabız Kuğu” (Constipated Swan). His cartoons presented a world of ugliness hidden behind beauty, along with absurdity, punk aesthetics, and a sarcastic view on everything regarded as “high.” Cengiz Üstün, Bülent Üstün’s elder brother, had worked in *Pişmiş Kelle*, *Avni* and then in *H.B.R. Maymun*. He had similar tendencies as his brother. Memo Tembelçizer, a close friend of Üstün Brothers, prepared a page with Cengiz Üstün in *H.B.R. Maymun*, called “Eşşek Cenneti” (Donkey’s Paradise). Memcoş worked in *Gırgır* as a teenager and also in *Pişmiş Kelle* and was a close friend of Bahadır Baruter. This gang was later joined by Oky, Emrah Ablak and Kenan Yarar to some extent.

Each of the above-mentioned cartoonists/comic artists created characters and/or comics which became the driving forces of *L-Manyak*. Bülent Üstün’s “Kötü Kedi Şerafettin” (Şerafettin the Bad Cat) is probably the best-known character *L-Manyak* has produced. Among the other comics created by Bülent Üstün are “L-Manyak Kerizleri” (Idiots of L-Manyak), and “Prensiplerim Vardır” (I Have Principles). Cengiz Üstün created the almost equally famous character “Kunteper Canavarı”<sup>5</sup>. Kaptan Onedın (Captain Onedın), “Duka Film”, (Cunt Film), and “Macerayı Seven Adam” (The Adventure-Lover) are among his other works. Memo Tembelçizer created “L-Manyak Şehitleri” (Martyrs of L-Manyak”) along with “Mastürbatörler Derneği” (Masturbators Society) and “Aşık Memo” (Memo the Bard). Memcoş drew “Bir Evimiz Vardı” (We Had an Apartment) which was later titled “Hatıralar Geçidi” (A Parade of Memories).

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<sup>5</sup> “Kun” means “anus” and “tepmek” means “to kick” in Turkish. However, in this context, the latter comes to mean “to fuck” as the “Canavar” (Monster) is a man with a huge penis who punishes people through anal sex.

*L-Manyak*'s first issues lacked the originality the magazine was to acquire later. The first issue did not involve any of the characters which have managed to survive today. There were longer stories of several characters of *Leman*, like "Paranoya" (Paranoia - Solmaz and Baruter), "Kofti Anarşist" (Pseudo-Anarchist – Bahadır Boysal), "Bezgin Bekir", "Erkut Abi" (by Kaan Ertem). Apart from these, there were some one-shot stories by *Leman* artists. The only new comics series which continued in the following issues, but was not among the lasting comics of the *L-Manyak* school was Kaan Ertem's "2001 Feza Fatihleri" (2001 Space Conquerors), which was about Turks in space and depended on the supposedly typical and ridiculous Turkish national mentality. The only non-*Leman* cartoonists of the first issue were Bülent Üstün, Uğur Durak and Deniz Ensari.

The second issue gave birth to two of the most popular characters of the *L-Manyak* school, which continue to exist today. The first one was Kaan Ertem's "Zıçan Adam" (Shitting Man, or to be more loyal to the text, Zhitting Man). The other one was Bülent Üstün's "Kötü Kedi Şerafettin".

"Zıçan Adam", is not a long narrative comics, but consists of a series of unrelated cartoons and comic strips<sup>6</sup> with the same character, a bald, short and seemingly naked man, who has the ability to excrete in superhuman amounts and force. "Zıçan Adam" is a *L-Manyak* version of Ertem's *Leman* based characters, especially "Erkut Abi." Erkut Abi reacts against the disturbers of social peace by punishing them physically, instead of merely observing or attacking them verbally like other Ertem characters. "Zıçan Adam", in that sense, is similar to "Erkut Abi" because he also punishes disturbers of social peace physically, by excreting on them. He can "explode" on a taxi driver who talks too much, a dealer who sells drugs to high school students, a contractor who forces two old people to sell their house in order to build an apartment

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<sup>6</sup> Most of the comics in *L-Manyak*'s first issues had the same characteristics. They were like long cartoons.

block in its place and so on. Kaan Ertem stood apart from the rest of the L-Manyak cartoonists, with an apparent interest in political and social satire.

Bülent Üstün's "Kötü Kedi Şerafettin", as the other popular series along with "Zıçan Adam" to start in issue 2, began as a mini series which soon turned out to be a long running storyline, with its own mythology and continuous characters. The series is about a cat named Şerafettin, or Şero for short, who is the worst troublemaker in all Cihangir, a neighbourhood in Beyoğlu. At the beginning, Bülent Üstün himself is among the major characters. He is a cartoonist, whose pet cat Pirtav has been raped and killed by Şerafettin and who has sworn vengeance on all costs.

"Kötü Kedi Şerafettin", which turned ten in 2006, is arguably the most famous comics character in Turkey today. Interviews with and articles on Bülent Üstün have been published in many different publications, including *Radikal*, *Yeni Aktüel*, *Haftalık* (which actually gave a separate supplementary about Şerafettin and Bülent Üstün), *Vatan*, *Hayvan*, *Sabah*, *Milliyet* et cetera. Besides having the usual merchandise such as t-shirts and mugs, Şerafettin also inspired a mobile phone game. Moreover, in 2003, several newspapers made news about a Turkish-Australian co-production of a feature length animated movie of Şerafettin. There were also rumours about a Şerafettin musical, which will be staged with the help of Şafak Sezer, a famous actor (Özyurt, *Radikal*. 18 May 2003).

Cengiz Üstün's "Kunteper Canavarı", is a human looking alien with a huge penis, who punishes people for different reasons, by hypnotizing them with his penis and penetrating them anally. He lives in a cave near Bodrum, and can "get the signal" when someone in any part of the country pronounces his name, which is enough reason for him to practice his way of justice. It turns out that he fought as a soldier during the Kıbrıs Peace Operation. His adventures mostly follow a storyline in which

teams of his victims try and have vengeance from him, using heavy artillery, which provides Kunteper Canavarı with the chance to display his military skills.

“L-Manyak Şehitleri” by Memo Tembelçizer, employs the cartoonists of L-Manyak as its characters, who die in different settings and different ways in each story. They have been to the Stone Age, the Wild West, the Space Age (as Ottomans) among other places, and they have been killed by homicidal maniacs, dinosaurs, angry village men, rapists, a cartoonist who loves the 1950s style “non-verbal humour”, or committed suicide. Memo also prepared a page called “Mastürbatörler Derneği”, which came with a manifesto that says: “1) Men and Women should be loved from afar. Love should not include sex. 2) Sex kills imagination, masturbation encourages it. 3) It is not true that masturbation causes acne. 4) It increases the belief in loneliness. The lonely individual is the strong individual. 5) It will take humanity to brighter times.” Memo wrote mock poems, parodying the traditional *âşık*<sup>7</sup> poetry, praising masturbation and underrating sex. He turned himself into a character called *Âşık Memo*, who travelled with a rod in his hand and a white robe which barely hid a giant erection. *Âşık Memo* taught those who had been ‘blinded’ with the idea of sex that masturbation was the righteous way, and was always deemed the wisest of the wise in return.

Memçoş’s comics mostly deal with his life, and his or his friends’ anecdotes. He started his career in *L-Manyak* with “Bir Evimiz Vardı”, in which he told his memories from the time he shared a flat with Bahadır Baruter. He changed the name of his comics as “Hatıralar Geçidi” later and continued to tell his memories, his views on life and the nature of relationships, things he learnt from documentaries and more abstract issues. His comics are reminiscent of “The Secret Life of Bahadır Boysal”,

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<sup>7</sup> Roughly translates as “bard” or “troubadour”.

however he seems to have run out of interesting stories to tell more quickly than Boysal. His comics are hardly coherent and apparently do not follow any script at all.

Other permanent artists and series in *L-Manyak*, which passed onto *Lombak* include Emrah Ablak with “Tübitak”, a humorous and imaginative look at the researches carried out in the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey; Andaç Gürsoy with “Tuğçe”, the stories of love and lust of a six-year-old girl; Alpay Erdem with “İsmail: Hasta Ruh” (İsmail: The Psycho), the experiences of a psychologically disturbed man; Oky with “Cihangir’de Bi Ev” (An Apartment in Cihangir), the lives of three young men in an apartment in Cihangir; Kenan Yarar with “Hilal”, a teenage schizophrenic girl and her relationship with the Devil; Ersin Karabulut with “Yeraltı Öyküleri” (Stories of the Underground), dark, violent, mostly non-humorous stories; Göxel with Prifesor Lepistes (Prifessor Lepistes), the adventures of a streetwise, mad scientist. These artists and series will be dealt with in the following parts.

In 2001, Bahadır Baruter, Bülent Üstün, Memo Tembelçizer and most of the cartoonists who contributed to the formation of the aesthetics of *L-Manyak*, separated their ways with the magazine and started publishing an independent humour magazine called *Lombak* (Memcoş was not among the quitters). The new magazine looked exactly like its predecessor. *Leman* carried on with the publication of *L-Manyak*. In 2002, another group of artists left *Leman*, including such popular names as Metin Üstündağ, Selçuk Erdem and Erdil Yaşaroğlu. They united with *Lombak* to publish a new weekly humour magazine called *Penguen*. *Lombak* also started publishing an A5 sized humour magazine called *Kemik* (Bone). Moreover, they started a new magazine focusing on culture, politics and arts, called *Hayvan* (Animal), edited by Metin Üstündağ and a continuation of *Leman*’s previous magazine *Öküz*. *Leman* started two other publications called *Yeni Harman*, a political newspaper, and *Kaçak Yayın*, a literature magazine.

In September 2006, Bülent Üstün, Memo Tembelçizer, Oky, Emrah Ablak and some other cartoonists from *Penguen*, *Lombok* and *Kemik*, quit their magazines and started to publish a weekly magazine called *Fermuar*. Bülent Üstün explained the reason for their separation as the wearing away of the humour of *Lombok* and the demand of the humour magazine readers for a more childish, innocent and naïve humour (Akverdi, *Akşam*. 16 September 2006). *Fermuar* continues to be published. However, some of the cartoonists have already left the magazine, and their number of pages decreased. It is apparent that *Fermuar* does not sell as much as *Penguen* or *Leman*.

### **2.3 *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* in Political and Cultural Context**

All texts are penetrated by the particular external conditions that surround them, whether they internalize them or react against them. Humour magazines are especially sensitive to their immanent environment. If they do not change with the times they lose their influence on their audience and are replaced by the newcomers who are able to catch up with the change. Therefore, in order to understand *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*, it is of great importance to discuss them in the political, social, and cultural contexts they flourished.

The style of humour developed in *L-Manyak* (and its follower *Lombok*) emerged in the mid-1990s, a time whose political, social and cultural roots are deeply embedded in the post-September 12 period of the 1980s in Turkey. On September, 12 1980, the army, led by Kenan Evren, took power, dissolved the government and all the parties, arrested party leaders, dismissed members of parliament and local mayors and governments on the grounds of causing political, social and economic disorder in the country (Calvocoressi, 1996: 265-266).

Following the coup d'État, all political power was claimed by the army and the National Security Council (NSC), with Kenan Evren officially declared the head of

state on September 14. In 1982, a new constitution was established and Kenan Evren was elected president. In the following year, Motherland Party, led by Turgut Özal became the single party in the parliament with the 45 per cent of the votes (Zürcher, 1995: 406-411).

Turgut Özal adopted a new right policy, in the vein of Thatcherism in the UK and Reaganism in the USA. The new right has two distinctive characteristics: “[t]he first is revived support for classical liberal economics, in particular for the free-market ideas of Adam Smith (...) The second theme also draws upon nineteenth-century ideas, but those of traditional conservatism, especially its defence of order, authority and discipline” (Heywood, 1998: 91). Stuart Hall defines the politics of Thatcherism, which he calls the “nemesis” of the left, as “authoritarian populism”, which is “an exceptional form of the capitalist state which, unlike classical fascism, has retained most (though not all) of the formal representative institutions in place, and which at the same time has been able to construct around itself an active popular consent” (Hall, 1990: 42).

Some contradictory patterns were also inherent in Motherland Party. According to Calvocoressi (1996: 266), the party “was an uncomfortable amalgam of modernizing westernizers and Islamic purists and nationalists”. Although Özal seemed to be in cooperation with the army, he also aimed to restore civilian politics. Due to the fact that the military leaders supported the other two parties (People’s Party led by Necdet Calp and Nationalist Democracy Party led by Turgut Sunalp), Turgut Özal appeared to be the only true democrat in the elections (Zürcher, 1995: 411), and thus, in a way, seemed to promise a neutralization of the people/power bloc contradiction that has come to dominate the country’s history through the official Kemalist ideology and a tradition of military interventions. Özal, like Süleyman Demirel, presented himself as one of the ‘people’.

The new government also adopted a free market economy like the British and American governments of the period. Çağlar Keyder (1993: 297) states that liberalism, which bureaucracy had previously approached in an adverse manner, was presented by the state as a solution to overcome the economic problems of the country. This new tendency was supported not only by the big bourgeoisie but also small producers. The results of these neo-liberalist policies in the society were increasing individualism, consumption, and self-interest. Can Kozanoğlu states that, when support began to decrease, Özal, who used to threaten the people (discreetly) with the possibility of a return to the “dark days” of pre-September 12, started to threaten them with the possibility of “not being rich, not being able to consume” (Kozanoğlu, 1994: 17).

It is possible to claim that, starting from the eighties, through the oppressive politics of the military regime and Özal’s application of the new right policies in Turkey, a new common sense was constructed, and naturalized. Engaging in radical (especially left-wing) politics was rendered absurd. The education system and parental authority contributed to the ideological programming of the younger generations in a conservative strain. Economic breakthrough, consumption and depoliticization became the keywords to describe the social tendencies of the young people raised in this period.

The cultural “climate” of the 1980s, in Nurdan Gürbilek’s words, also bears peculiar contradictory characteristics. First of all, the 1980s were a period of both oppression and liberation. “On the one hand, it was a period of refusal, denial and oppression; on the other hand, it was a period of opportunities and promises, in which the desires and appetite of the people were provoked as it had never been before.” Individual desires were more and more emphasized in the 1980s; however, they were mostly desires of consumption (Gürbilek, 2001: 9-10). Secondly, the oppression of words went hand in hand with an “explosion of words and images”. As a result of this explosion, culture

became increasingly subject to the market, as advertising and weekly news magazines put into circulation new images, a new language and a new public outside the restraints of official ideology.

According to Gürbilek, the press discovered new areas of news that had never been dwelled on before (Gürbilek, 2001: 54). Particularly sex and sexuality, sexual orientation, and private lives began to be exposed, and were turned into news and images in newspapers and magazines. As the 1990s marched on, this tendency – the explosion of words and images – was pursued by even more magazines and newly emerging private television channels. Ayşe Öncü delves into the topic of sexuality as spectacle in the 1990s in her article “Global Consumerism, Sexuality as Public Spectacle, and the Cultural Remapping of Istanbul in the 1990s”. Emphasizing the instance of Istanbul, she states that there has been an explosion of sexual images on the newspapers, glossy magazines, television and billboards as a result of the influence of global consumerism on city life and lifestyles. According to Öncü, “(...) for Istanbul’s ‘youth’ or ‘younger generations’ – between teenage and marriage – the conjuncture of the 1990s opened a window to unlimited consumption for and on sexual bodies, constrained only by financial circumstance” (Öncü, 2002: 174).

As far as humour magazines are concerned, Öncü labels them as “transgressive cultural spaces for Istanbul’s youth”. Their independence, being devoid of advertisement and use of cheap paper grants them the position of being alternative to such magazines as “*Cosmopolitan, Marie Claire, Burda, Playboy* etc”, all of which are presented in glossy papers and are under umbrella of big media groups (Öncü, 2002: 176). Öncü deems the world represented in humour magazines, particularly in *maganda* cartoons as the antithesis of the “shiny, clean, orderly world inhabited by good-looking people” as represented in television commercials and magazines which focus on upper-middle class lifestyles. The sexuality in *maganda* cartoons, unlike the

aforementioned glossy magazines, is also far from being clean, erotic, or pornographic, but is obscene and humorous (Öncü, 2002: 180-181).

Sex and sexuality constituted significant portions of the humour practiced in humour magazines even before what Gürbilek labels the “sexual explosion” of the 1980s. Humour magazines were also receptive to the “low culture” Gürbilek (2001: 106) claims exploded in the 1980s, long before, as humour is essentially nurtured by what is low. The sexuality in humour magazines, however, went through several changes in different decades as humour styles changed and new humour magazines emerged.

It has been mentioned that *Gırgır* became popular as a result of producing humour for the masses, employing the culture of the shantytowns and slum neighbourhoods. This was one of the reasons that led to the huge amount of popularity *Gırgır* received. Another reason for this was the use of nudity, eroticism and sex in *Gırgır*. In the first issues, *Gırgır* featured erotic photo-collages with famous characters of *Gırgır* such as “Avni” and “Utanmaz Adam”. Of course, apart from photographs, cartoons, drawings and illustrations of naked women were also present. Sipahioğlu contends that, starting from 1975, the eroticism in *Gırgır* takes up a grotesque facet, and the number of grotesque-erotic parodies of politicians increases (Sipahioğlu, 1999: 196). In 1976, Oğuz Aral and his brother Tekin Aral started publishing another humour magazine called *Fırt*, which took over the erotic content of *Gırgır* and enabled it to adopt a stance of political opposition.

It can be suggested that, with the “sexual explosion” of the 1980s, humour magazines underwent some changes in terms of the representation of sex and sexuality, and directed themselves to a more radical path, where the mainstream media cannot walk into. Sexual interaction was not merely implied any more, it was portrayed openly, and the depiction of genitals was no longer a taboo. *Maganda* cartoons were and are an important vessel of representation of sexuality in humour magazines.

The humour style in *Limon* and the first years of *Leman* is particularly remembered with the *maganda* cartoons. Ayşe Öncü underlines the fact that *maganda*, in these cartoons, is portrayed with a ubiquitous erection and an insatiable sexual appetite. She believes that, in *maganda* cartoons lies a settling of scores with the adult world. She says, “[i]t is only by keeping in mind the sheer sense of exhilaration which comes when the dominant male figure of the adult world is exposed as being sexually ‘illiterate’ that it becomes possible to grasp the essence of *maganda* humour” (Öncü, 2002: 181). However, she adds that this is not the only way to read the *maganda* cartoons. The artist and the reader of these cartoons identify themselves with the *maganda* on another level because they, too, experience “otherness and alienation amidst an abundance of commodified icons and images of sexual fantasy and desire in Istanbul in the 1990s” (181-182). The *maganda* cartoons have lost their influence in humour magazines to a great extent; however, they continue to be written and drawn to this day, particularly by Mehmet Çağçağ from *Leman*.

The *maganda* cartoons, of course, are not the only cartoons that have shaped the representations of sexuality in the humour magazines of 1980s and 1990s. The lives of a more sexually-liberated, urban (Istanbulite) youth were also depicted in the pages of *Limon* and *Leman*. The Timsah (Crocodile) character in the series “Daral ve Timsah” (Daral and Timsah) is a good example of this strain in *Leman*. Timsah lives a parasitical life with his rich friend Daral. Although he is not rich himself, he has adopted the lifestyle of a rich young man, going to hotels, clubs and bars, having promiscuous relations with all sorts of women, all of whom worship his sexual talents and powers. Ironically, his rich friend Daral cannot do any of this, and only finances, with the help of his father’s wealth, Timsah’s pursuits. Timsah is, in some ways, an “Utanmaz Adam” for the 1990s. He aims to live a life of pleasures by cheating rich people, particularly rich women. He lives in accordance with materialistic values and has no ethical restrictions, while Daral believes in new age spiritualism.

Daral and Timsah are stereotypes of the post-September 12, middle-class urban young men. They are both depoliticized. Timsah, not being of the upper class himself, is ambitious to move upwardly in the social hierarchy, and to better his life standards. Daral, on the other hand, is rich but in constant depression and boredom. He is fragile and has endless questions about his identity. Although it is apparent that these stereotypes only signify the youth of a certain class of the society<sup>8</sup>, they reflect true observations to an extent. Ayça Alemdaroğlu suggests that the young generations of the post-1980 period became gradually independent from the concept of youth the Kemalist state discourse imposed on them. According to Alemdaroğlu, the young people of this period grew up in authoritarian policies of the state and in an illusion of freedom bred by the values of free market economy. In the 1990s, mass communication enabled young people to express different political and cultural identities, the two most distinctive being “Islamism” and “Laicism” (Alemdaroğlu, 2005: 23).

The analyses on the youth of the post-1980 period usually ignore alternative spaces and ways through which young people can experience and express politics. Humour magazines in Turkey – transgressive spaces of youth as Öncü puts it – have been essentially oppositional, anti-establishment and anti-mainstream. Produced and read particularly by young people, they have been important media in shaping the political and social attitudes, and the language their audience adopt.

The political attitudes of humour magazines since *Gırgır* evolved through time. *Gırgır* was not very political in the beginning. It became more politically oppositional gradually. The most visible resistance to daily politics in *Gırgır* was reflected on the

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<sup>8</sup> Samet İnanır (2005: 40-41) states that the “apolitical youth” discourse directly signifies white-Turk-laicist and male figures. It excludes, for example, the Islamist and Kurdist youth of the 1980s and 1990s, who were political enough. He also says that the youth of the 70s were idealized as conscious and politicized while the youth of the eighties are idealized as unaware and depoliticized; however, both decades, obviously hosted young people who could be defined in the opposite way.

cover page, where politicians were depicted as untrustworthy people, illustrated as belly-dancers et cetera, because they are thought to be slippery. The distrust against politicians was taken over by the followers of *Gırgır*, sometimes accompanied by a more radical left-wing attitude, as in the examples of *Mikrop* and *Limon*.

The content of *L-Manyak* (followed by *Lombok*), on the other hand, was prepared mostly by a post-1980 generation of cartoonists. Although they are not the stereotyped youth of the last twenty five years, they do share some of the attributes that have been imposed on this generation. They do not seem to care about moving upwardly in the social hierarchy. They claim to feel closer to the life in Cihangir and Tarlabası, which they deem “the margins of the city” rather than Bağdat Caddesi, where rich people live. They are apparently against the consumption-oriented lifestyles that have come to dominate the age with the adoption of free market economy. Moreover, they seem to have problems with the whole order. However, they have their share of individualism and being apolitical, which have been generally identified with the youth of the post-1980s. Unlike the weekly humour magazines which have dominated the tradition, *L-Manyak* (and *Lombok*) does not have any space for daily politics and politicians. Apart from a few exceptions, like the works of Kaan Ertem (“Zıçan Adam”, “Enstantaneler” and “Ezik Şarkıcı Altuğ”), it does not even practice social satire. Nevertheless, it might be suggested that these magazines, in most instances, resisted the values of the dominant culture, and authority on a symbolic level, just like the youth subcultures that bloomed in the Western world in the second half of the twentieth century, especially the Punk movement of the late 1970s.

Youth subcultures in the West strived to adopt styles which might be called reactionary “spectacles”, to subvert what the Situationists labeled the Society of Spectacle, which defined the modern society of consumption. Youth subcultures had a shared understanding of fashion, music, language and a place which they identify

themselves with. Ayşe Öncü also associates humour magazines with the youth subcultures around the world in the sense that the readers are gathered around the same sense of humour, and become familiar with the different styles of the artists as well as the street language they use, and also in the sense that humour magazines subvert the cultural forms, symbols and meanings. It can also be added that, in the case of *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*, a shared place is also available, which is Cihangir and, to an extent, Beyoğlu. However, it should be stated that, as Öncü mentions, humour magazines, in this case *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*, do not have their origins in the working class youth, as the youth subcultures studied by sociologists generally are. Although *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* feature stories of the characters from the marginal sections of the society, their editor Bahadır Baruter confesses that they would not raise their children to be heroin addicts or homosexuals and their natural chemistry with the man on the street is not preferable to their relationship with their families (Cantek, 2002: 315). Nevertheless, regardless of the class origins of the cartoonists, the stories produced in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* have elements that negate the discourses of official ideology and high culture, with an emphasis on everything that is “low”.

The lower bodily stratum has been employed in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* as it has never been in preceding humour magazines. It is in the center of the humour style of these magazines. Sex and obscenity have been taken to a further level than their predecessors where sex is portrayed in all its aspects, from what is considered normal to what is considered extreme. The magazines also portray violence and drug abuse, in a way that American underground comix of the 1960s and 1970s did. Sex, drugs and violence in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*, as in underground comix, take an exaggerated, comical and grotesque form, which cannot be tolerated in the mainstream media.

Of course, there are other factors than merely revolting against values of the general public to *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*'s use of sex, drugs and violence. It can be claimed that the only way to survive for the humour magazines in the 1990s was to adopt a more radical attitude towards taboo subjects because, as it has been pointed out by Gürbilek and Öncü, with the advent of new magazines and private TV channels, sexuality in media underwent an explosion. The humour style particular to *Gırgır* was taken over by TV shows like Levent Kırca's *Olacak O Kadar* and Hamdi Alkan's *Reyting Hamdi*. In accordance with that, the sales of humour magazines started to drop in the 1990s. The cartoonists of this era had to practice a style of humour that cannot take place on television or other media.

In the past, when there was only one TV channel which belonged to the state, *Gırgır*'s humour was also nurtured by television shows and celebrities, just like the style of humour of *Mad* magazine in America. *Gırgır* featured parodies of famous TV shows and films, and cartoons of celebrities. This type of humour was appreciated by the readers because they watch the same shows, films and celebrities as the cartoonists. When the number of TV channels started to increase, TV stopped to constitute a shared experience for the cartoonists and readers, with a myriad of shows, programs and celebrities. The cartoonists of the 1990s had to find other shared experiences that would interest the readers. For example, they made parodies of mainstream comics heroes of both foreign and Turkish origins, old movies, fairy tales et cetera. In *Leman*, "My Fellow Countrymen" cartoons, which contain observations on the supposedly typical Turkish behaviours, became also quite popular.

In *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*, the alternative to the shared experience of TV was the construction of a shared setting in some of their comics series: Beyoğlu and particularly Cihangir became the spectacle the cartoonists were eager to portray and the readers were eager to "watch". Beyoğlu and Cihangir were the places where

cartoonists spent most of their time. Can Kozanođlu describes how these areas became home to cartoonists in *Yeni Őehir Notları*:

(...) humour magazines which were traditionally based in Cađalođlu moved to the Taksim-Harbiye-Cihangir region in the 1990s. Big media groups moved to İkitelli-GüneŐli from Cađalođlu, whereas humour magazines, which separated from big capital holders, chose another direction. One of them was constructing buildings in the middle of an almost empty space, while the other was going into the back streets (Kozanođlu, 2001: 94)<sup>9</sup>.

Rıfat N. Bali puts forth the rising nostalgia for Beyođlu and the “old İstanbul” among the new elites, starting from the mid-1980s through the 1990s and 2000s. These were the years, says Bali, that the new elites expressed their feelings about how the city was invaded by villagers, magandas and the “lahmacun culture” (Bali, 2002: 134-139). This longing for the old İstanbul also covered other neighbourhoods like Ortaköy, Cihangir and Galata, which was a result of the increasing nostalgia for the non-muslim minorities of İstanbul. Cihangir has become a popular place to live among journalists, artists and writers because it was close to Beyođlu and there is a communal atmosphere in which everyone knows each other (Bali, 2002: 140-141).

Cartoonists in *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* found a place in Cihangir where they can seclude themselves from the rest of the city and the world. They became flâneurs as they stroll up and down in Beyođlu and Cihangir, and observe the streets and the people. They have reconstructed these places in their works, in which they imply to bear some type of street wisdom. Beyođlu and Cihangir acquire a utopian aspect in their works, where they can stay away from politics, the officialdom, religious fanatics, *magandas* et cetera. They embrace the dangers and disorder of these places as they feel themselves closer to the people of the street than to the middle classes, the

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<sup>9</sup> (...) geleneksel olarak Cađalođlu’nda üslenmiŐ mizah dergileri, ‘90’lı yıllarda Taksim-Harbiye-Cihangir bölgesine yerleŐti. Büyük medya grupları Cađalođlu’ndan İkitelli-GüneŐli tarafına geçmiŐ, büyük sermayeden kopan mizah baŐka bir yönü seçmiŐti. Bir taraf neredeyse boŐluđun ortasına bina dikerken, diđer taraf iyice arka sokaklara dalıyordu.

rich, and politicians. In the third chapter, the representations of Cihangir in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* will be further dealt with.

## **2.4 The Political Economy of Humour Magazines**

So far, *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* have been described in their historical, cultural and political contexts. It has been deduced that although *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* were not particularly involved in daily politics, politicians or social structures, they pursue resistance to the repressive dominant culture and authority on a symbolic level, like a youth subculture. These analyses will be focused on a more textual basis in the next chapter. In this part, *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* will be discussed in terms of political economy and the concept of culture industry.

Culture Industry is a concept which was developed by T. W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer during their time in the United States. They argued that capitalist monopoly produced cultural commodities in order to create a false consciousness among the masses, in order to manipulate them. According to them, culture has been industrialized and standardized, in order to construct false needs in the consumers and satisfy them. They say

[t]he consumers are the workers and employees, the farmers and lower middle class. Capitalist production so confines them, body and soul, that they fall helpless victims to what is offered them. As naturally as the ruled always took the morality imposed upon them more seriously than did the rulers themselves, the deceived masses are today captivated by the myth of success even more than the successful are (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1977: 359).

The situation is no different for the artist, either. He/she must conform to the rules and standards of the culture industry, in order to survive in the art “business” (ibid: 359). Adorno and Horkheimer also claim that the products of culture industry, particularly

movies, leave “no room for imagination or reflection on the part of the audience” and appropriate them passively (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1977: 352-353).

Adorno and Horkheimer’s idea that the audience is passively manipulated by the products of mass media has been subject to criticism in the area of cultural studies. There have been several theories regarding the reception of the audience, which has negated Adorno and Horkheimer’s theory. On the other hand, the tendency in media and cultural studies to privilege the text and lay aside the particular economic structures in which it was formed has been highly criticized by scholars who believe that cultural analysis is never complete unless it is defined in the current capitalist organization of economy. These scholars contend that the cultural products are not exempt from the capitalist mode of production and the free market economy.

For example, Nicholas Garnham, in his article “Contribution to a Political Economy of Mass-Communication”, criticizes Hall in that he

explain[s] the ideological effect in terms of pre-existent and ideologically predetermined communicators or encoders choosing from a pre-existent and ideologically predetermined set of codes so that there is a systematic tendency of the media to reproduce the ideological field of society in such a way as to reproduce also its structure of domination. That is to say he offers the description of an ideological process, but not an explanation of why or how it takes place, except in tautological terms (Garnham, 2001: 234).

According to Garnham, although Hall mentions there is a relationship between monopoly capitalism and the growth of mass media, he refuses to pursue an explanation of how they are related for fear of economic reductionism. Garnham believes that the mass media establishes political and ideological domination by way of the economic (Garnham, 2001: 236).

It is doubtless that the mass media exist and are produced in a capitalist economy. According to Barış Çakmur, media related production is also an industrial production.

The culture industry produces commodities, via wage labour, which are subject to exchange in the market (Çakmur, 1998: 118). However, what constitutes a commodity when cultural products are in question remains unsolved. Çakmur refers to the ideas of several scholars on cultural commodities, like Dallas Smythe and Eileen Meehan. The former, basically, claims that the audience become commodities, as the media industries sell the attention of the audience to advertising companies. The latter, on the other hand, suggests ratings are the main form of cultural commodities. Çakmur puts forth a reconciling theory, saying that all of these are different forms of the commodification of cultural products (Çakmur, 1998: 120). Çakmur also states that cultural commodity is not the medium through which a product is presented. For example, a movie is a cultural commodity, not the strips of film on which it is printed. The strips of the film function as the reproduction of the cultural commodity (Çakmur, 1998: 134).

Humour magazines in the 1990s have a distinctive place in the culture industry of Turkey. Prior to that period – if we accept *Gırgır* as the beginning of all current humour magazines – they generally belonged to other media groups, whereas they mostly became independent during the 1990s. Starting from the 1990s, they set their discourse upon being independent publications of opposition, and constituting an alternative to what they deem “degenerated” media.

Levent Cantek states that until *Gırgır*, humour magazines had to deal with problems of survival and therefore were not blamed with earning a lot of money (Cantek, 1997: 71). It was with *Gırgır* that humour magazines acquired high circulation rate, a market for themselves, and became a centre of attraction. *Gırgır* started to be published in 1970 as a page prepared by Oğuz Aral for the newspaper, *Günaydın*. It continued in another newspaper, *Gün* in 1972. Aral explains the reason for taking “Gırgır” to *Gün* as: “Haldun Simavi was publishing another newspaper called *Gün* at the time and the circulation rate of the newspaper was gradually decreasing. When

Simavi said ‘let’s publish this page in *Gün* and prevent this decrease’ we started to prepare the page for *Gün*.” (*Hürriyet*, 30.04.1989, Quoted by Cantek, 2002: 212)<sup>10</sup>. It is clear that, in Aral’s opinion, Simavi regarded *Gırgır* as a way to increase the sales of the newspaper. In the same interview, Aral states that Simavi soon suggested publishing “*Gırgır*” as a magazine. Hence, *Gırgır* became a magazine in August, 1972. They printed 40.000 copies of the first issue and it is believed that *Gırgır* sold 500.000 – 600.000 according to Oğuz Aral – copies in its prime (Quoted by Cantek, 2002: 265). The potential of readers was so great that in 1976, the producers of *Gırgır* started to publish another humour magazine called *Fırt*, whose sales reached 200.000 copies (Öngören, 1998: 120).

It is understood from the accounts of several cartoonists that *Gırgır* was highly commercially organized rather than artistically concerned. Semih Balcıoğlu recounts *Gırgır* as: “There were long speech bubbles, curses, and totally understandable cartoons. It closed its doors and windows to art cartoons” (Balcıoğlu, 2003: 20). Kemal Aratan, who started his career in *Gırgır*, interprets *Gırgır* as: “In some circles, *Gırgır* is accused of being simple, being commercial. Yet, how else can one achieve that amount of circulation? Everything was clear in *Gırgır*. The magazine was produced for the mental age of 12-13” (Quoted by Cantek, 2002: 214). Aratan also talks about the production process of the magazine. There was a division of labour between the artists and the joke providers. In order to get four cartoons published, the workers of *Gırgır* had to come up with many more, which were then subject to selection by a board of four people. There was a highly competitive atmosphere.

The first break from *Gırgır* occurred in 1978 when Engin Ergönültaş, İrfan Sayar, Latif Demirci, Hasan Kaçan and Sarkis Paçacı started publishing *Mikrop*. *Mikrop* was

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<sup>10</sup> “Haldun Simavi, o sırada *Gün* adlı bir başka gazete çıkarıyordu ve bu gazetenin tirajı giderek düşüyordu. Simavi, ‘Bu köşeyi *Gün*’de yapalım da düşmeyi biraz önleyelim’ deyince biz *Gün*’de sayfa yapmaya başladık.”

published for about a year and then they had to return to *Gırgır*. Necdet Şen claims that the reason for *Mikrop* to close down was the attitude of distribution monopoly. According to Şen, Hür Distribution, which belonged to the newspaper *Hürriyet* and distributed *Çarşaf*, a humour magazine, published by the *Hürriyet* group, demanded that *Mikrop* be printed 100.000 copies, although it only sold 60.000 copies a week (Şaşmaz, www.cizgiroman.gen.tr. 29 July 2001). Levent Cantek, on the other hand, asserts that the real reason was the ideological differences among its producers rather than the circulation rates (Cantek, 2002: 222).

Another group quit *Gırgır* in 1986 and founded *Limon*. According to Levent Cantek, this was not much of a stroke for *Gırgır*, since the *Limon* team was not the most important cartoonists in *Gırgır* and it was clear that they would not practice a similar style of humour to that of *Gırgır*. Therefore, *Gırgır* did not consider *Limon* as an opponent. However, when a group of more than twenty cartoonists left *Gırgır* to publish *Hıbr*, *Gırgır* received a significant blow. Almost all of the significant producers of *Gırgır* had quit the magazine. This resulted in arguments between the magazines, which quickly spread to mainstream newspapers. It turned out that the producers of humour magazines earned large quantities of money and rumour had it that the *Hıbr* team was paid large sums of transfer fees. Oğuz Aral wrote an article, accusing Asil Nadir, the owner of Gelişim Publications, and *Hıbr* of stealing the labour of 18 years in one night. He also blamed the *Hıbr* team with lack of political awareness. In response to this article, *Hıbr* said that *Gırgır* continued using their works under different names even after they quit the magazine, and Oğuz Aral did not provide them with insurance although he talks about political awareness and workers' rights (Cantek, 2002: 249-253).

In 1989, Oğuz Aral started publishing another humour magazine called *Dıgıl*, under the editorship of Galip Tekin, in order to decrease the sales of *Hıbr* (Cantek, 2002: 251). *Dıgıl* was published with the subtitle "Selections from *Gırgır* and *Fırt*" at first.

It later started publishing new works. During the same year, Haldun Simavi, who owned *Gırgır*, sold it to Ertuğrul Akbay, who also started publishing a newspaper called *Gölge Adam*. Due to some disagreements, Aral brothers left *Gırgır* and joined the *Sabah* group to publish *Avni* and *Fırfır* instead of *Gırgır* and *Fırt*, and they accused Ertuğrul Akbay of stealing *Gırgır*, and using their older works without copyrights.

All these humour magazines were affiliated with larger media groups. *Gırgır* and *Fırt* belonged to Haldun Simavi and then Ertuğrul Akbay. *Mikrop* belonged to Ercan Arıklı's Gelişim Publications. *Limon* was published by *Güneş*. *Hıbrır* was originally owned by Asil Nadir's Gelişim Group, but frequently changed hands and was bought by the Özal family at the end. Due to these affiliations, humour magazines gained a "his master's voice" aspect in the eyes of the readers and lost their credibility, which resulted in a decrease of sales.

Cultural products are not within the range of material needs; therefore, as Çakmur says, their reconsumption mechanism should be constituted ideologically (Çakmur, 1998: 123). There are various discourses in process to create demand for cultural products. When humour magazines are in question, the need for them is constructed mainly with the idea that laughing is one of the basic needs of human beings. Another basic discourse of humour magazines is that they provide an oppositional point of view for their readers, by parodying politics, politicians, businessmen, and the power blocs. These magazines, as a principle, do not even publish advertisements (they do not commodify their readers), and are merely supported by their readers to protect their oppositional stance. When the above-mentioned arguments broke out in 1989, the readers of humour magazines had to confront the fact that humourists themselves earned a lot of money, and most of them were managed by the capital holders they seem to oppose. As a result, humour magazines lost one of the discourses – that of

opposition – they employed to create demand and the readers began to consider humour magazines as “fake”.

The discourse of opposition was regained during the 1990s, as humour magazines started to become independent one by one. The first independent humour magazine, *Deli*, was founded in 1991 by cartoonists who were expelled from *Limon* by the *Güneş* management. *Deli* was followed by *Leman* in the same year, when *Güneş* stopped paying the workers of *Limon*, who quit as a result. *Hıbr* became independent in 1994 and adopted the name *H. B. R. Maymun*. Cartoonists became their own bosses, and to some extent, businessmen in a profitable market.

*Leman* became the most successful of these independent magazines and entered the Twenty-first century as a humour magazine monopoly. The magazine continued the tradition of not publishing advertisements; however, it triggered several mechanisms of reconsumption for its readers as it became more and more popular and the best-selling magazine of the period. They opened a *Leman Culture Café* in İstanbul, which was followed by other branches in different cities. They produced cross-promotional products, such as t-shirts, mugs, mouse pads etc. They also became a publication company and published the collected works of their cartoonists. Finally, they founded other magazines and turned into a media group in their own right. Among such magazines as *Kedi* (a magazine about cats), *Öküz* (a magazine on Culture and Arts), *Git* (a traveling magazine), they also started publishing a humour magazine, *L-Manyak* in 1996 and another one called *Atom* in 2000. Especially *L-Manyak* attracted many cartoonists from the other popular humour magazines of the period such as *Pişmiş Kelle* and *H. B. R. Maymun*, which contributed to the demise of these magazines. In short, the *Leman* Group increased their profits to a great extent.

*Leman*'s domination in the market was overturned in the 2000s. Most of the cartoonists in *L-Manyak* quit the magazine and started publishing *Lombak* (a

magazine of the same format as *L-Manyak*) in 2001 independently, which was followed by *Kemik* (a magazine prepared by mostly young cartoonists, like *Atom*), and *Penguen* (a weekly humour magazine) in 2002. When the *Lombok* team left the *Leman* group, Tuncay Akgün, one of the managers of *Leman*, accused them of stealing *L-Manyak*, just like Oğuz Aral accused *Hıbrır* of stealing *Gırgır*, whereas Bahadır Baruter, the editor of *Lombok*, claimed that their separation from *Leman* was due to the fact that *Leman* was an establishment, but *Lombok* was a gang (Harani. *Hürriyet Pazar* 29 April 2001).

However, when the producers of *L-Manyak* became independent with *Lombok*, they had to confront trials against what was defined as their immoral comics. Before, the editors of *Leman* dealt with such trials. As a result, characters such as “Kunteper Canavarı” and “Aşık Memo” disappeared. The “gang” soon became an establishment competing with the *Leman* group. This new group in the humour magazine market does not have the political reservations of their opponent. The managers of this new group of humour magazines did not shy out of getting into profitable deals with capitalist corporations. In 2002, they founded a company called Cominic, which described their aims in their websites ([www.cominic.com](http://www.cominic.com)) as working in five basic areas: “Mobile Entertainment, Publishing, License Sales, Consumption Products, and Production (Animation & Broadcast). In 2003, it was announced that Cominic established a partnership with Sony Ericsson “to bring popular humour, which is followed by everyone through different channels, into Sony Ericsson mobile phones via mobile internet technologies” (Oymacı, [www.netyorum.com](http://www.netyorum.com) 6 March 2003). In this context, wallpapers, screen-savers, EMS’es, and games (such as a game featuring *Kötü Kedi Şerafettin*) were designed for mobile phones. Another deal was established by giant publishing corporation Doğan Publications, who started publishing books of collected works by the cartoonists of *Lombok* and *Penguen*, and in one memorable newspaper advertisement, referred to them as “our cartoonists”. This resulted in

changes in the characters. The attitude towards sex and violence, for example, became less radical.

The *Lombok* group of magazines now shares the domination of the market with *Leman*. Although the *Leman* group has lost its former influence to the new generation of humour magazines, they are still powerful enough to survive in the market, unlike several other magazines who failed, such as *Meme* (later *Memet* - 2004), *Patatez* (2004), and *Gargi* (2005), which were monthly magazines in the *Lombok* format, and *Kırmızı Alarm* (2003), *Zehir* (2004), *Kütük* (2004), *Küstah* (2005), which were weekly magazines in the *Gırgır* format. In September 2006, a group of cartoonists from *Lombok*, *Penguen* and *Kemik* quit to publish another weekly humour magazine called *Fermuar*. This new group contained such popular names as Bülent Üstün, who was also the editor of the magazine, Memo Tembelçizer, Oky, Cengiz Üstün, Emrah Ablak, and Nuri Çetin, Cihan Ceylan, Yetkin Gülmen, Sadece Kaan from the younger generation. The magazine continues to be published to this day; however, some of its staff quit the magazine and returned to their old magazines, and there has been a decrease in their number of pages. It is also distributed less than the other weekly magazines, *Leman* and *Penguen*.

*Gırgır* had created a style, which proved to bring financial success. Therefore, when Oğuz Aral's "students" set out to publish their own weekly magazines, they adopted the same formula, which became a tradition for humour magazines in Turkey. The third page in almost all weekly humour magazines is made up of political cartoons. They all feature a healthy mixture of cartoons and comics, and they all publish works of amateurs as Aral used to. *L-Manyak*, as a monthly magazine, changed that formula dramatically. They eliminated political cartoons from their content, and in time, they almost stopped publishing cartoons and became a humorous comics magazine. *Lombok* carried on the flag of *L-Manyak*. The works of amateurs have never been able to get published in these magazines, and it was hard for any new artists to get

their works into these magazines. *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* have always been produced with a calculated professionalism. Artists, such as Kenan Yerar, whose styles are closer to fantastic, photo-realistic comics, has had to conform to the general style of these magazines and produce more humorous, caricaturized works.

Turkey has gone through some drastic changes after the coup d'État of 1980. The promises of variety put forth by the neo-liberalist economy affected the cultural space as well. As Emre and Orhon (2005: 127) underline, Turkey got closer to what can be defined as a culture industry in the 1990s. The increase in the number of publishing companies, for Emre and Orhon, is the most obvious sign for the industrialization of culture. The emergence of private TV channels and the rising level of privatization and professionalism in all areas of culture can be counted among the other signs. Due to the industrial organization of cultural production, there emerged a quality of sameness in cultural products.

The quality of sameness spread to humour magazines as well; or to put it more correctly, it has always been there since *Girgir*. The financially successful formula was, and continues to be, perpetuated in the cultural industry of humour. Humour magazines leave no room for innovation, partly due to the demand from the readers, who want to keep on reading the works and the same characters of the cartoonists they are accustomed to. This has always resulted in one style of humour springing from a particular magazine to wear down, while newer styles and newer magazines rise out of the ashes of the older. Therefore, at some point older humour magazines start to represent a rigid status quo, while the newer ones assume a flexible, revolutionizing aspect. *Girgir*, for example, changed the style of humour *Akbaba* has been practicing for 50 years. It was accused of featuring a degenerate humour by the mainstream circles; however, when the public showed interest in *Girgir*, its style was accepted by the mainstream. When *Limon* and then *Leman* started to be published, their humour was considered degenerate, while the older generation regarded *Girgir*

in a nostalgic manner. Then *Leman*'s style gradually turned into a pattern and started to be adopted by the mainstream. *L-Manyak* appeared and was labeled degenerate, as portraying excreta, sex, drugs, violence et cetera, and avoiding politics. The mainstream media was repulsed by the magazine while the younger generations embraced it, as practicing a new form of humour.

This ever-changing aspect of humour magazines is even turned into a marketing strategy for the newest magazine in the market, *Fermuar*. The editor of the magazine, Bülent Üstün says that they have founded *Fermuar* because “the style of humour changes every five years” and the style of *Lombok* has expired. He claims that the young generation of readers is not shocked by the humour of *Lombok* any more and prefers subjects revolving around childhood, naiveté and innocence. He defines the attitude of *Fermuar* as keeping some characteristics of the *Lombok* tradition but also open to the demands of this young generation (Akverdi, *Akşam* 16 September 2006).

Today, it would not be wrong to say that *L-Manyak*'s and *Lombok*'s humour has been appropriated by the mainstream culture and media. As Emre and Orhon points out, the functioning of the culture industry is directed towards containing and melting the elements of resistance and difference (Emre and Orhon, 2005: 134). The oppositional aspects of popular texts start to get included in the range of standardized products. The mainstream culture is no longer repulsed by the humour of *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*, as it appropriated their humour and reproduced it as profitable products; i.e. books by Doğan Publications and Mobile Phone Entertainment in cooperation with Sony Ericsson. Bahadır Baruter is introduced in a website as the manager of a magazine (*Lombok*) with an annual turnover of 500.000 US Dollars and a monthly circulation of 70.000 (Oymacı, [www.netyorum.com](http://www.netyorum.com). 6 March 2003).

As mentioned earlier, the staff of the *Lombok* group of humour magazines is mostly made up of the less political or non-political cartoonists of the previous generations.

*Lombak* and *Kemik* do not have any concerns about political opposition and *Penguen*'s opposition is obviously less radical than that of *Limon* and *Leman*. It can be deduced from their popularity that the readers of humour magazines do not place importance on political opposition as much as they used to; hence, one of the basic discourses used for constructing the need for humour magazines has been more or less eliminated. As the latest humour magazine to emerge, *Fermuar* describes its political stance as not as radical as *Leman* nor as light as *Penguen*, but as somewhere in between. However, it is hard to say that *Fermuar* is much interested in politics. In another interview, Bülent Üstün says that he finds "having concerns" an artificial concept and that their only concern is having fun (Oğuz, 2006: 24). Hence, it is possible to claim that the most popular humour magazines have given up their oppositional elements to a great extent and mostly supply entertainment for the demand of laughter.

## CHAPTER III

### ***L-MANYAK* AND *LOMBAK*'S STYLE IN THE TRADITION OF HUMOUR MAGAZINES**

In this chapter, the sources of *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*'s humour will be analyzed in terms of the setting of the comics in these magazines, their aesthetic origins, their kinship with the styles of subcultures and their relationship with a literary tradition. The first part will be devoted to Cihangir and the margins of the city as the settings of some of the most prominent comics in these magazines. The second part will explore the aesthetic origins of the magazines in the American underground comix of the 1960s and 1970s. In the third part, how the attitude of *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* has a kinship with the Punk subculture will be examined. In the final part, the relationship between these magazines and Bakhtin's concept of grotesque realism will be dwelled on.

All of the sources mentioned above, which form the style of humour particular to *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* might be interpreted as bearing elements of symbolic resistance. Cihangir was home to such marginal people as transvestites, transsexuals and drug addicts as well as artists, writers and bohemians, and had an aura of unofficialdom. The underground comix movement set out to break the taboos of what it considered a repressive society. The punk subculture revolted against the dominant culture and authority, and aimed to shock the public, with a style that signified disorder. Grotesque realism, as a literary genre, has debasing characteristics and degrades everything that is high, spiritual and ideal, through the use of the lower bodily elements in a positive manner.

On the other hand, all the above-mentioned sources of humour in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* can be evaluated from another point of view. Cihangir, for example, has become a popular place among the upper middle classes, who seek to live in a marginal and bohemian neighbourhood, and as a result, the rents climbed up, and it lost its “lowly” attributes. Underground comix and punk movement have been appropriated by the culture industry and lost their independent spirit. According to Bakhtin, grotesque realism lost its ties with the collective consciousness of the people and assumed an individualistic, sarcastic and negative character.

In this chapter, *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* will be analysed without disregarding either aspect of these sources of their style of humour. As they are magazines produced by several artists, it cannot be expected that all the cartoonists share exactly the same approaches towards their subjects. Even individual cartoonists do not always have a consistent attitude in their works. They do not reflect a particular strong opinion in their works. For example, when minorities are concerned, they seem to adopt a favourable attitude towards transvestites and gypsies, whereas African immigrants, without any exceptions, might be portrayed as drug selling rapists. Moreover, they do not have the same sensitivity towards such minority groups as Kurds.

When underground comix and punk movements are concerned, the producers of these subcultures can basically be classified as white males. Therefore, while they might be regarded as subversive and reactionary from some aspects, they were accused of reflecting the discrimination perpetuated by the patriarchal society. Particularly, their attitudes towards several ethnic groups and women have been considered hostile. The same criticism can be directed against *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*. The cartoonists are mostly comprised of white Turkish males and they constitute a closed community within themselves. They display a discriminatory – if not racist – and partly misogynist attitude from time to time. They do not portray figures like politicians or Kurds, as they are willing to isolate themselves from the political agenda and exist

merely in their own community. Their stance against the dominant culture and the authority also bears some contradiction. They seem to be at odds with all forms of authority; however, in some cases, they reflect exactly the official point of view. For example, one cartoonist depicts Atatürk in a sequence of stories, in which they go hunting for Islamic fundamentalists.

Another emphasis should be put on how this study employs Bakhtin's grotesque realism to interpret some of the series in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*. Grotesque realism will be regarded as a literary genre that puts into use images and elements of the lower bodily stratum. It will be considered as part of a verbal tradition, rather than oral tradition. As mentioned earlier, the main images depicted in the magazines in question are that of excreta, genital organs, and the whole lower bodily stratum. However, it should be noted that the portrayal of these images are not always in accordance with what Bakhtin defined as grotesque realism. Sometimes, they lack the essential positive characteristics Bakhtin associates with the grotesque and take on a more negative aspect. In these cases, the main motivation is to shock the public and negate the ideal concepts of beauty. Nevertheless, there are numerous examples which reflect the grotesque tendencies Bakhtin finds in Rabelais' work.

### **3.1 Representations of Cihangir in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok***

Bakhtin analyzed the concepts of grotesque realism and carnivalesque as the reflection of Middle Age Europe folk culture on Renaissance literature. *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*, on the other hand, are magazines which are published in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Turkey and have been shaped by an urban culture. Therefore, it might sound over-interpretative to try and explicate these magazines with Bakhtinian concepts. However, the essence Bakhtin had discovered in Rabelais's novels, have penetrated into these magazines, albeit in different forms. One can feel the conflict between the ideology of Catholic Church and the humanistic aspect of folk culture in Rabelais's

novels. The conflict carried in the texts of *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* is basically the one between the opposite poles of the city – the margins and the centre. There is a visible connection between the culture particular to the margins of the city and the culture and language crystallized in Bakhtin’s concept of grotesque realism.

Ali Şimşek, in his book *Yeni Orta Sınıf* (The New Middle Class), claims that *Gırgır* produced the humour of “the neighbourhood” whereas *Leman* produced the humour of “the new city” (Şimşek, 2005: 88-9). *Gırgır*’s characters, such as “Avanak Avni” (Avni the Clot), “Zalim Şevki” (Cruel Şevki), “Eşşek Herif” (Jackass), are unsuccessful and sympathetic tricksters who live in a neighbourhood full of colourful people. The neighbourhood they live in arouse in the reader feelings of sincerity, geniality and nostalgia for the good old times which are long gone. It is a collective belief – which is also promoted through the media, TV series et cetera – that the values of the old neighbourhood culture are lost today. *Leman*, on the other hand, is the humour magazine of the new city culture. Most characters in *Leman*, for example Daral and Timsah or “Bahadır Boysal in Theory and Practice”, are “cool” characters of the city, bars, clubs and dangerous streets.

The concept of neighbourhood has returned with *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* under a new facet. The slum neighbourhoods of *Gırgır*, which cunning, crafty but good-hearted people inhabit, are replaced by another kind of neighbourhood occupied by people who live or who are made to live on the margins of and/or outside the social norms: junkies, prostitutes, transvestites, transsexuals, homosexuals, bohemians, thieves and so on. The origins of this tradition can be found in the comics of Engin Ergönültaş. Funda Şenol and Levent Cantek state that he approached “slum neighbourhoods in a tougher and more realistic way in the 1970s” and “the slum neighbourhood stories he told in *Mikrop* and *Pişmiş Kelle* were narratives which were literary and disturbing, and had ‘concerns’.” (Şenol and Cantek, 2005: 67). Nurtured by these texts, the neighbourhoods of *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* are marginal and/or grotesque

neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods sustain the characteristics of the nostalgic neighbourhood – as represented in the movies, television, literature, and humour magazines – such as being rather secluded locations where the inhabitants take shelter against the dangers of the city and live in a sort of community spirit. However, they are not places where traditional values are preserved unlike the neighbourhoods reproduced in Yeşilçam movies and TV series. Ülker Sokak in Cihangir, where transvestites and transsexuals lived and supported each other against the powers that be until 1996, can be an example for such a neighbourhood.

Beyoğlu, Tarlabası and especially Cihangir, with subcultures and language unique to them, constitute the background for several comics in *L-Manyak* and *Lombak*. Kötü Kedi Şerafettin is a Cihangir cat. One of the most popular comics in *Lombak* is Oky's "Cihangir'de Bi Ev" (An Apartment in Cihangir). Moreover, comic artists such as Mehmet Coşkun (*L-Manyak*) and Bahadır Boysal (*Leman*, *L-Manyak* and *Atom*), who draw upon their own lives and experiences in their comics, feature Beyoğlu, Tarlabası and Cihangir in their comics. Before continuing with these examples, it is essential to give some information about the social and cultural aspects of Beyoğlu, Tarlabası and Cihangir.

Beyoğlu and its surroundings (including Galata) have been cosmopolitan places as well as centres of entertainment, taverns and prostitution since almost the Thirteenth century (Scognamillo, 1994: 12). The reason for that is the closeness of the region to the port and that it is the meeting point of sailors from all nations. According to Mustafa Cezar:

There has always been prostitution in Istanbul to a certain extent. Those who practiced prostitution in the Nineteenth Century were able to establish themselves in Galata and Beyoğlu. The fact that the port was situated in Galata, foreigners and tourists took shelter in Beyoğlu, taverns, cafes and places of entertainment were located in Beyoğlu resulted in the gathering of prostitutes around the area. When

prostitution nested itself there, the scoundrels of the city became the inhabitants of the same area (quoted by Scognamillo, 1994: 62)<sup>11</sup>.

Özdemir Kaptan (Arkan), the writer of the book *Beyoğlu, Kısa Geçmişi, Argosu* (Beyoğlu, Its Short History and Slang), objects to the way people nostalgically depict Beyoğlu as a place where elite people go with their best clothes, by giving various examples from history. Although official powers started “cleaning” campaigns in the area and decreased the level of prostitution and crime during several periods, Beyoğlu is still not regarded a completely safe place. This characteristic makes it a place of attraction today, as it did in the past (Arkan, 1993: 24-53).

Beyoğlu has not only been the home of heterosexual prostitution but also homosexual prostitution. Homosexuals, transvestites and transsexuals who previously used to work at a place called “Çöplük” (Dump), scattered to different brothels after the 12 September coup d’état and following that, moved to Abanoz Sokak, Pürtelaş Sokak and finally Ülker Sokak in Cihangir, where they formed a subculture community they could live in solidarity (Selek, 2001: 102-3). Pınar Selek says

[a]fter Cihangir, which had been used as the place for special dating houses called ‘garsoniyer’ since the first years of the Republic, embraced transvestites and transsexuals, it became the location of marginals, bachelors, intellectuals, students and artists, who were not bothered about living with them (Selek, 2001: 103)<sup>12</sup>.

The places represented in the *L-Manyak* school fit into the description made by Pınar Selek. Bahadır Baruter, who edited, first *L-Manyak* and then *Lombak*, explains how these magazines relate to the symbolic margins of the city:

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<sup>11</sup> İstanbul’da fuhuş, az ya da çok oranda her zaman var olmuştur. XIX. Yüzyılda fuhuş yapanlar daha ziyade Galata ve Beyoğlu’nda tutunacak yer bulmuştur. Limanın Galata’da yer alması, yabancı ve turistlerin Beyoğlu’nda barınması, meyhane, pastane ve eğlence yerlerinin Beyoğlu’nda yoğunluk kazanması, fuhuş yapan kadınların da bu tarafta toplanmasına neden olmuştur. Fuhuş burada yuvalanınca, şehrin iti, uğursuzu da aynı semtin sakinleri haline gelmişlerdir.

<sup>12</sup> Cumhuriyetin ilk yıllarından beri ‘garsoniyer’ denilen özel buluşma evleri için kullanılan Cihangir, travesti ve transeksüelleri de içine almasıyla birlikte, marjinalerin ve onlarla birlikte yaşamaktan rahatsız olmayan bekarların, entelektüellerin, öğrencilerin, sanatçıların mekanı haline gelir

Places like Cihangir and Tarlabası, the margins, are areas that lack much validity or officiality. The language and the slang of the ghetto are connected to the out-of-the-ordinary. The things which are covered, suppressed and hidden make us laugh most, right! Because life is not in Bağdat Caddesi. The asshole and the shit of the city is there [in Cihangir and Tarlabası]. Those people are the closest characters to the shit and filth which we are interested in. I mean, we are naturally on the same side with them. We have a chemistry with the man who carries a knife, with the *tinerci*<sup>13</sup>, the junky, the unjustly treated, the *jiletçi*<sup>14</sup>, the loser. But do we raise our children as junkies, heroin addicts or homosexuals? Or do we expect such characteristics from our brothers/sisters or friends? I cannot say that. We can never give such a moral message. There is no such thing in humour, either. We laugh and have fun, but the warmest relationship I have is with my family (Quoted by Cantek, 2002: 315)<sup>15</sup>.

It is best to talk about Erdoğan Dağlar's comic series in *Pişmiş Kelle*, "Cihangir Günlüğü" (Cihangir Diary) before continuing with the manifestations of Cihangir in *L-Manyak* and *Lombak*, because Dağlar's work is among the primal inspirations of the comic artists who told stories of Cihangir. Funda Şenol, in her article "Cihangir'in Vicdanı Erdo" (Erdo, the Conscience of Cihangir), says that cities, like human beings, have their own subconscious, and Cihangir is one of those neighbourhoods, which are dangerous yet attractive, and harbour "experiences which promise freedom and wildness". According to her, the leading role in Dağlar's "Cihangir Günlüğü" belongs to "the image of Cihangir which has turned into a myth" (Şenol, 2004: 68-9). Erdoğan Dağlar's character in this series is himself: a comic artist called Erdo who works at *Pişmiş Kelle*, who lives in Cihangir with his cat and who listens to Rock music. The

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<sup>13</sup> Tinerci is commonly used to refer to paraffin addicts.

<sup>14</sup> Jiletçi is commonly used to refer to people who cut themselves with razorblades.

<sup>15</sup> Cihangir ve Tarlabası gibi yerler, kenarlar, çok geçerlilik ve resmiyet kazandırılmamış alanlar. Kenar mahallenin ağzı, küfrü alşılmadık olanla bağ kuruyor. Bizi en çok güldüren şeyler de örtülmüş, kapatılmış ve saklanmış olanlardır ya! Hayat, Bağdat Caddesinde değil çünkü. Şehrin götü, boku püsürü orada. O insanlar bizim ilgilendiğimiz çamura ve boka en yakın tipler. Hani biz doğal olarak tarafız onlarla. Bıçak çeken adamlar, tinerci ile, junkiyle, mağdurla, jiletçiyle, kaybetmişlerle bir ten uyumumuz var. Ama çocuklarımızı bir junki, bir eroinman gibi ya da bir eşcinsel gibi yetiştirir miyiz? Ya da kardeşlerimizden arkadaşlarımızdan böyle özellikler bekler miyiz? Böyle bir şey söyleyemem. Bu türden ahlaki bir mesaj asla vermeyiz. Zaten böyle bir şey mizahta da yoktur. Güleriz, eğleniriz ama en sıcak ilişkiyi ailemle kurarım

scripts of “Cihangir Günlüğü”, revolves around Erdo’s helping people in trouble by chance, his victories against his opponents through his muscles or brains, or his defeats. Transvestites, Africans, heroin addicts, prostitutes, homeless people, paraffin addicts and such are familiar figures of “Cihangir Günlüğü” and are people with whom Erdo is naturally on the same side. When these people suffer from any form of cruelty, Erdo always tries to help them. Funda Şenol thinks that this behaviour makes him the conscience, or the superego, of the neighbourhood.

The Cihangir image in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* first appeared in “Kötü Kedi Şerafettin” (Şerafettin the Bad Cat). The series, created by Bülent Üstün, started in issue 2 of *L-Manyak* and is about the adventures of a cat – an anti-hero as the title suggests – living in Cihangir. Şerafettin is a cat who acts according to his instincts. He drinks and smokes, he has sex without considering whether his partner is willing or not; theft and murder is not unusual for him. All the cats, and even dogs and humans respect him out of fear.

The characters and types in “Kötü Kedi Şerafettin” show a great variety and present a profile of people and animals living in Cihangir. Şerafettin’s father is a man named Tonguç, who is an ex-communist and works in different fields of art. Şerafettin’s son Tacettin is as tough a cat as his father. A man called “Ayyaş Pezo” (Drunkard Pimp) taught Şerafettin how to steal. The local shopowner is a gypsy called Şemistan and a good friend of Şerafettin. The vengeance seeking comic artist is a punk. Şerafettin is accompanied by such characters as seagulls, rats, a rooster and a constipated swan (a reference to Üstün’s page in *H. B. R. Maymun*). “Kötü Kedi Şerafettin” also contains characters like transvestites, drunkards and drug addicts, with whom the reader is familiar from “Cihangir Günlüğü” and who are irreplaceable parts of Cihangir comics. Şerafettin, who drinks and uses drugs, gets on well with the last two; however, he does not like transvestites at all.

“Kötü Kedi Şerafettin” can be counted among comics which feature their artists as their characters. However, unlike most of such comics, the artist is not the main character and it is not autobiographical. Bülent Üstün depicts himself as a cartoonist whose cat has been raped and killed by Şerafettin and who has sworn vengeance on the bad cat and is obsessed with it. Şerafettin and Bülent Üstün are much more liable to violence than the characters of “Cihangir Günlüğü” and “Bir Evimiz Vardı”. They do not falter from using guns. It can be said that “Kötü Kedi Şerafettin” uses an exaggerated violence. Bülent Üstün thinks that the reason for his characters’ popularity is the fact that they expose the violence and sexual instincts everyone represses with all their might (Koca, 2006: 5). Unlike the other characters that will be discussed, Şerafettin belongs only to the street; he is among the dangerous “folk” of the street. If Erdo is to be considered as the superego of Cihangir, Şerafettin can be claimed to be the id of the neighbourhood.

The comics series, “Bir Evimiz Vardı” (We Had an Apartment), created by Mehmet Coşkun (Memcoş) in the first issues of *L-Manyak*, is about his experiences in and around an apartment he shared with Bahadır Baruter and also depicts reflections of the life in Cihangir. Memcoş partly shares Dağlar’s sympathy for those who live in the symbolic margins of the city. He also derives from Kemal Aratan’s comics series in *Pişmiş Kelle*, called “Bi Gece Daha” (One More Night), which is made up of the real life stories the artists tell each other when they work all night long. Memcoş, tells “interesting” incidents and sex stories he and/or his friends have experienced, in great enthusiasm, and in a way which can be connected to the “itiraf.com” (confession.com) culture. In his stories, he frequently allows space for his relationship with his neighbours, the transvestites, prostitutes, junkies and Africans. “We were proud of living in the most marginal street of Cihangir”<sup>16</sup> he says.

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<sup>16</sup> “Cihangir’in en marjinal sokağında yaşamaktan gurur duyardık”.

“Bir Evimiz Vardı”, which Memcoş started in the fifth issue of *L-Manyak*, contains all the basic elements which constitute the humour peculiar to the magazine. In the first panel, Memcoş and Bahadır Baruter walk happily under the coquettish looks of some transvestites and a woman in Ülker Sokak. The next two panels show their apartment, decorated in a bohemian style. During the three panels that follow, the excreta pouring out from their toilet is displayed and a plumber, who fixes the toilet, is mentioned. The story goes on with scenes of the comic artists’ life; how Memcoş and Baruter’s apartment has been used as an opium den; a police raid; problems with the landlord; voyeurism; masturbation and a woman performing oral sex on Memcoş.

The location of this marginal lifestyle, as mentioned above, is Cihangir and Ülker Sokak, which had been home to transvestites and transsexuals until 1996. Memcoş occasionally talks about his memories and opinions regarding transvestites and transsexuals whom he calls “*dönme*” – a somewhat pejorative slang term to describe them. In the sixth issue, he says “Conversation with *dönmes* is priceless... But they might stab you in the back at a pinch...”<sup>17</sup> In issue 11, Memcoş talks to one of his transvestite friends and learns that Ülker Sokak, the fortress of transvestites, have been taken away from them during Habitat II. In the last panel, Baruter and Memcoş watch the people who banished transvestites in order to increase the rents, having a feast. Baruter comments “look son, the army of the shameless and the dishonoured are eating and drinking!”<sup>18</sup> In issue 12, they visit their transvestite friends to listen to their problems. Their friends thank them for writing and drawing about what has happened to them. It was, indeed, difficult to find a positive portrayal of transvestites in the mainstream media at the time. However, Memcoş does not show the same amount of social sensitivity when Africans are concerned. He generalizes them as

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<sup>17</sup> “Dönmelerle muhabbetin tadına doyum olmaz... Ama icabında sizi bir çırpıda satarlar”

<sup>18</sup> “Bak oğlum, yüz­süz ve şerefsizler ordusu yiyip içmekte”

people who deceive young girls into becoming heroin addicts and force the girls to have sex with them in return for drugs.

Memcoş describes a life of sex, drugs, alcohol, violence and marginality; nevertheless, he also seems to carry the belief that an artist has a responsibility of educating the society. Hence, he starts drawing Atatürk in his comics. In issue 12, Memcoş sees Atatürk in his dream, who criticizes the mess their apartment is in. There are empty bottles, tea glasses and books, used condoms and cigarette butts all around the place. Atatürk says: “I did not found the Turkish Republic so that the Turkish youth would live in places like this! Turkish Youth, your first duty is to clean”<sup>19</sup>. Memcoş and Baruter are left in tears. The lifestyle Memcoş portrays in his comics is in conflict with the lifestyle envisioned by the official ideology for the Turkish youth. In the following issues, Atatürk, Baruter and Memcoş go hunting Islamic fundamentalists as well.

Memcoş maintains this didactic style while talking about other social issues, and warn his readers in issues such as drug abuse, and evil people who pushes young and innocent girls into their web. The reason for his employment of a style particular to the dominant culture while, on the other hand he describes lives of decadence, including his own, is ambiguous. The texts of Memcoş are full of contradictions. He describes transvestites in a positive light whereas he shows prejudice against homosexuals. He leads a life of sex, drugs and rock 'n roll; however, Atatürk activates a mechanism of guilt in his mind. Atatürk, also becomes a weapon against the religious fundamentalists, who pose a threat to Memcoş's lifestyle. These contradictions in his work may be a proof that he talks about these subjects in an

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<sup>19</sup> “Ben Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’ni Türk gençliği böyle yerlerde yaşasın diye kurmadım! Türk gençliği, ilk vazifen temizlik!”

arbitrary way without thinking about them thoroughly and without considering any consistency.

After a while, starting from issue 15, Memcoş changed the name of the series as “Hatıralar Geçidi” (A Parade of Memories) and decreased the number of his Cihangir stories. Memcoş had not ever followed a stable script since he started the series. Instead, he told stories which are not organically connected to each other. His following works in “Hatıralar Geçidi” has an even more arbitrary quality. Apart from his experiences and memories whence the title comes, he portrays himself having interviews with comics heroes and *Leman/L-Manyak* artists, passes on information he acquired from documentaries, comments on life and the nature of relationships – most of which are commonplace ideas – and illustrates not-so-well-developed stories based on fantasy. When *Lombak* was released in 2001, he quit the “gang” which he was a part of with Bahadır Baruter, Bülent Üstün and Memo Tembelçizer. He did not quit *Leman*. As time went by, his series lost originality, Memcoş got tired, and his artwork lost its previous diligence.

Another comics series related to the life in Cihangir is Oky’s “Cihangir’de Bi Ev” (An Apartment in Cihangir). Oky tells the stories of three young men who share an apartment and their friends who are constantly at their apartment. Oky’s first comics in *L-Manyak* is “Sentetik Cenreyşın” (Synthetic Generation) in issue 26. In the first panel of this story, Oky portrays himself and defines the setting he intends to create: “Nooooowww! A roomful of guys... Punks etc... The place should be in a mess. There might be cats around... They should smoke joints etc... Empty beer bottles... And the comic artist himself should be there...”<sup>20</sup> This formula also partly applies to “Cihangir’de Bi Ev” which first appeared in issue 34 of *L-Manyak* for the first time. Oky did not continue this series for a long while. Another comics series by Oky,

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<sup>20</sup> “Şimdiii!.. Bi oda dolusu herif... Panklar filan... Ortalık pis olsun. Kedi olabilir evde... Coint moit içsinler... Boş bira şişeleri... Çizer de olsun...”

which was published in issues 39 and 40, called “Sıkı Dostlar” (Good Fellas) can be considered a preparation for “Cihangir’de Bi Ev”. The characters are Oky himself, Faruk Bayraktar (or Farköp – another artist of *Pişmiş Kelle* origin) and Yusuf. Their apartment, is of course in Cihangir

Unlike Erdoğan Dağlar and Memcoş, Oky never portrays streets of Cihangir in “Cihangir’de Bi Ev”. On the surface, it might be thought that there would be no difference if the apartment were located in another neighbourhood. However, it is implied that the lifestyles and relationships portrayed in the series is only possible in neighbourhoods like Cihangir, where marginality is acceptable. Drug and alcohol abuse, sex, sexually promiscuous women, marginal and unusual frequenters... The apartment is as messy as Memcoş’s apartment. Empty bottles, cigarette butts, bugs, disconnected power sockets, sperm stains are all over the place. There is always a shortage of water in the toilet, which, as a result, is full of excreta most of the time.

“Cihangir’de Bi Ev” is based on dialogues and situational humour rather than action. The continuity and structure of the series is reminiscent of sitcoms. The same characters are portrayed in a single setting and one-shot stories. The main characters are Batu, a non-intellectual person, who always fails in his relationships with women, gets paralyzed when he has a chance to have sex with a woman, and as a result constantly masturbates; Muhittin, whose intellectual level is almost the same as Batu, but who has sex with nearly all the women who comes to their apartment; and Ömer, who functions as the auto-control mechanism in the apartment. Ömer is an easily irritable character, who complains about the parties thrown in the apartment and the fact that there are always different people at the place. He always tries to prevent anyone who tries to do something crazy. He leaves the apartment in the following issues.

The other characters are more intellectual compared to the owners of the apartment. They read books and know especially a lot about cinema. People like Keçe, Doktor, Demirhan and Neşet, who are actual friends of Oky, constitute the other characters of “Cihangir’de Bi Ev”. When the character Şeker starts coming to the apartment, the series gain a continuity beyond one-shot stories. Şeker becomes the object of desire. She is seventeen years old and younger than the other characters. Şeker becomes Batu’s girlfriend first, but they cannot have a sexual intercourse which can be regarded as normal (at one point, Şeker masturbates Batu, while he is spitting on her face). On the other hand, Doktor is in love with Şeker, too and does not understand how such an intellectual and beautiful girl as Şeker can be in a relationship with a loser like Batu. As for Şeker, she loves Muhittin like all the other women frequenting the apartment. This love triangle becomes the major conflict and the driving force in the series.

Oky’s characters have connotations of characters from American independent cinema, who talk endlessly on popular culture. Especially, Doktor, Keçe and Demirhan talk about various movies, such as *Taxi Driver*, *Emmanuelle*, *Star Wars*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Zardoz*, *I Spit on Your Grave* and *Evil Dead*. Moreover, Keçe and Demirhan always use the apartment as the setting when they have short film projects. Their conversations are not limited to cinema. Any kind of “schmooze” is acceptable: the rumours about the death of Michael Douglas, games like Taboo, rock-paper-scissors, and Truth or Dare, “katalak” party which is a fantasy about a group of men having sex with each other in a circle, “would you eat Nicole Kidman’s shit for one billion liras?” are only a few examples for the trivial talk in the apartment.

We have mentioned that “Cihangir’de Bi Ev” does not portray streets of Cihangir, which are the metaphorical subconscious of the city. Erdo from “Cihangir Günlüğü”, and Memcoş and Baruter from “Bir Evimiz Vardı”, live in an interzone between the world of the street and the world of art. Their implication is that they are quite

familiar with the life on the street. Nevertheless, it is impossible to say that they belong to the street. The quotation from Bahadır Baruter given above supports this idea. Regardless of the fact that these artists find street life close to themselves, they separate their family and home from the life on the street. On the other hand, the characters in “Cihangir’de Bi Ev” are far from being acquainted with the life on the street. They spend their whole life inside the boundaries of the apartment. They are typical/typified examples of middle class/upper-middle class youth residing in big cities. They are depicted as apolitical hedonists and the youth of rising values of liberal economy. They do not take life seriously and do not like people who do.

In one of the issues, Keçe records spontaneous images of everyone at the apartment. Keçe describes his project as follows: “We are going to edit these and make a documentary about the apartment... We have come up with some pretty cool stuff; it’s going to be a nice minimalist film about our generation...”<sup>21</sup> In the unedited version of this documentary, a character called Berna, who starts with a quote from Erich Fromm, makes a speech about how her generation is not as hollow as widely believed and how they are aware of the works of art and nurtured by them. The other characters laugh and make fun of her while watching this part of the video. Demirhan, who is older than all of the characters there, tells Berna that their generation should learn about self-criticism. Doktor, appearing right after Berna, talks about his affection for the 1980s and sings some songs from the decade. Finally, Eda and Şeker expose their breasts. This is the summary of the film which tells about “our generation”: delusions of intellectualism, a sarcastic point of view against intellectualism, nostalgia for the past, and sexual explosion.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the image of Cihangir has not been reproduced in any other media as much as it has in humour magazines. The reason for

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<sup>21</sup> “Bu çektiğimizi kurgulayıp evle ilgili bi belgesel hazırlıycaz işte... Acaip güzel şeyler çıkıyo bizim cenarasyonu anlatan minimal nefis bi film olacak... acaip makara”

that, among others, is that comic artists working at humour magazines, who happen to constitute a rather introvert community, have constructed patterns related to their own lives, by giving reference to their own experiences in their works since the beginning of the 1990s. Comic artists depict themselves as individuals who finish their works at the last minute staying up all night, sleep on chairs, love having trivial and absurd conversations with their colleagues, act in a slightly crazy way, and cannot socialize much outside their own community. Although they seem to have complaints about this from time to time, they cannot help romanticizing it. The habitat of the comic artist is an important element while constructing his/her identity, which has almost become a uniform for all workers of humour magazines. All artists mentioned here who draw about themselves, including Oky, have used Cihangir as a complete constituent of their identity and have constructed an image of Cihangir, mixed with their own imagination. In this respect, it might be claimed that people who crave a marginal life are influenced, although partially, from this constructed image portrayed in humour magazines, and have desires of moving there.

It is implied, in humour magazines, that living in Cihangir is considered chic in terms of being “hip”. There is also an implication of a community spirit. The strangers passing by are under threat; however, those who moved in Cihangir – although they are nowhere near being people of the street – have gained a privileged position in which they are accepted by the local scoundrels and can live free of the threat they expose. The inhabitants of Cihangir, joyfully describe how you can be robbed or how your car can be stolen during the night at the neighbourhood. They regard themselves invulnerable to such dangers. Can Kozanoğlu analyzes this cultural tendency in his article “Şehirde Yeni Fetiş: ‘Sokak’” (The New Fetish in the City: “The Street”). He talks about how back streets constitute places of attraction during the night, with homeless people drinking, stray dogs and prostitutes. He defines people who are attracted to these streets as: “No matter how hard he tries to draw his life to marginal areas, the area is above ground. He lives his life above ground. Some part of his life is

searching for ‘the underground’. He thinks he belongs there; maybe just a feeling, much better; maybe a thought, not so good.” (Kozanođlu, 2001: 38)<sup>22</sup>.

Today, Cihangir shares the same faith with places like Soho, London and Greenwich Village, New York. These places were also inhabited by artists, bohemians, marginals and intellectuals due to the fact that they were cosmopolitan places, they were closer to the ‘margins’ rather than the ‘centre’ and the rents were low. Consequently, these places gained an atmosphere of libertarianism and culture, became centres of intellectual activities and aroused demand in the new middle class who craved a bohemian life. As a result, there has been a visible increase in the rents. These neighbourhoods have now lost their bohemian spirit to a great extent.

The history of efforts to tame and appropriate Beyođlu and its surroundings – “the symbolic margins of the city” – goes far back. These ambitions, which reached their peak with the slaughtering of street animals and the forced exodus of transvestites out of Cihangir by the official and civil powers, have been achieved to a certain extent during the recent years. These areas are being sterilized as much as possible and becoming the target of real estate investors. For example, the January 2006 issue of the Turkish *Forbes* magazine has put director and producer Sinan etin’s picture on its cover with the caption “Emperor of Cihangir”. In the featured article, it is stated that etin owns forty real estates around Taksim-Cihangir line and that Cihangir is now called “Sinangir” (Atay, 2006: 79-83). Furthermore, there are rumours about Sinan etin having the cats in Cihangir killed (*Milliyet*, 6 April 2006, “Sinan etin’e Kedi Protestosu” [Cat Protest to Sinan etin] by Glay Fırat). It seems that the characters of *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* will soon be out of place in Cihangir, while the image of Cihangir constructed in humour magazines will gradually disappear.

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<sup>22</sup> “Hayatını ne kadar marjinal blgelere ekmeye alıřsa da blge yer stnde. Hayatı yer stnde yařıyor. Ruhunun bir parası, ‘underground’u arıyor. Kendini oraya ait gryor; bir his belki, daha iyi; bir dřnce belki, o kadar iyi deđil.”

### **3.2 The Parallelisms between Underground Comix and *L-Manyak* and *Lombak***

The underground comix movement was a phenomenon of the 1960s counterculture in the United States. They functioned as the comic art extension of the issues raised by the youth culture of the era: free love, expanding consciousness through the use of drugs, anti-war and anti-establishment politics. However, most notable underground comix artists went beyond conforming to the necessities of being a “hippy” and expressed more personal issues dealing with the dark, violent, sexual, taboo side of the human psyche. These artists subverted the official American discourse which had been communicated, among others, through superhero comics. It is worth studying underground comix in that, one can draw a number of parallelisms between them and *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* in terms of their aesthetics as well as their general aura.

Patrick Rosenkranz, in *Rebel Visions: The Underground Comix Revolution 1963-1975*, states that one cannot name an exact starting date for underground comix. *Zap Comics* # 1, created solely by Robert Crumb in 1968 is regarded as the first underground comix to be published in a comic book format; however, some artists, such as Gilbert Shelton, S. Clay Wilson, Joel Beck, Frank Stack, Jaxon and Rick Griffin, who were to form the underground comix movement following the publication of *Zap Comics*, had already been producing comic art in the same vein as Robert Crumb (Rosenkranz, 2002: 3). Prior to *Zap Comics*, most avant-garde cartoonists of the era had their works published in underground newspapers such as *The East Village Other* and *Berkeley Barb*, in college magazines like *The Texas Ranger* and in several fanzines. There were also artists who specialized in drawing psychedelic posters and magazine covers like Rick Griffin and Victor Moscoso.

*Zap Comics* # 1 was hailed as a “reinvention of the comic book” by Bill Griffith, another underground comix artist. Crumb’s comics involved sex, drugs and satire on the middle-class values. There was also a three-page comic strip called “Abstract

Expressionist Ultra Super Modernistic Comics”, which was a purely visual, non-linear, psychedelic influenced artwork (Rosenkranz, 2002: 71). Crumb inspired other artists all over the country to create their own comic books. Suddenly there was a boom in the production of *Zap* style comics, with the help of “the new accessibility of offset litho printing” (Sabin, 1993: 37). Titles like *Snatch*, *Feds 'n' Heads*, *Big Ass Funnies*, *Cunt Comics*, *Yellow Dog*, *Witzend*, *Bijou Funnies* started to appear. Robert Crumb collaborated with S. Clay Wilson, Rick Griffin and Victor Moscoso for *Zap* # 2. The works of other artists were also featured in the following issues of *Zap*. Underground comix artists prepared and sometimes printed these comic books themselves. Most of these artists published their works in several titles at a time. There were no strict line-ups in the comix.

The underground comix publications were first distributed by the artists themselves on the street. Soon, the publishers found other networks that enabled them to reach a country-wide audience. Print Mint, which distributed psychedelic posters at the time, agreed to put *Zap* and some other titles in their mail-order catalogue (Rosenkranz, 2002: 86). Print Mint also started to publish underground comix. It was followed by several other publishers and distributors like Rip Off Press, Last Gasp, The San Francisco Comic Book Company, and Bijou Publishing Empire. Like the underground press, who formed a syndicate, the production and distribution of underground comix were independent from the mainstream networks, which would not publish or distribute the content featured in these publications.

Roger Sabin, in *Adult Comics*, states that the term ‘comix’ signifies the “contradistinction [of comix] to their straight counterpart and...their ‘x-rated’ content” (Sabin, 1993: 36). Underground comix mainly dealt with sex, drugs, violence and to some extent politics. Their revolution lies in the fact that they took a medium largely associated with children and used it as a powerful tool to convey their artistic vision. They reacted against both the art world, which was then dominated by abstract

expressionism, and the values of the mainstream culture. Comic books were an ideal medium to reach a wider audience due to the fact that they were cheap, popular, and easy to consume.

S. Clay Wilson was one of the first artists to portray outrageous, sado-masochistic sex scenes in comix. His “Head First”, published in *Zap* # 2, was about a pirate cutting the penis of another pirate and eating it (Rosenkranz, 2002: 85). Crumb was heavily influenced from the way Wilson portrayed penises, vaginas, sexual penetration, and violence and he let deviancy in his works as well (Rosenkranz, 2002: 87). In such titles as *Snatch*, *Jiz*, *Big Ass Funnies*, Crumb and Wilson tried to go as far as they could concerning the portrayal of sex in comics, with incest, sado-masochism, misogyny, racism, pedophilia and so on. This tendency caught up and was imitated by other artists soon.

Mark James Estren, in *A History of Underground Comix*, compares the way Crumb and Wilson handle sex, saying: “...the fact is that Crumb finds sex an object for enjoyment and satire, while Wilson sees it as just another symbol of decay” (Estren, 1993: 119). Estren also quotes Mike Barrier regarding Wilson’s work:

My basic complaint about Wilson’s work is that it *is* moral, in the narrowest, nastiest sense...By that I meant that he seemed to share an attitude common to little old ladies, that sex – and by implication, life itself – is dirty and disgusting. It is in his strips certainly. His people are all wart, moles, sweat, flab, and body hair (he can make any part of the human anatomy unappealing), and all freaks in one way or another (Quoted in Estren, 1993: 119).

Estren, on the other hand, thinks that “Wilson is the complete nihilist – he *does* find life ‘dirty and disgusting.’ There are no ‘normal’ people at all in Wilson’s comics, because there are none in his world” (Estren, 1993: 119).

The sex presented in the works of underground comix artists can be regarded 'pornographic', as they represent sexual penetration openly; however, it would be unfair to cast them aside as mere pornography, since they do not aim to arouse sexual interest. At least, it is not their only concern. Beth Bailey, in her "Sex as a Weapon: Underground Comix and the Paradox of Liberation" asserts that the representations of sex in underground comix served two purposes: offending the "mainstream society" and symbolizing "freedom and liberation" through a search for "graphics and language and attitudes that clearly transcended the strictures of a repressive society" (Bailey, 2002: 308). Underground press and comix employed visual and verbal obscenities in order to challenge the establishment.

Mark James Estren quotes the opinions of a psychiatrist, whom he calls *The Phantom Psychiatrist* complying with his wish to remain anonymous. *The Phantom Psychiatrist* says that sex and sexuality in underground comix is always violent, however violence in these comix is not always related to sex (Estren, 1993: 144). Violence in underground comix is an exaggerated, graphic violence. Underground comix, unlike straight comics do not depict violence in a hygienic way. The representation of violence in underground comix is, like the representation of sex, about going to the extremes to break taboos. Estren says "the cartoonists often feel they are simply reflecting the society in which they live" (Estren, 1993: 140). Estren also believes that underground comix are potentially "ironic, if not necessarily humorous" in terms of the violence represented.

Sex and violence have also been the components of *L-Manyak* and *Lombak*. It would be far-fetched to say that artists in *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* are directly influenced by the works of underground comix artists; however, there is a certain kinship in their visual styles, their attitudes towards sex and violence and their political standpoints. It is known that Bülent Üstün is familiar with the works of Robert Crumb, and "Kötü Kedi Şerafettin" bears a slight likeness to Crumb's character "Fritz the Cat", who is

by no means a violent character but has a subversive effect on the “funny animal comics” tradition through the use of explicit sex and drug abuse in the same way as “Kötü Kedi Şerafettin”.

“Kötü Kedi Şerafettin” is the first character to mark the beginning of the *L-Manyak* type of humour. The comics series rely on an exaggerated violence, sex and action. Kötü Kedi Şerafettin is portrayed as mincing the face of people, blowing their brains, electrocuting them, attacking them with chainsaws, raping cats, dogs, and human beings alike. His father Tonguç, and son Tacettin (the latter, only during the first adventures) are also as violent as Şerafettin.

Cengiz Üstün’s character “Kunteper Canavarı” is, like Şerafettin, a hybrid. His mother is a human being and his father is an alien. He looks human but he has claws instead of hands and feet, and an extended penis. The main plots of “Kunteper Canavarı” stories revolve around Kunteper’s punishment of different people through anal sex. His victims are generally people who do not believe in his existence and pronounce his name loudly. This results in Kunteper’s “picking up the signal”, finding the person responsible for it, hypnotizing him/her by wiggling his penis and leaving them with their rectums shaped as volcanoes. The humour in “Kunteper Canavarı” can be categorized as sexual violence. Sex is used as a weapon, as a way to punish people.

Sex and violence in *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* are not limited to the stories of “Kötü Kedi Şerafettin” and “Kunteper Canavarı”. They are the basic constituents of most comics series in these magazines. “İsmail Hasta Ruh” by Alpay Erdem is about a schizophrenic man called İsmail, who lives with the skeleton of his deceased uncle and a mannequin, with which he has sex. “Prifesor Lepistes” by Göxel is about a mad professor with an attitude of a hoodlum, who gets into fights, drinks, and has sexual affairs as often as he invents something. “*L-Manyak Şehitleri*” by Memo Tembelçizer

uses the cartoonists of *L-Manyak* as its characters and features stories in which the characters are killed violently in different settings and original ways. “Cihangir’de Bi Ev” by Oky portrays different sexual acts including spitting, masturbation, oral sex, lesbianism, group sex and so on.

The majority of comics in *L-Manyak* and *Lombak*, with male characters endowed with great sexual potency, have a sexist attitude towards women and connotations of male chauvinism. Like underground comix, they are liable to be condemned with being “adolescent male fantasies” (Bailey, 2002: 322). “Hilal” by Kenan Yazar and “Tuğçe” by Andaç Gürsoy are two exceptions which bestow strong and sexually dominant female characters. “Hilal” depicts the life of a teenage girl who is stalked by the devil. Hilal hates her mother, school, teachers and any kind of authority there is. Even the Devil is helpless against Hilal as he fails to achieve his sexual goals on her each time he tries. “Tuğçe” is the only series in *Lombak* written and illustrated by a woman and is about a pre-school girl with a premature sexual appetite for men of all ages, but particularly those who are around the same age as her. Male characters in this series are victimized as Tuğçe plans, and realizes her schemes to make them her lovers.

Comics is a male-dominated medium in terms of both the creators and the readers. Therefore it is not surprising that the sexuality represented in comic books is male-oriented. It is a fact that in most cases comics turn female characters into passive objects. However, what must be questioned, regarding underground comix and in this case *L-Manyak* and *Lombak*, is whether the sole aim of these comics is to utilize female characters in order to sexually stimulate the reader by utilizing female characters. Mark James Estren says

...many of the [underground] cartoonists are at least looking at sex and laughing, rather than placing it in a cabinet, like a special piece of china to be eaten from only on special occasions. Ultimately, it is likely to be their irreverence and not their

willingness occasionally to stimulate their readers that will prove to be their most important contribution where sex is concerned (Estren, 1993: 139).

Unlike underground comix, *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* cannot be regarded as pornographic because they do not portray sexual penetration openly. Moreover, they do not represent a sexual revolution in the Turkish comics tradition unlike underground comix, which had been the first genre of comics in the US history to handle sex issues. Comics, like *Superman* or *Spiderman*, preceding underground comix had almost no sexuality in them. However, in Turkey, comics like *Karaođlan* presented the bodies of foreign women as lands to be invaded (Cantek, 2003: 102). *L-Manyak* and *Lombak*'s significance lies in the fact that they do not portray sex as related to romantic love or something clean and hygienic. Sex, in these magazines, is almost always accompanied with sweat, sperm, body hair, and fart, and therefore might be considered more down to earth.

Drugs, as one end of the holy trinity of 60s counterculture in America along with sex and rock 'n' roll, cover a considerable space in underground comix. *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* also portray use of drugs in the same way as underground comix, as nothing harmful, as a part of everyday life. Characters are portrayed as using drugs in comics like "Kötü Kedi Şerafettin", "Prifesor Lepistes", "Cihangir'de Bi Ev" etc. The difference is, underground comix often place drugs in the centre of a story while in *L-Manyak* and *Lombak*, drugs are merely "stage props". Drugs either represent a hedonist lifestyle or the life on the street in *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* type of comics.

Underground comix have seldom been directly involved in politics although they are quite actively hostile against mainstream society. Along with more obvious works of satire, like Robert Crumb's "Whiteman", underground comix artists were of the idea that their violent and sexually deviant works also constituted a satire on the repressing values of the society, which is to a certain extent, true. In Mark James Estren's book, *The Phantom Psychiatrist* summarizes the essence of underground comix as follows:

“these comics communicate one basic idea beyond fantasy: that everything is shit and hopeless, I think that idea comes out very well – shit and hopeless and violent, but mostly shit and hopeless” (Estren, 1993: 112).

*L-Manyak* and *Lombak* have an exceptional standing in the tradition of humour magazines in Turkey as the only magazines which does not even slightly reflect any political concern at all. When a group of artists left *Leman* and *L-Manyak* to publish their own magazine, *Lombak*, Tuncay Akgün from *Leman* blamed them with not being in the aura of *Leman* and not having any concerns while *Leman* had a political concern (Harani, *Hürriyet Pazar*. 29 April 2001). A recent interview with Bülent Üstün, upon his leaving *Lombak* with another group and publishing his own magazine called *Fermuar*, confirms Akgün’s words. Üstün says:

The whole ‘having concerns’ stuff is insincere. There are people who have concerns only for the sake of having concerns. We do not have any such artificial concerns. We have only one concern, having fun. We have a lot of fun while working and we are more about joy than having concerns” (Oğuz, 2006: 25)<sup>23</sup>.

Unlike underground comix, *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* do not have any obvious social satire, either. No character in these magazines is a stereotype of any social class or figure. However, with the representation of a visible dose of violence and sex in the comics, they reflect a similar hostility against the mainstream society with the underground comix. The cartoonists in *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* share the underground comix artists’ desire to shock the general public and challenge the repressing values of the dominant culture. The idea that “everything is shit and hopeless”, and that everything is meaningless is also present in these magazines.

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<sup>23</sup> “Dert edinme muhabbetinde bir samimiyetsizlik var. Bir derdin var deyip de sadece bir derdin olsun diyen insanlar var, yok değil. Bizim öyle yarattığımız yapay bir derdimiz yok. Bizim bir derdimiz var o da eğlence. Biz bu işi yaparken çok eğleniyoruz ve bizim dertten çok neşeyle alakamız var.”

Overall, underground comix and *L-Manyak/Lombok* are products of different times, places and cultural atmospheres. Underground comix came into being in a time of cultural and social turmoil in the United States and became an extension of the cultural revolution taking place. *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*, on the other hand, are products of a time when a “new middle class” is on the rise and the dominant culture is much more tolerant to deviancy. Still, underground comix and *L-Manyak/Lombok* treated taboo subjects such as sex, violence and drugs with the same radical attitude. In their time both aroused shock and hostility in the mainstream media but now they are both appropriated by it as the best-selling newspapers interview the cartoonists and big publishers publish their books.

### **3.3 The Influence of Punk on L-Manyak and Lombok**

Punk as a youth subculture is a widely discussed topic, on which a great number of studies, presenting a great diversity of information on the history and origins of punk as well as what it was all about, have been put forth. In this section, a comprehensive framework regarding Punk will be formed, and the influence of punk on comics in general and comics in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* will be examined.

Punk Rock, as a music genre, can be traced back as early as the late 1960s, although it went through its rise and fall during the late 1970s. Most sources give the names of such American bands and artists as Velvet Underground, Iggy Pop, and the New York Dolls as the early influences of Punk Rock, who replaced the pastoral, utopian philosophy of the hippy culture with a more urban, streetwise, down-to-earth attitude. The style and the rituals spinning around the music, though, took shape and gained international following when a British band called the Sex Pistols, managed by Malcolm McLaren, started their career in 1976.

Tricia Henry emphasizes the kinship between British punk and the American bands mentioned above (which she calls “New York underground-rock movement”) from the musical point of view: “...raw, harsh, unrestrained...” However, she explains that

[t]he New York underground music scene seems to have been primarily a function of middle class boredom expressed in the form of artistic rebellion: art for art’s sake. In Great Britain, on the other hand, musicians actually did have difficulty finding regular jobs to support themselves. Working-class style and demeanor were not affectations of a middle class looking for ‘kicks’ or ‘slumming it,’ as it were, but an actual fact of life. For this reason British punk was not just music for music’s sake, but contained a real social message (Henry, 1989: 69).

Henry defined the punk movement not only as carrying a social message but also having political and philosophical undertones (Henry, 1989: 71). Almost all studies on Punk are unanimous on the fact that punk is/was more than just music. Dick Hebdige is among the first scholars to have reflected on the implications of punk philosophy in his *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. In the first part of his book, he seeks to associate punk with all the other preceding subcultures in the UK, which, according to Hebdige had roots in the working class and was influenced from the black immigrant culture. In the second part, Hebdige examines the punk movement in terms of what it signifies and how it subverts the signifying practices of the dominant culture.

According to Hebdige, the punk subculture in Britain was a form of resistance to the parent culture and the social formation around them on a symbolic level through style and rituals (Hebdige, 1991: 80). The style of punks, composed of their music, looks, language, attitudes, media (fanzines) “communicate[d] disorder” (Hebdige, 1991: 88). Their style conveyed an “anti-everything” message on every level.

Punk music was basically made up of three chords. Tricia Henry notes that punks derived the amateurishness of their music from the New York underground rock bands (Henry, 1989: ix). Punk musicians were the first people in rock ’n roll history

to tear down the barricade between the audience and the musicians by giving the message “anyone can form a rock band”. This do-it-yourself (DIY) tendency is best articulated in *Sniffin Glue*, the first fanzine in Britain, in which the editors published “a diagram showing three finger positions on the neck of a guitar over the caption: ‘Here’s one chord, here’s two more, now form your own band’.” (Hebdige, 1991: 112). This amateurishness was a conscious decision. Greil Marcus, in his book *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*, tells how Malcolm McLaren brought together Sex Pistols after he listened to the records of the American band, New York Dolls and realized “how brilliant they were to be this bad” (Marcus, 1989: 49). The Sex Pistols took this badness to the extreme. Johnny Rotten (the lead singer of the Sex Pistols) summarized their attitude towards music as “We’re into chaos, not music” (quoted by Hebdige, 1991: 109).

Tricia Henry describes punk fashion, whose origins are in the designs of Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren, as “antifashion – anything that was ugly or offensive to the general public; anything ‘unnatural’: multicolored hair spiked up with Vaseline; the ragged haircut; exaggerated make-up – the 1940s horror movie look” (Henry, 1989: 2). Punks also appropriated several objects for their own fashion. They used chains, safety pins, razorblades which were taken out of their context and used to “disrupt and reorganize meaning” (Hebdige, 1991: 106). These objects turned into weapons for punks’ attack on the dominant culture – their way of horrifying and shocking the society. They wore ripped clothes, bondage outfits and swastikas, not that they were all necessarily sadomasochistic or have fascist beliefs but because they knew what repulsive effects they would have on their spectators and enjoyed this idea.

As mentioned above, this “revolting style” was not limited to the music and the clothes. Punk, in Dick Hebdige’s words, “undermined every relevant discourse” (Hebdige, 1991: 108). Punk lyrics, as exemplified by Hebdige, like “If You Don’t

Want to Fuck Me, fuck off” and “I Wanna be Sick on You” (Hebdige, 1991: 110) reflect only a small portion of how obscene punks could get with language. The written language of Punk movement, as represented by fanzines was no different from the spoken language. Along with obscenities of the spoken language, fanzines also contained all types of “typing errors and grammatical mistakes, misspellings and jumbled pagination” (Hebdige, 1991: 111).

Punk concerts were shows of violence, in which the performers spat or vomited on the audience, or hit them with guitars and got hit or thrown whatever the audience could get their hands on: bottles, cans, seats. Robert Garnett, in his article “Too Low To Be Low: Art Pop and the Sex Pistols”, asks the question “...did punk transcend pop and become something else, like performance art, for instance?” (Garnett, 1999: 17). The concert performances of punk bands, in terms of audience participation and interaction have indeed connotations of performance art, which is an art form shaped during the 1960s, and has its roots in the avant-garde art movements of the early twentieth century, such as Dadaism.

The artistic ancestry of punk is not limited to performance art only. Tricia Henry displays similarities between punk and such twentieth century avant-garde artistic movements as futurism (in terms of fashion), surrealism and Dadaism (in terms of visual art, collages and juxtaposition), and expressionism (in terms of its “assertive, assaultive” performance) (Henry, 1989: 2-5). Almost all academic studies on punk draw a similarity between the movement and Dadaism. Dick Hebdige quotes George Grosz’s reflection on Dada in order to shed light on its connection with punk: “Nothing was holy to us. Our movement was neither mystical, communistic nor anarchistic. All of these movements had some sort of programme, but ours was completely nihilistic. We spat on everything, including ourselves. Our symbol was nothingness, a vacuum, a void” (quoted by Hebdige, 1991: 106).

The birth of British punk is often associated with economic depression and the resulting discontent among, especially, the working class and the movement was considered as a reaction against this situation, crystallized in the slogan “No Future” (taken from “God Save the Queen” by the Sex Pistols). Greil Marcus says that the watchwords of the 1960s’ rock music had been “adventure” and “risk” whereas the watchword of the 1970s was “survival” (Marcus, 1989: 45). The theme of survival was associated with surviving the routine of daily life: jobs, marriages et cetera. Punk was a reaction against that boredom of everyday life. It is through this fact that Greil Marcus relates punk with the Paris-based group of artists and intellectuals, the Situationist International, which was founded in 1957 and is a successor of the former group the Lettrist International (Marcus, 1989: 18). Some critics find this interpretation a farfetched one and claim that there is no apparent connection between punk and situationism. However, it is certain that, Malcolm McLaren, the manager of the Sex Pistols, was interested in situationism when he was in art school and employed several situationist slogans in his designs and the work of the New York Dolls and the Sex Pistols (ed. Sabin, 1999: 86).

Greil Marcus says that boredom was deemed “a modern form of control and “a social pathology” ” (Marcus, 1989: 50-52) by the situationists. However, boredom was not only a matter of work but also a matter of leisure, because “in order to maintain the power, those who ruled...had to ensure that leisure was as boring as the new forms of work” (Marcus, 1989: 50). The Lettrist International and then the Situationist International sought out ways to overcome the boredom and the cycle of consumption that the modern society had been subject to and came up with two concepts: “the ‘dérive’, a drift down city streets in search of signs of attraction or repulsion, and ‘détournement’, the theft of aesthetic artifacts from their contexts of one’s own devise” (Marcus, 1989: 168). Situationism was about “wrecking this world” and “reinventing everything” (Marcus, 1989: 175). Punk’s weapon against boredom and modern society was its music and its style. Punk also wanted to destroy everything as

stated in the last line of the Sex Pistols song “Anarchy in the U.K.”: “Get pissed/Destroy!”

The common belief is that punk has roots in anarchism, because the first punk record was called “Anarchy in the U.K.”. However, this is only true to a certain extent. Craig O’Hara, who is a member of the punk movement in America, writes that most punks prefer anarchism instead of capitalism and communism but he adds that it does not mean that punks read about the history or the theory of anarchy (O’Hara, 2003: 71). Therefore, it might be claimed that the anarchism of punk is the result of the distrust against politicians, governments and systematic religion among punks. “Anarchy in the U.K.”, which starts as “I am an Anti-Christ/I am an Anarchist/Don’t know what I want but I know how to get it/I wanna destroy possibly”, is about the negation of religion, government and the social order. Punks, unlike Dadaists, were not nihilists; they were negationists. Their symbol was not nothingness or meaninglessness; they aimed to destroy the meanings produced by the dominant culture, through the meanings they produced. Greil Marcus says “you can find punk between every other line of [Adorno’s] *Minima Moralia*: its miasmatic loathing for what Western civilization had made of itself by the end of the Second World War was, by 1977, the stuff of a hundred songs and slogans” (Marcus, 1989: 72). He adds “what Adorno’s negation lacked was glee – a spirit the punk version of his world never failed to deliver” (Marcus, 1989: 73).

This spirit of gleeful negation is the most significant commonality *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* share with punk. The apolitical attitude of these magazines is also a result of distrust against politicians and the social formation in which they are produced. They also have a pessimistic outlook on life and believe that there is “no future”. Yet, like punks, they are ultimately hedonists, portraying lives spinning around sex, drugs and humorous situations. They seek to negate the norms and values of the dominant

culture, as well as their “parent’s” (*Leman*’s) culture in a way a youth subculture does.

When a group of cartoonists led by Bahadır Baruter left *L-Manyak* and started publishing *Lombok* in 2001, the parties of this separation interpreted the situation differently. An article in *Hurriyet Pazar* (29 April 2001) by Yavuz Harani is illustrative in supporting the analogy of “parent culture vs. youth subculture” regarding *Leman* and *Lombok*. In the article, Bahadır Baruter is quoted as saying that they were like young people who, first moved to their own room (*L-Manyak*) and then to their own house (*Lombok*) and that “we are not an establishment like *Leman*, we are a gang”<sup>24</sup>. On the other hand, Tuncay Akgün, as a representative of *Leman*, says that the “kids” who left *Leman* are mostly of *Pişmiş Kelle* and *Hıbrır* origin and not of the “*Leman* aura” and that he does not want to talk about this as they have more important concerns – political concerns. The emphasis here should be on Akgün’s defining the *Lombok* team as “kids” and Baruter’s defining themselves as “a gang”. Akgün’s attitude is that of a parent disapproving the way his sons and daughters act. He implies, by saying *Leman* has political concerns, that the *Lombok* team is apolitical and maybe, that their humour is degenerate (as most of them were not of *Leman* origin). On the other hand, Baruter’s attitude is almost like a juvenile delinquent, challenging his father, who, he thinks have been incorporated into a system he does not approve of. The “gang” also implies a group of “young hoodlums”, which is one of the dictionary definitions of punk (Henry, 1989: 7).

When Tuncay Akgün says those who left are mostly of *Pişmiş Kelle* and *Hıbrır* origin, he also, unconsciously, gives a hint about where to start searching the roots of the punk influence on *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*. *Pişmiş Kelle* is probably the first humour magazine in Turkey to have featured the works of punk cartoonists and to have

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<sup>24</sup> “Biz *Leman* gibi bir kurum değil, çeteyiz”.

reflected on the influence of punk on comics which is a debatable issue. Guy Lawley, in his article “I Like Hate and I Hate Everything Else: The Influence of Punk on Comics”, asks the questions

How do we define ‘punk influences’? In a graphic medium like comics, do we confine ourselves to those which share a certain drawing style, and if so, what are its defining parameters? Or is it a question of subject matter: punk characters, gigs and bands? Are thematic concerns more important: the rejection of hippy values, the politics of Anarchy, an anti-authoritarian thrust, or the nihilistic rallying cry of ‘No Future’? Can we identify a defining punk attitude, and is it constituted from the above concerns or from a more general desire to shock, offend or subvert? ... In practice, of course, the answer is ‘all of the above’... (ed. Sabin, 1999: 100-101).

Engin Ergönültaş, the editor of *Pişmiş Kelle*, also defined what the influences of punk on comics were. On the 20 March 1992 issue, he started writing an article on punk and comics, saying that cartoonists like Cengiz Üstün and Memo, who started their career in *Pişmiş Kelle* (both of whom later worked at *H. B. R. Maymun* and now work at *Lombak*), are punks themselves (Ergönültaş, 1992a: 15). He continued his article the following week, along with a story with a punk theme illustrated by the then-19-year-old Mehmet Coşkun (who now works at *L-Manyak*). In the article he describes underground comix, which he labels as the ancestor of punk style in comics. He defines the main characteristics of punk comics as an amateur drawing style with themes of “hopelessness, corruption, impurity, uncanniness, violence, darkness” (Ergönültaş, 1992b: 2, 12, 15)<sup>25</sup>.

The same feeling of pessimism can be distinguished in one of the writings of Bülent Üstün in *H. B. R. Maymun*, who is also a comic artist with punk sensibilities. In his page “Kabız Kuğu” (Constipated Swan) in *H. B. R. Maymun* 80, he writes:

The satirist or the master of irony is basically a hopeful person, on the side of change and evolution. If s/he swears, mocks, or speaks sarcastically it is because s/he invests in the existence of a better world. There is no such hope for the

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<sup>25</sup> “Umutsuzluk, bozulmuşluk, kirlenmişlik, tedirgin edicilik, şiddet, karanlık”

BLACK HUMOURIST. Like a prophet of apocalypse, s/he sheds light on the hypocrisy hidden beneath the hope, the desire for change and the belief in evolution. For him/her, nothing has changed since the beginning and his/her mission in this bloody farce, i.e. “Life”, is to unveil (Üstün, 1995b: 5)<sup>26</sup>.

This statement has obvious connotations of punk negationism, in the vein of the slogan “No Future”. It is a manifesto for overthrowing meaning formed by the signifying practices of the dominant culture. This piece can also be read by replacing “the satirist” with “the hippy” and “the black humourist” with “the punk”.

An announcement which Bülent Üstün had made a week before he wrote the statement above, in issue 79 had even more visible commonalities with punk philosophy:

Announcement: Psychopaths, mad people, the manic depressive, paranoids, those of the threshold, the stupid, geniuses and idiots, perverts, the waste of the society, those who can leave the door open to anarchism and to the bearded and long haired people who have perceived the drawbacks of committing to the nation, ideologies and any other masks and deceptions without any room for debate, the disconnectus erectus... Write! Draw! Shit! But send them! They will be used in Kabız Kuğu (Üstün, 1995a: 5)<sup>27</sup>.

This announcement reflects punk philosophy from three aspects. The first one is the way it calls to all the marginals of the society to send their work, which will resist the social formation in some form. Secondly, it employs anarchism in the same way punk

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<sup>26</sup> “Yergici, ironi ustası temelde umutlu, değişimden ve evrimden yancı olan kişidir. Sövyüyor, makaraya alıyor ya da çuvalız batırıyorsa, daha iyi bir dünyanın varlığına yatırım yaptığı içindir. KARA MİZAH’cı için ise böyle bir umut yoktur. Bir kıyamet habercisi gibi, umudun, değişim özleminin, evrime olan inancın altında saklanan iki yüzlülüğe tutar ışığı. Ona göre, başlangıçtan bu yana hiç bir şey değişmemiştir ve bu kanlı maskaralıkta, yani “Hayat”ta kendisine düşen görev peçeyi düşürmektir”. This is actually a quotation from Batur (1987).

<sup>27</sup> Duyuru: Psikopatlar, deliler, manikdepresifler, paranoyaklar, eşikteki, aptallar, ileri ve geri zekalılar, sapıklar, toplum atıkları, millet, ideoloji ve akla gelebilecek diğer tüm maskeler ve aldatmacalar dahil, bir düşünceye hiçbir tartışmaya yer bırakmaksızın bağlanmanın sakıncalarını sezmiş tüm sakallılara, ve tüm uzunsaçlılara, anarşizme hayatında küçük bir kapı aralığı bırakabilenler, tutunamayanlar... Yazın! Çizin! Sıcın! Sıvayın! Ama gönderin! Kabız Kuğu’ya katkı maddesi olarak kullanılacaktır.

does. Üstün sees concepts like nation and ideologies as “masks and deceptions”, which has connotations of punk distrust against organized systems of political or religious belief and politicians. Thirdly, the way Üstün asks for people to produce, to send their own work is reminiscent of the DIY philosophy of punk. The message is very similar to the message *Sniffin Glue* gave to its readers about forming their own band.

Ergönültaş’s formula for punk comics, and Bülent Üstün’s definition of what his work is all about constitute only one facet of the punk influence on comics. According to Guy Lawley, the influence of underground comix on punk comic artists is obvious, as it was artists such as Robert Crumb, Sidney Shelton, S. Clay Wilson and Spain Rodriguez, who introduced subversive themes, which punk comic artists enjoy, like sex, drugs, rock ’n roll and violence into the comic strip medium. (ed. Sabin, 1999: 101). Lawley also refers to the situationist style as another influence on punk comics, which “[use] pictures or whole pages reprinted or traced from straight comics, but detoured by the re-writing of the word balloons” (*ibid*: 101). According to Greil Marcus, “[d]étournement was a politics of subversive quotation, of cutting the vocal cords of every empowered speaker, social symbols yanked through the looking glass, misappropriated words and pictures diverted into familiar scripts and blowing them up” (Marcus, 1989: 179). Thus, détournement has the capacity to signify the total opposite of the original message conveyed in a comic book. It was first put to use in Jamie Reid’s work, who prepared posters, flyers and record covers for the Sex Pistols, along with the collage aesthetics, derived from surrealism and Dadaism. These styles also were and have been influential on fanzines.

What was also missing in the definitions of Ergönültaş and Üstün is the fact that they seem to exclude the humour aspect of punk, and describe the punk influence as mere bitterness. Ergönültaş’s works are generally tough stories with slums and ghettos as their settings and carry a tone of desperation. However, Bülent Üstün’s cartoons in H.

B. R. Maymun aim at raising laughter through an absurd humour. Indeed, humour has never been excluded from the punk movement. Tricia Henry describes punk humour in fanzines as

Characterized by outrageousness in graphics and content, it was designed not only to entertain the readership, but to alienate the general public. *Punk* #1 features sexist humor (“Cars and Girls”), and scatological humor (“Joe”). In *Punk* #3 we find examples of black humor (“Father No’s Best”), antireligious humor (“10 Warning Signs of Blessedness”) and a bizarre piece by Legs McNeil entitled “A Story to Fill Space,” in which he describes throwing up on a subway (Henry, 1989: 111).

*Punk*, an American magazine, was the first medium to feature punk comics, which was first published in 1975 by the comic artist John Holmstrom, and was among the pioneers of fanzines published both in the USA and the UK. The magazine featured interviews with the musicians of the New York underground along with comic strips by Holmstrom, Batton Lash and Ken Weiner and others (ed. Sabin, 1999: 104). This magazine set an example to many fanzines on the both sides of the Atlantic, in terms of using comic strips, handwriting and humour. One British magazine called *Sounds*, started featuring comic strips by such artists as Edwin Pouncey (a.k.a. Savage Pencil) and Alan Moore, who is one of the most famous writers in the comic medium today (ed. Sabin, 1999: 104).

Edwin Pouncey’s style, labeled as “the ratty line”, became “the defining feature of a whole school of punk cartooning” (ed. Sabin, 1999: 106). His drawing style was simple, primitive, and his lines were shaky. Other followers of this style were Los Angeles based artists, Matt Groening (who later created *The Simpsons*) and Gary Panter among others. Lawley attributes the coining of the term “ratty line” to Panter, who created a character called Jimbo, “a spiky haired youth in a tattered vest, equally at home (or equally alienated, more to the point) in hellish punk-ridden LA alleyways and futuristic or prehistoric dreamscapes”. These artists also practiced a crude, childish drawing style with violent images, which Lawley associates with “punk

music, with its up-from-the-streets, back-to-basics, anyone-can-do-it attitude” (ed. Sabin, 1999: 107).

Other tendencies in the comic industry which Lawley draws parallelisms to punk are the New Wave (or newave) style of artists such as Matt Feazell who said “I want to do to comics what the Clash, the Ramones and the Sex Pistols did to rock music” with his “stick-figure mini-comics like *Cynicalman*” (Sabin, 1999: 110); the DIY aspect of the following “small press” movement represented by the British *Escape* magazine, which was self-published a la punk fanzines; the sleazy, revolting humour of *Viz*, which started as a punk influenced photocopy fanzine; and the way today’s most prominent writers of comics like Neil Gaiman, Alan Moore and Grant Morrison were shaped by the British punk movement in their youth and reflect that influence in their work, although not in an overt way. He finishes his article by admitting that there is a conflict between comics, which is a medium for storytelling, and punk, which “wasn’t about narrative”, but adds that regardless of this, punk has had impacts on the comics medium, “if often indirectly” (ed. Sabin, 1999: 110-117).

Although *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* are far from being totally under the influence of punk, most of what Guy Lawley counts as influences of punk on comics are characteristics visibly present in the works published in these magazines. It should also be noted that some of the influences analyzed here may not be conscious decisions on the part of the artists. However, this fact is not of importance for the purposes of this part, which aims to discuss if the comics in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*, whether consciously or unconsciously signify the same or similar meanings as punk. The influence of punk on these magazines may be divided into four: the DIY aspect, subject matter, street culture, and visual aesthetics.

The DIY aspect of punk is apparent in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* in two ways. Firstly, they come from a tradition of self-publishing. As it has been mentioned before,

*Leman* and *H. B. R. Maymun* were magazines, which started publication under different media corporations in the 1980s and became independent during the 1990s. *L-Manyak* was one of the first attempts of *Leman* to become a media group itself. In 2001, *Lombok* took over the flag of self-publishing, and parted ways with *Leman*, which became a “corporation”. Secondly, the crude, primitive, naïve and “anyone-can-do-it” (anti-) aesthetics of DIY became one of the dominant drawing styles in these magazines. Especially, the “ratty line” is favoured among a number of artists such as Emrah Ablak, Memo Tembelçizer in “Ben Bir Eşşeğim” (I am an Ass), Yetkin Gülmen, Alpay Erdem, Göxel, Bahadır Baruter in “Kahraman Barut” (Barut the Hero) and Bülent Üstün in “Lombok Kerizleri” (Idiots of Lombok) and “Prensiplerim Vardır” (I Have Principles).

In terms of subject matter, i.e. “punk characters, gigs, and bands”, *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* had limited space. The cartoonists whom Ergönültaş identified as punks, Cengiz Üstün, Memo Tembelçizer and Memhmet Coşkun as well as others like Bülent Üstün and Oky occasionally place punk characters in their strips and cartoons. Tolga Sümer, from the younger generation, who works mainly at *Kemik*, *Lombok*’s side project, has also a liking for punk characters. However, it is mostly due to Bülent Üstün, punk characters are used in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*. He turned himself into a character in “Kötü Kedi Şerafettin”, and draws himself as a punk, with spiked hair, ripped clothes, t-shirts with anarchy symbols or the logos of punk bands, and a leather jacket. The only comic strip with an overt punk subject matter was “Mongollar” (The Mongols). This short-lived series was written by Bülent Üstün and illustrated by Hakan Karataş and was about an untalented punk band, who try endlessly to record a demo and give concerts but fail each time.

One of the main influences of punk on *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* was related to the street credibility, “streetwise” facet of punk. As discussed in part 3.1 about Cihangir, the artists in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* imply in their works that they know the language

and practices of the street closely. The use of drugs and alcohol, street violence, and slang is indispensable elements of these magazines. Therefore, some comic series in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* have a punk flavour, even though their subject matters are far from being punk. Apart from Memcoş's "Hatıralar Geçidi" and Bülent Üstün's "Kötü Kedi Şerafettin", the works of Bahadır Boysal and Göxel communicate this street credibility to the full. Bahadır Boysal's works in *L-Manyak* are an extension of his cartoons in *Leman*. The main character of his cartoons is himself, wearing something like a super-hero outfit with a big "B" on the chest. His function as a character in his cartoons is witnessing out-of-the-ordinary events on the street, bars, night clubs and so on, and comment on them in a cool attitude. He writes about drug use, transvestites and prostitutes, clubbers and rockers, street fights and a deviant way of life in general. He is rarely an actor in what he describes and yet his work is all about himself, and his stance against what he experiences. Hence, the title "Teoride ve Pratikte Bahadır Boyal" (Bahadır Boysal in Theory and Practice". Göxel's comic strips, on the other hand, portray characters Bahadır Boysal would observe and produce some sarcastic commentary about. His characters are very similar to Kötü Kedi Şerafettin: aggressive, vile, and dangerous. Their language is not that of the youth but that of the slum neighbourhood. His characters have moustaches, scars and fangs and a ubiquitous joint in their hands. Göxel's characters seem to keep to the *racon* – the unofficial codes of living for the tough men of the street. Neither Göxel nor Bülent Üstün, who portray such violent characters, can be as violent themselves. They employ these characters like punks used the swastika, in order to horrify the public with an image it deeply fears. Kötü Kedi Şerafettin and Göxel's characters, as complete nightmares of the city life in Turkey, are the most suitable characters for this purpose.

Some artists in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* also make use of the techniques punk appropriated from the avant-garde movements of the twentieth century. Bülent Üstün uses a collage-like aesthetics in his "Lombok Kerizleri" and "Prensiplerim Vardır".

His title logo for “Lombok Kerizleri” is derived from the Sex Pistols’ ransom-note type of logo, with a safety pin on the letter “L”. This strip is basically a crudely drawn page-filler, which shows a different Lombok artist in different situations in each panel. Bahadır Baruter’s art in “Ruhaltı” (Subpsyche) and “Kahraman Barut” is mostly influenced by surrealism and expressionism. Cengiz Üstün makes use of détournement in his “Tribal Enfeksiyon” (Trippy Infection), in which he detaches panels from mainstream foreign comics and changes the scripts in the speech balloons, thus undermining their original message. His style in “Macerayı Seven Adam” (The Adventure-Lover), also has influences of the détournement style, because he uses photorealistic figures – which look ink-stained in order to create a pulp comics effect – in order to parody adventure comics of heroism. The main character, Macerayı Seven Adam, creates himself adventurous situations in a ridiculous way, for no reason at all. His way of disrupting the ordinariness and boredom of everyday life may also be read as a (probably unconscious) situationist tendency.

What is portrayed in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* have, in effect, a punk flavour, in that they share the same desire to revolt and shock. The characteristics Tricia Henry identified in punk fanzines, “chaotic appearance, subversive graphics, offensive subject matter, aggressive antisocial tone, and liberal use of profanities and off-color humor” (Henry, 1989: 112) are used as primary sources of humour in these magazines. The magazines whence *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* sprang out of – *Leman*, *H. B. R. Maymun* and *Pişmiş Kelle* – had limited use of this kind of subversive humour, with an exception of *Pişmiş Kelle*, which contributed greatly to the style *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* developed. However, *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* have become the cradle of subversive humour in Turkey. They have never been political in the sense *Leman* has been. However, their humour has been a gleeful negation of the social order and its signifying practices.

### 3.4 Sexuality, Obscenity and the Grotesque in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*

Sex, obscenity, and the grotesque – in varying proportions – have always been among the ingredients of humour magazines in Turkey. *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* are no exceptions. However, what makes them exceptional is the particular attitude they adopt in employing sex, obscenity and the vernacular. Their treatment of these elements can be delineated through the concept of grotesque realism, which Mikhail Bakhtin presented in his analysis of Rabelais' works, *Rabelais and His World*.

It is evident that analyzing *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*'s humour merely through Bakhtinian terms would be reductionism. There are numerous artists who produce stories for more than one series, and obviously, not all of these stories feature grotesque content all the time. Moreover, it is essential for the task at hand to avoid falling into the trap of taking one theoretical pattern – which is undoubtedly a text in itself – and applying it to yet another text in order to understand the way the text in question operates. In short, not everything in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* are grotesque in the Bakhtinian sense; nevertheless, the meaning of most texts in these magazines is crystallized when they are viewed through the glass of grotesque realism. In this part, Bakhtin's theory of grotesque realism will be summarized and its repercussions on particular series in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* will be presented.

Bakhtin's analysis of Rabelais' work present two important concepts, the carnivalesque and grotesque realism, which have been used not only in literary studies but also in explaining such distant topics as Brazilian cinema (Berrong, 1986: 4), rave culture and so on. According to Bakhtin, Rabelais' work in *Gargantua and Pantagruel* draws heavily from the popular culture of the middle ages, which involved popular festivities such as carnivals, the marketplace language, and the lower bodily stratum.

In the introduction part of his book, Bakhtin states that there have been others who associated Rabelais' work with "the material bodily principle, that is, images of the human body with its food, drink, defecation, and sexual life". Bakhtin thinks that these images were wrongly considered to be originating from "the Renaissance bourgeois character" although they are actually an extension of the folk humour of the middle ages into the Renaissance literature. According to him, this "peculiar aesthetic concept", endowed with "all-popular festive and utopian aspect(s)", is apt to be labeled as "grotesque realism" (Bakhtin, 1984: 18-19). Bakhtin asserts that:

...the body and the bodily life have here a cosmic and at the same time all-people's character; this is not the body and its physiology in the modern sense of these words, because it is not individualized. The material bodily principle is contained not in the biological individual, not in the bourgeois ego, but in the people, a people who are continually growing and renewed. This is why all that is bodily becomes grandiose, exaggerated, immeasurable (Bakhtin, 1984: 19).

Bakhtin says that the most significant characteristic of grotesque realism is "degradation". It lowers down everything that the official culture holds dear – spirituality, seriousness, hierarchical order etc – turns them upside down, bring them down to earth, materializes them. As grotesque realism degrades, takes its object down to earth, brings it in the lower bodily stratum – genital organs, the belly, the buttock – it lets its object be swallowed up and destroyed, and be regenerated as something better, at the same time. The lower bodily stratum does not only negate its object but also gives it a new life through the fertile womb (Bakhtin, 1984: 19-21).

As opposed to the "classic" aesthetics, which favour the "ready-made and the completed" being, grotesque aesthetics portray phenomena in a state of incompleteness and becoming. The grotesque image, in Bakhtin's opinion, enveloped the concepts of cyclical time – which was related to the "natural and biological life" in archaic times, but then went on to involve "social and historic phenomena" as well – and ambivalence, which presents both the old and the new, birth and death at the

same time. Grotesque images “are ugly, monstrous, hideous from the point of view of ‘classic’ aesthetics” and their traditional content is made up of “copulation, pregnancy, birth, growth, old age, disintegration, dismemberment”. The grotesque body knows no boundaries between itself and the world. It is united with the world and all beings through “the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus, the potbelly, the nose”. In language, the grotesque is inherent in “abuses, oaths and curses”. Bakhtin says “[t]he importance of abusive language is essential to the understanding of the literature of the grotesque” as they are significant tools of degradation (Bakhtin, 1984: 24-27).

Bakhtin believes that the concept of the grotesque has evolved through the centuries. It goes back to the ancient mythology and art of pre-classic Roman and Greek period. Grotesque realism “flowered” during the middle ages in the folk humour and was crowned by Renaissance literature. Grotesque realism lost its ties with the collective folk culture during Renaissance but continued to live in the literature of the time; however, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when classicism in arts and literature prevailed, it was also detached from great literature and was labeled as “gross naturalism”. In the following period of romantic literature, the grotesque was used as “a reaction against the elements of classicism which characterized the self-importance of Enlightenment. It was a reaction against the cold rationalism, against the official, formalistic, and logical authoritarianism...”. Nevertheless, in the Romantic period, grotesque realism acquired an individual, isolated, subjective aspect. “...[L]aughter was cut down to cold humor, irony, sarcasm”, therefore lost its regenerating power. Another difference between the folk humour and the romantic grotesque is that the former knows no fear while the latter “express[es] fear of the world and seek[s] to inspire [its] reader with this fear” (Bakhtin, 1984: 30-39).

According to Bakhtin, laughter in the medieval folk culture and in Renaissance literature was collective, universal and philosophical, and had a healing, regenerative

power. Starting from the seventeenth century, it became “narrow and specific”. Theories of laughter after the seventeenth century, such as Bergson’s theory, emphasized negative aspect of it rather than the positive aspect. During the middle ages, laughter was banned from “the official sphere of high ideology and literature”. It was this unofficialism that gave the laughter of the folk culture “exceptional radicalism, freedom, and ruthlessness”. Although official ideology excluded laughter, it granted certain “privileges” in which the laughter of the people could thrive, such as the marketplace, feast days, festive recreational literature. During these occasions, the official culture and language, church rituals and restrictions were degraded, turned upside down, and brought down to the lower bodily stratum (Bakhtin, 1984: 66-74). The same spirit of carnival was maintained in Renaissance literature. This spirit was understood among the contemporaries of Rabelais but later they were regarded degenerate and improper.

There are a number of criticisms regarding Bakhtin’s views in *Rabelais and His World*. For example, Michael Gardiner, in *The Dialogics of Critique*, says that much of the book “is given over to a lyrical, almost chiliastic celebration of the liberating potential of carnival laughter and the utopian promise of popular culture that at times seems embarrassingly fulsome and naïve” (Gardiner, 1992: 180). According to Gardiner, another criticism directed towards Bakhtin is that “...his conception of ‘the people’ is vague and virtually bereft of any real sociological content”. He adds that Bakhtin fails to mention the way some minority groups, like the Jews, were subject to violence during the carnival time (Gardiner, 1992: 182). Gardiner also quotes from C. Byrd, to illustrate that Bakhtin (and Freud) only emphasized the positive, “subversive” aspects of humour and laughter, whereas they can be employed to exercise prejudice and control against “social stereotypes” and “can help support certain reactionary hierarchies (patriarchy, racism), and cannot be considered as *ipso facto* liberating or emancipatory...” (Gardiner, 1992: 230-231). Another criticism comes from Aaron Gurevich, who, in his article “Bakhtin and his Theory of

Carnival”, claims that in medieval popular culture and carnival, joy and laughter was never separated from fear and hate (Gurevich, 1997: 56). In Gurevich’s opinion, medieval people’s lives in the unofficial sphere did not always revolve around festivity. There was intrinsic fear of God and the afterlife. Moreover, the church was not totally against laughter (Gurevich, 1997: 56-57).

One should, therefore, be aware of the fact that neither official culture nor the popular culture is monolithic, or exclusive of each other. As Necmi Erdoğan, in his article “Devleti ‘İdare Etmek’: Maduniyet ve Düzenbazlık”, says, the subaltern classes are in a state of “liminality” and “undecidability” against the ruling classes. They neither totally accept nor totally reject the ruling ideology. They create an “interspace” in which they can “escape without leaving”, “make do with” the state’s will. This should be kept in mind while studying humour magazines, because they, too, are not free of the ruling ideology, neither are they obviously absorbed in it. They make do with the laws and regulations of the state as mainstream publications. On the other hand they find different ways to undermine the values of the official culture. They push the limits of what is acceptable by the state. Grotesque imagery is one of the styles humour magazines adopted, which degrade the norms of the ruling ideology without changing it (Erdoğan: 1999/2000: 8-30).

It should be stated that this study claims no originality in associating humour magazines with the tradition of the grotesque. There have been others who employed the terms “grotesque” and “carnavalesque”, in different contexts, to define humour magazines. Ayşe Öncü, in her article “Global Consumerism, Sexuality as Public Spectacle, and the Cultural Remapping of Istanbul in the 1990s”, says that humour magazines are not political, but “alternative” and “anti-establishment”. Their humour, which involves “trashiness” and “ribaldry”, separates them from “mainstream” humour and thus can be defined as “carnavalesque”. In fact, Öncü suggests interpreting Bakhtin’s “carnavalesque” as a more encompassing concept and reading

all types of humour – rude jokes, witty lines, funny comic strips, cartoons – as built on established categories of meaning and logic and subverting them. She believes that all types of humour “subverts” the cultural discourses of a certain moment and they simultaneously “disassociate” the familiar and “reassemble” it. According to her, the cartoonist shows it is possible to turn cultural forms, symbols and meanings upside down (Öncü, 2003: 188).

Öncü does not specify which humour magazine(s) she is talking about, but it is rather obvious that she has *Leman* in mind, because her definition of humour magazines as representing “moments” and “situations” is reminiscent of *Leman* and also she focuses on the cartoons of Mehmet Çağçağ, who is a cartoonist in *Leman*. Öncü follows the trail of the concept “*maganda*” starting from humour magazines – particularly Çağçağ’s cartoons – and going on with the mainstream media. Although she does not associate “*maganda*” with the concept of the grotesque, Ali Şimşek, in *Yeni Orta Sınıf*, draws that analogy.

According to Şimşek, “*maganda*” took its shape in *Limon* and continued developing in *Leman* in the 1990s until it turned into the stereotype of “my fellow countrymen”, a grotesque parodying of Turkishness (Şimşek, 2005: 92). “Maganda” is depicted as a rude, provincial person, who listens to arabesque music, spits on the roads, has an insatiable sexual appetite, and harasses people. Şimşek thinks that this image encodes Kurdish identity with the accent and the stylization. “Maganda”, says Şimşek, represents the grotesque opposite of the glamorous world of the new middle class, of the “white Turks” created in the mainstream media. The representations of lower classes in humour magazines changed in the 1990s. Şimşek says that in the *Gırgır* period, the “little man” was portrayed as bright faced, and cleanly. In the *Limon* and *Leman* period, he gains a deformed, dirty and “grotesque” character (Şimşek, 2005: 93-97).

Şimşek claims that the source of the language and strategies adopted by the new middle class in the 1990s is, to a great extent, *Leman*. This language and strategies in question are those of “naming” and “mumbling”. According to Şimşek, the new middle class encodes the traditional middle and lower classes through “my fellow countrymen”, an etiquette originated in *Leman*. Şimşek particularly emphasizes two weekly strips in *Leman*, “Öğreten Adam ve Oğlu” by Kaan Ertem and “Kıllanan Adam” by Ahmet Yılmaz. Öğreten Adam (Teaching Man) gives his son tours in the routines of lower middle classes, and tells him his observations about the lives of these classes. His son listens to him in a cool and indifferent manner “because he already knows”. “Kıllanan Adam”<sup>28</sup>, is, in Şimşek’s words a “continuous *disturbance generator*” (Şimşek, 2005: 110). He “mumbles” about the cliché that things will never be right in Turkey, that if we were smarter, we would have already gone to the moon. “Kıllanan Adam”, is a stereotypical middle aged, middle class Turkish man, with balding hair, wearing striped pyjamas and a singlet, drinking tea all the time. The fact that “Kıllanan Adam” is a “typical citizen” makes him, in Şimşek’s opinion, a pawn of the new middle class, who is the hiding, “mumbling” figure inside “Kıllanan Adam”, criticizing, labeling every situation related to the cliché “Turkishness” in an ironical, sarcastic, cool manner (Şimşek, 2005: 109-110).

The grotesque character Şimşek uncovers in the “maganda” figures of Limon and “my fellow countrymen” of *Leman* is not the same as Bakhtin’s idea of grotesque realism which encouraged a universal laughter. As Şimşek points out, the lower class figure is the object of a sarcastic, ironical, isolated laughter (Şimşek, 2005: 102). The positive aspect inherent in grotesque realism does not dwell in the cartoons and strips related to what Şimşek calls “grotesque Turkishness”. In fact, the filth, degradation, the lower bodily stratum aspects of grotesque realism do not even go near *Leman*’s

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<sup>28</sup> “Kıllanan” is the adjective form of the verb “kıllanmak”, which is a slang term meaning both “disturbed” and “suspicious”. “Kıllanan Adam”, hence, might roughly be translated as “Disturbed Man”

“Killanan Adam” and “Öğreten Adam ve Oğlu”, most of the time. These strips practice a more satirical humour and lack the festive aura of the grotesque.

*L-Manyak* and *Lombok*'s humour, on the other hand, bears a kinship with the concept of grotesque realism as the reflection of the folk culture on literature with its emphasis on the material bodily principle and festive laughter. As mentioned in part 3.1, *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* are not magazines of folk humour, but of a more urban humour; however, their affinity with the margins of the city, which has echoes of the unofficialism of the folk culture, brings them closer to the definition of grotesque realism than any other humour magazine in Turkey. Levent Cantek points out the relation between grotesque realism and *L-Manyak*'s humour in his book *Türkiye'de Çizgi Roman*. He says:

What was interesting was the emphasis on the grotesque in [*L-Manyak*'s] humour. This level of humour was a first. The understanding of beauty adopted by the civilized world and belles lettres, in relation to its “belles” aspect, which focuses on the upper bodily stratum – especially the face – was consciously degraded, buttocks, holes, fart, shit, sperm, menstruation, vomit, snot, sneezing, erect penises, masturbation was constantly drawn. [The magazine] produced characters on whom everything particular to the carnivalesque and carnival men who stand out with all kinds of exaggerated costumes and who are the symbols of carnival time, which is equated with all types of freedom in the Western world, was accumulated. Mekar Hastası Nihan [Dick Addict Nihan], Memo's own character which he uses in his stories and poems, and Kunteper Canavarı bore carnivalesque characteristics (Cantek, 2002: 313)<sup>29</sup>.

There are, of course, other characters and stories in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*, whose content has influences of grotesque imagery. One important grotesque image represented in these magazines is that of excrement. Bakhtin places particular significance on defecation in grotesque realism. He says that “(...) the slinging of

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<sup>29</sup> İlginç olan, dergideki mizahın grotesk vurgularıydı. Bu düzeyde bir mizah ilk kez kullanılıyordu. Medeni dünyanın ve “edep”le ilgili olarak edebiyatın kullandığı belden yukarıya – özellikle yüze odaklanan güzellik anlayışı bilerek – aşağıya ediliyor, kalçalar, delikler, ossuruklar, sıçmalar, spermler, regl hali, kusma, sümük, aksırma, kalkık penisler, masturbasyon sürekli çiziliyordu. Batı dünyasının her türden özgürlükle eşitlenen karnaval zamanının sembolü olan ve her türlü abartılı kostüme özelliklerle öne çıkartılan Karnaval adamlarının ve karnavaleske özgü olan herşeyin üzerinde toplandığı tipler çıkarılıyordu. Mekar Hastası Nihan, Memo'nun şiir ve öykülerinde kullandığı kendi tiplemesi, Kunteper Canavarı karnavalesk özellikler taşıyordu.

excrement and drenching in urine are traditional debasing gestures, familiar not only to grotesque realism but to antiquity as well. Their debasing meaning was generally known and understood. We can find probably in every language such expressions as ‘I shit on you’ (...)’ (Bakhtin, 1984: 148). According to Bakhtin, defecation, in grotesque imagery, means death for the person who is subject to it, yet it also signifies birth and regeneration, and thus becomes ambivalent. Defecation brings death for the old and birth for the new.

Excrement is generously employed in most *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* narratives; however, in one series it is in the centre of all the stories: “Zıçan Adam”. “Zıçan Adam” by Kaan Ertem is an extension of his other characters in *Leman*, as mentioned in 2.2. Like “Erdener Abi” and “Erkut Abi”, he punishes certain groups of people. His method of punishment differs from other Ertem characters. He excretes on his victims in superhuman speed and proportions. According to Cantek, Kaan Ertem’s narratives in *L-Manyak*, including “Ezik Şarkıcı Altuğ” (Altuğ the Meek Singer) and “Enstantaneler” (Snapshots) were the closest ones to political agenda with their “criticism on ‘management’ rules getting more and more embedded in everyday life” and their emphasis on “the slippery and capitalist relations in big corporations” (Cantek, 2002: 314). The capitalist system is not the only target of “Zıçan Adam”’s faeces. He does not discriminate between classes. He explodes on any kind of oppressor regardless of class: hooligans, disturbers of peace, hunters, those who pollute the environment, spoiled rich people etc. The exaggeration of the amount of “Zıçan Adam”’s excretion and the manner in which he excretes associate the series to grotesque realism, particularly to what Bakhtin refers to as “Malbrough Theme”, which can be summarized as “degrading death” related to defecation (Bakhtin, 1984: 151). People who are drenched in “Zıçan Adam”’s faeces are not only degraded but also die a symbolic death.

Another significant artist who portrays images of defecation in a grotesque way is Memo Tembelçizer. His two works from *Lombak*'s 53<sup>rd</sup> and 54<sup>th</sup> issues particularly reflect the ambivalent nature of defecation Bakhtin talks about. These two narratives, both titled "Dünyanın En İğrenç İnsanı Memo Tembel Çizer" (Memo Tembelçizer, the Most Disgusting Person on Earth), contain both poles of becoming, namely destruction and regeneration. The first narrative starts as "In the beginning, there was shit..."<sup>30</sup>, which is clearly a reference to the opening sentence of the Old Testament, and reminiscent of other mythological texts as well. Memo uses the image of faeces with religious connotations, on purpose. Memo associates the genesis with faeces, as he portrays all life springing from it. When human beings populate the Earth, they grow apart from their own faeces. They seclude it from their lives. The accumulated faeces, through hundreds of years, gain life and become a giant creature in the image of Memo himself. This creature invites humanity to the righteous way, which is "Eat shit!", and be in good terms with their excrement. He calls them to "shit on civilization!" In the end, all is drenched in defecation, and the universe turns into the way it used to be. In the second narrative, in issue 54, Memo sits on the toilet and starts to excrete. His faeces keep coming uncontrollably, he gets lost in it and finally he is shot through the deep space by the force of his faeces. At the final panel, he is portrayed as a baby in a womb in space. The first narrative relates defecation with the cyclical nature of time and the process of life. All life rise out of faeces and finally get drenched in it, and destroyed. It is implied that life will rise out of faeces again. In the second narrative, faeces symbolize both poles of creation: death and birth. Memo does not approach faeces in a modern, hygienic sensibility; he emphasizes the relationship between defecation, life and death. Therefore, in these two narratives, the grotesque tradition, in Bakhtin's sense, is prevalent.

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<sup>30</sup> "Başlangıçta bok vardı..."

Memo Tembelçizer is actually one of the artists who stand closest to the grotesque tradition. In “Aşık Memo” (Memo the Bard), he writes poems which glorify masturbation, using words like “dam, fik, köt” which are actually distorted versions of “am, sik, göt” (“cunt, dick, ass”). He both parodies the *aşık* tradition of literature, and through use of sexual imagery and scatological language, practices a grotesque humour. An example of this is “Varmola?..” (Is there?..):

Memo the bard wanders with his dick in his hand  
His mind is blurred with dreams of a cunt  
He is ashamed to say “Bend over, girl”  
Is there any other way than jerking off<sup>31</sup>

Another series by Memo with connections to the grotesque tradition is “Ben bir Eşşeğim” (I’m an Ass), in which he uses himself as a character once again. According to Bakhtin, “[t]he ass is one of the most ancient and lasting symbols of the material bodily lower stratum (...)”. Bakhtin gives examples from several festive rituals, along with Apuleius’ *Golden Ass*, in which a young man is transformed into an ass through magic. The same thing happens to Memo in each “Ben Bir Eşşeğim” narrative. He starts each story as a human being and ends up being an ass in the end.

Bakhtin also mentions the devil as a grotesque figure in medieval culture. Unlike the romantic grotesque, which depicts the devil as a terrifying creature, the medieval grotesque portrays it as a comic monster, a “gay ambivalent figure expressing the unofficial point of view, the material bodily stratum” (Bakhtin, 1984: 41). This is how Kenan Yazar characterizes the devil in his series “Hilal”. He illustrates the devil as a human size goat on two legs. The devil, in the series, is a jovial character with a considerable sexual appetite, who plans and schemes ways to get the leading female

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<sup>31</sup> “Aşık Memo fik elinde dolanır  
Aklı damcık hayaliyle bulanır  
‘Domal dilber’ demeye de utanır  
Otuzbirden başka çıkar varmola?..”  
This is only one of the twelve stanzas in the poem.

character, Hilal, to love him, but cannot succeed. He is a down to earth figure with connotations of the lower bodily stratum and is not related to the terrifying figure represented neither in the romantic grotesque nor in any celestial religion. It does not inspire fear. The devil figure, in this series, is “defeated by laughter” as in the representations in the folk culture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (Bakhtin, 1984: 39).

Along with the representations of the devil, Bakhtin compares the theme of madness in the medieval and romantic grotesque traditions. He says, it

is inherent to all grotesque forms, because madness makes men look at the world with different eyes, not dimmed by ‘normal’, that is by commonplace ideas and judgments. In folk grotesque, madness is a gay parody of official reason, of the narrow seriousness of official “truth.” It is a “festive” madness. In Romantic grotesque, on the other hand, madness acquires a somber, tragic aspect of individual isolation (Bakhtin, 1984: 39).

The theme of madness is used in some L-Manyak and Lombok narratives from time to time, but it is the only theme in Gökhan Dabak’s “Deli Cevat” (Mad Cevat), Alpay Erdem’s “İsmail: Hasta Ruh” (İsmail: Psycho) and Cengiz Üstün’s “Deliler Koğuşunda Fikir Alışverişi” (Exchange of Ideas in the Psych-Ward). Cevat, İsmail and Cengiz Üstün’s mental patients are examples of gay madness. In the first “Deli Cevat” stories, Cevat wears a watch around his penis, which he later wears around his nose<sup>32</sup>. During the stories, he talks to himself, and his other personalities, making no sense in terms of official reason. Neither his words nor his actions follow any logical order. İsmail believes that he lives with his uncle, who is a skeleton and his wife, who is a mannequin. Cengiz Üstün’s “Deliler Koğuşunda Fikir Alışverişi”, unlike the

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<sup>32</sup> If this is interpreted in the Bakhtinian sense, there is not much difference between the two. According to him, in grotesque tradition the nose “always symbolizes the phallus” (Bakhtin, 1984: 316). Memo Tembelçizer also draws a link between the nose and the phallus in his characterization of Rıza Külegeç, the letterist of several humour magazines, as “Sikburun Rıza” (Dicknose Rıza), in which Külegeç is depicted as having a phallus where his nose should be. The size and shape of noses are almost always exaggerated in humour magazines. However, the link between the nose and the phallus is rarely drawn.

other two, is not in a narrative format but is made up of a group of one panel cartoons, in each of which different mental patients exchange ideas. The logic behind the cartoons resembles Gökhan Dabak's humour in "Deli Cevat". All the characters in these series redefine the world in the perspective of their madness, which is in no way tragic.

"Kötü Kedi Şerafettin" also hosts a number of grotesque themes, the most particular of which lies in Şerafettin's origin story. In issue 7 of *L-Manyak*, Şerafettin recites the succession of events concerning his birth. He tells his son, Tacettin, that he was not fathered by a cat but by a man called Tonguç, who is another character Bülent Üstün created in *H. B. R. Maymun*, in the comic strip titled "Tonguç the Fucker of Art". Tonguç is an ex-communist from the 68 generation. He was prisoned and tortured in those years, as a result of which he slightly lost his sanity and became an aggressive man, who practiced all forms of art to no avail. One day, while he was masturbating, he ejaculated on the floor. His cat Ekin accidentally sits on his sperms and gets pregnant. When she is in labour, she is unable to give birth, because Şerafettin is a bigger cat than normal. Bülent Üstün portrays her with a huge belly, and her vagina bleeding. Tonguç, not knowing what to do, decides to save the life of the kitten and rips open Ekin's belly with a knife and takes the kitten out. He names him Şerafettin, after one of his friends who was killed after he got out of prison. There are two grotesque themes related to Şerafettin's birth. The first one is that Şerafettin is a half human-half cat creature. As Bakhtin points out, "(...) the combination of human and animal traits is, as we know, one of the most ancient grotesque forms" (Bakhtin, 1984: 316). The second one is the theme of combined killing and childbirth. Bakhtin exemplifies this theme with the birth of Pantagruel in Rabelais' novel. There is a similarity between Şerafettin's and Pantagruel's birth. Gargantua's wife Badebec dies while giving birth, because Pantagruel was too large and suffocated his mother while being born. Bakhtin says "[t]his is the theme already familiar to us from the Roman carnival of combined killing and childbirth. Here, the killing is done by the newborn

himself, in the very act of his birth” ( Bakhtin, 1984: 329). Moreover, in both narratives, the birth of the newborn is followed by what Bakhtin calls “banquet imagery”, eating and drinking. The panel illustrating Şerafettin’s birth is followed by a panel showing Tonguç and Şerafettin drinking wine. Banquet imagery is occasionally used in the series, as Şerafettin enjoys sharing his loot with other cats. Bakhtin asserts that the banquet images in Rabelais’ novel signify a “banquet for all the world” (Bakhtin, 1984: 278). The spirit of collectivity and abundance make themselves apparent in the feasting scenes of the novel. The festive spirit is also manifest in the collective drug abuse and group sex scenes in “Kötü Kedi Şerafettin”. Bülent Üstün depicts group sex scenes of the Cihangir cats, especially in March issues, which is quite carnivalesque in character.

Exaggeration has penetrated in most narratives of *Lombak* as the examples above demonstrate. Bakhtin states that exaggeration, along with hyperbolism and excessiveness, is an essential element in grotesque realism (Bakhtin, 1984: 303). He says “(...) Rabelais depicts hunchbacks with humps of huge proportions, or monstrous noses, abnormally long legs, gigantic ears. There are men with disproportionate phalli (...) and others with unusually large testes”. The visual style of *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* are infested with such images. Particularly, “Kunteper Canavarı” and “Aşık Memo” can be given as examples for “disproportionate phalli”. Another character of Cengiz Üstün’s, “Mokar Hastası Nihan”, is the opposite of “Kunteper Canavarı” and “Aşık Memo”, as she has the capacity and willingness to insert any phallic object inside her vagina. Of course, from a modern, feminist point of view, she is nothing but a male fantasy; however, in terms grotesque aesthetics, she represents the gaping, swallowing orifice, which is in contact with the whole world.

The exaggeration in the visual style of *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* is also put forth in a form reminiscent of the “Indian Wonders” Bakhtin mentions. “Indian Wonders”, a cycle of legends and folk tales, is an important source for the grotesque lore in the

medieval culture. Bakhtin says “[b]oth in literature and pictorial art, the body of mixed parts and the strangest anatomical fantasies, the free play with the human limbs and interior organs were unfolded before him. The transgression of the limits dividing the body from the world also became customary” (Bakhtin, 1984: 347). This tendency to cross the limits of the body is specifically revealed in the covers of *L-Manyak* and *Lombak*. The covers present grotesque bodies moulded by imagination, like a creature with fingers sprouting from its face, an incredibly fat and naked man with an open mouth in his belly, the devil made up of thousands of naked bodies and so on.

Part of the sexuality represented in *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* is inescapably grotesque. Sexual themes are handled outside the official norms. Sex is almost never presented as an extension of love. It is purely bodily. It is apparent that the artists, with a few exceptions, do not aim to invoke erotic stimulation. They represent sexual intercourse with all bodily liquids and gases. The bodies in sexual act are far from perfection, and often drawn in an exaggerated way with hair, fat, cellulite et cetera. In these representations, sexual act gain a filthy, jovial character. Bülent Üstün, Cengiz Üstün, Memo and to some extent Oky generally present sexuality in this manner. Faruken Bayraktare’s “Rezil-i Rüsvan” (Sleazy Rüsvan), which started as a comic strip in *Pişmiş Kelle* and continued in *L-Manyak*, can also be given as an example in this context. The series is about a pimp called Rüsvan, his son Fistan and a prostitute called Rehvan. The brothel is the main setting of the narratives and the sex performed there acquires a gay tone.

*L-Manyak* and *Lombak* are also notorious for representing all types of sexual intercourse, whether they are considered normal or perverse. Vaginal, anal, and oral sex is accompanied by masturbation, homosexuality, bestiality, different fetishes (foot, hand, spitting, slapping, urinating, defecating et cetera), bondage, S&M, and eastern sexual techniques. Some of these representations do not have the Bakhtinian grotesque aura. They have the objective of merely shocking the reader with obscenity.

Bahadır Boysal and Memcoş, especially, produce works to this end. They both narrate their own memories, experiences and observations in their pages. They reflect on unusual sexual relationships, such as women willing to be raped, couples urinating on each other, religious cults praying by day, having group sex by night et cetera.

The language used in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* fosters the grotesque attitude. Oaths, curses and abuses are freely used, although the words are slightly changed in order to avoid lawsuits. The language in these magazines is close to what Bakhtin calls the marketplace, or billingsgate language. According to Bakhtin, these elements of speech “refuse to conform to conventions, to etiquette, civility, respectability” (187). They create an atmosphere of freedom, familiarity and collectivity devoid of all hierarchies. Oaths, profanities, or curses, which are almost never articulated in the official sphere, which constitute the unofficial face of language, have spread all over the narratives of *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*. These forms of speech are both used with their negative and positive aspects. They might signify friendliness or hostility. Therefore, it is possible to say the use of oaths and curses have an ambivalent nature in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*. Gürcan Yurt’s “Robinson ve Cuma”, a parody of Robinson Crusoe as the title suggests, is a good example for this. What is special about this series is that it displays great originality in terms of the curses it contains. The dialogues between Robinson and Cuma (Friday), are almost entirely made up of oaths and curses, like “teaching the whore how to fuck”<sup>33</sup>, “fuckin’ Englishman with a whore as a queen”<sup>34</sup> et cetera. Robinson and Cuma also curse each other affectionately, combining praise and abuse. They might use curses like “son of a bitch” and “faggot” in a friendly way, which is the case for all the characters of *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*.

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<sup>33</sup> “Uruspuya nasıl skişceğini öğretiyor”(Issue 41).

<sup>34</sup> “Kraliçesini sktiğimin İngilizisi” (Issue 45).

*L-Manyak* and *Lombok*, in the editorship of Bahadır Baruter, has an overall tendency to negate and overturn what is acceptable by the official culture. It is known that Baruter bases the humour of *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* to “mud and shit” (Cantek, 2002: 315). Baruter also articulates this kinship to filth in his humour in the 4<sup>th</sup> year special supplement of *Penguen*. His one-pager is titled “Bu İşin Sırrı” (The Secret behind this Job) and portrays Baruter as defecating and urinating on the works of his co-workers. He explains the motive of his actions as the application of an advice he got from Oğuz Aral, who told him the secret is “shit”. Aral tells Baruter that humour is nurtured by the dirty, rotten, and low. The symbol *Lombok* chose for itself, a creature made up of two lower bodies joined from the waist, is a perfect encapsulation of the lower bodily stratum and turns the concept of beauty and intelligence gathered in the upper bodily stratum upside down. It has been mentioned in part 3.3 of this study that negation is one of the basic mechanisms of humour in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*. This negation does not always mean negativity, as the examples given so far demonstrate. It is a festive negation, far from the negativity of “my fellow countrymen” jokes of *Leman*. *L-Manyak*’s resistance to official seriousness is, perhaps, best reflected in an inside cover illustration of Baruter in *L-Manyak* 54, which depicts serious and old people in a steamboat reading newspapers of the mainstream media, while a high school boy is reading *L-Manyak* sitting on the ceiling upside down. There are also some seagulls flying upside down and laughing. This picture negates all that is serious, respectable and old and replaces them with laughter, the new and the young, which is what *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*’s humour is mostly about.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to study the humour magazines, *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* in a monographic manner. It has been claimed that *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* constitute a shift in the tradition of humour magazines in Turkey; that their general attitude signifies a symbolic resistance like youth subcultures although there are some exceptions; and that they have been appropriated largely by the culture industry.

In order to describe the shift *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* have put forth, the history of humour magazines in Turkish Republic has been summarized in the Second Chapter. *Akbaba* (1922) was the first important humour magazine to be published in the history of Republic. However, due to particular reasons, such as the impossibility of criticizing the newly emerging nation state, it was inefficient as a source of political opposition and during its fifty-five years of publication, it generally sided with the parties which are in power. *Akbaba* was significant because, almost all famous humorists of the time worked at least once in the magazine. It also displayed a favourable approach towards art cartoonists of the 1950s generation.

*Girgir* dethroned *Akbaba* in 1972 with a new style of humour. *Girgir* increased the amount of visuality in humour magazines via offset printing. It reserved a larger space for comics. The magazine was able to respond to the tastes of the new urban population, comprised of migrants from rural areas living in slum areas. Its initial apolitical stance enabled it to be bought by both supporters of the Justice Party and the Republican People's Party. Gradually *Girgir* adopted an oppositional character in

a populist, central-leftist, Kemalist manner. It also increased its popularity by referring to television and the famous actors, actresses, singers and footballers of the time, which attracted young readers. As a consequence, it was accused of being banal and degenerate by the previous generation of cartoonists. Therefore, *Girgir* employed the younger generation of cartoonists and also encouraged its readers to draw cartoons for the magazine. *Girgir*'s significance lies in the fact that it turned humour magazines into a popular medium and raised a new generation of cartoonists who started publishing their own humour magazines.

*Limon* (1986) and *Leman* (1991) constituted another shift in the tradition of humour magazines. They adopted a more radical humour, in terms of their political attitude and their approach towards sex. *Leman*, unlike *Girgir*, featured various styles of humour at the same time. There were political cartoons which opposed all types of fascism and supported human rights along with apolitical, entertaining ones. Universal and local humour were hand in hand. As a consequence, *Leman* was mostly criticized for such conflicting issues as pornography, Kurdism, banality, and satirizing traditional lower and middle classes with the popular discourse of "Yurdum İnsanı" (My Fellow Countrymen). *Leman* marks the beginning of best-selling independent magazines. It has become a small media group, publishing books and several magazines. The managers of *Leman* also opened a chain of café/bars in different cities and released such cross-promotional products as t-shirts and mugs.

*L-Manyak* (1996), which started to be published by *Leman* as a monthly magazine, brought about another shift in the history of humour magazines. It was edited by Bahadır Baruter, who prepared the "Lombak" column in *Leman*. The "Lombak" column handled themes of sex, violence, religion, drugs, mental illnesses, disabilities and other taboo subjects in a politically incorrect way. Therefore, Bahadır Baruter gathered cartoonists from other humour magazines with a similar approach to humour around *L-Manyak*. These cartoonists left the *Leman* group and started publish a

magazine called *Lombok* (2001). The difference of *L-Manyak* from preceding humour magazines is that it does not feature any content related to the daily politics, politicians and current events and rarely produced social commentary.

In this study, it has been attempted to prove the assumption that *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*, being apolitical publications, practiced a symbolic resistance to the dominant ideology through their humour. They employed several tools to this end, like the setting of their stories, the aesthetics of American underground comix, the attitude of punk subculture, and influences from grotesque realism.

The setting of some of the comics in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* was the neighbourhood of Cihangir in İstanbul, which used to be a popular area among transvestites, transsexuals, African immigrants, marginals, drug addicts, bohemians, writers and artists. The cartoonists of *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* regard places like Cihangir and Tarlabası as the “margins of the city”, which are away from the officialdom of the “centre”. They deem these places as the “asshole” of the city and think that they are closer to the “mud and shit” they are interested in. It is possible to suggest that the cartoonists of *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* reconstructed the image of Cihangir in their works as a utopian place, where they can stroll like flaneurs, in attitude of street wisdom without being disturbed by *magandas*, Islamic fundamentalists, or the representatives of official ideology. They also avoid depicting poor people as if it would contain a political statement. Among the series with a Cihangir setting are Bülent Üstün’s “Kötü Kedi Şerafettin” (Şerafettin the Bad Cat), Mehmet Coşkun’s “Bir Evimiz Vardı” (We Had an Apartment) and Oky’s “Cihangir’de Bi Ev” (An Apartment in Cihangir).

As it has been mentioned, the cartoonists of *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* feel closer to “mud and shit”. They frequently portray acts of defecation, sex, drug use, violence, madness et cetera. Their visual aesthetic is parallel to the aesthetic used by the

underground comix artists of the 1960s and 1970s in America. Underground comix, as an extension of the counter-culture movement in America, aimed to break all taboos and the values of the American middle class through their works. Artists such as Robert Crumb and S. Clay Wilson produced works filled with explicit sex, vaginas, penises, violence, drugs as well as such disturbing themes as misogyny, racism, castration, rape, and fetishism in order to shock and revolt the public. It cannot be said that all cartoonists in *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* are directly influenced by the underground comix style; however their visual styles and themes carry a certain kinship. Moreover, some Turkish cartoonists like Bülent Üstün and Oky are known to appreciate the style of Robert Crumb and their art bears a likeness to underground comix. Their styles have also influenced their colleagues and younger generations of cartoonists. Underground comix artists saw their art as an attack on the repressive values of the society, although they do not generally feature overtly political content in their works.

The attitude and style of *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* also draws from the Punk subculture of the late 1970s. The punk movement is shaped by Punk Rock, which is a raw and harsh music genre, with simplistic and loud songs comprised of three chords. The Punk movement attacked the common understanding of art and aesthetics and claimed that anyone can make music or publish fanzines with a “do it yourself” philosophy. The clothes, appearances and behaviours of punks were intended to shock the public. Therefore, the punk style has been interpreted as subverting the signifying practices of the dominant culture, and “communicating disorder”. Another approach placed punk in the avant-garde art movements of the twentieth century, such as Dadaism and Situationism. The political opinions of it is composed of a superficial anarchism, born out of a disbelief against all sorts of authority; and the nihilistic slogan of “No Future”. However, Punks are not altogether desperate and they display a large amount of hedonism as well. Therefore, their attitudes can be summarized as a “gleeful negation”.

It can be claimed that punk style has been mostly adopted by humour magazines in Turkey. In the 1990s, the editor of *Pişmiş Kelle*, Engin Ergönültaş wrote articles about punk style in comics. In *H. B. R. Maymun*, Bülent Üstün reflected his punk attitude in several pieces of writing. *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* also share most of the characteristics associated with the Punk style. Cartoonists like Bülent Üstün, Cengiz Üstün, Oky, Memo Tembelçizer, Mehmet Coşkun, who used to work in *Pişmiş Kelle* and *H. B. R. Maymun*, imply that they like punk music and the punk attitude in their works, and draw punk characters. For example, Bülent Üstün wrote a series called “Mongollar”, about a punk band.

There is an aesthetic reaction against the more artistic, photo-realistic style of mainstream comics in *L-Manyak* and *Lombak*. Some cartoonists use the “ratty line” associated with the comic artist Edwin Pouncey and punk comics in general. This simplistic, primitive and shaky style of drawing connotes the “do it yourself” aspect of punk. It is implied that anyone can draw comics. This style is used by Memo Tembelçizer in “Ben Bir Eşşeğim” (I’m an Ass), Bülent Üstün in “Prensiplerim Vardır” (I Have Principles) and “Lombak Kerizleri” (Idiots of Lombok), Yetkin Gülmen and Alpay Erdem. Other visual styles like collages and the détournement appropriated by punk is also used in some cartoons and comics of *L-Manyak* and *Lombak*, particularly by Cengiz Üstün.

*L-Manyak* and *Lombak* also bear the spirit of “gleeful negation”. Their revolting style of humour aims to subvert the values of dominant culture. Like punks, the cartoonists of *L-Manyak* and *Lombak*, have problems with authority figures like politicians, parents, the police et cetera. Bülent Üstün, for example, writes about how nations and ideologies are “masks and deceptions” in one issue of *H. B. R. Maymun*, where he also calls for all the marginals of the society to produce works and send them to Bülent Üstün’s page, “Kabız Kuğu” (Consipated Swan). To sum up, Tricia Henry’s (1989: 112) definition of punk fanzines can be employed to define *L-Manyak* and

*Lombok* as well: “chaotic appearance, subversive graphics, offensive subject matter, aggressive antisocial tone, and liberal use of profanities”.

Part of *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*'s vision of humour, in terms of symbolic resistance, can be explained through Bakhtin's concept of grotesque realism. Actually, it is possible to suggest that all subversive elements described so far, the influences of Cihangir, underground comix and punk style, partially carry tones of the grotesque. Bakhtin identifies grotesque realism in the Renaissance literature, particularly in Rabelais's works, which have stemmed from the European folk culture of the Middle Ages. The main characteristic of grotesque realism is “degradation”. It lowers down anything that is held dear in the official culture: spirituality, seriousness and hierarchical order. It turns them upside down and brings them into the sphere of the lower bodily stratum. Grotesque aesthetics portray phenomena in a state of becoming as opposed to classic aesthetics' closed and completed portrayal of beings. The grotesque body knows no boundaries between itself and the whole world. It is united with all beings through the open mouth, the genital organs, rectum and the nose.

Grotesque realism has undergone several changes throughout the history. It flowered with the medieval folk humour and popular laughter, but it lost its connection with the people during the Renaissance and became a literary style. In the romantic period, it lost its universal and collective aspects and turned into a style of individualism, isolation and sarcasm, which is more or less still the case, according to Bakhtin.

This study claims no originality in associating humour magazines with the tradition of the grotesque. Ayşe Öncü (2002) and Ali Şimşek (2005) put the concept into use to describe the *maganda* cartoons of *Limon* and *Leman*. However, the grotesque aspect of *maganda* cartoons is related to sarcasm and cold humour of isolated laughter. Levent Cantek (2002), on the other hand, uses it in reference to *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*. In *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*, the classical notion of beauty is constantly

degraded and everything related to the grotesque body, the lower bodily stratum, body liquids, holes, mouths and noses are presented in an exaggerated and festive way.

Defecation is particularly important in *L-Manyak's* and *Lombak's* humour. Kaan Ertem's "Zıçan Adam" (Shitting Man, or Zhitting Man) constantly makes use of the "Malbrough Theme" Bakhtin mentions, drenching disturbers of social peace in faeces. Memo Tembelçizer also frequently exploits images of defecation and in one particular story, he describes life emerging from faeces and is destroyed by drenching in it.

Memo Tembelçizer's works like "Aşık Memo" (Memo the Bard) and "Ben Bir Eşşeğim" (I am an Ass) also conveys some grotesque themes. In "Aşık Memo", Memo depicts himself as a dervish with a big, erect penis and writes poems reminiscent of the Turkish *aşık* tradition and glorifies masturbation, using a scatological language. In "Ben Bir Eşşeğim", Memo depicts himself again. In each story, he turns into an ass, which is a symbol of the material bodily stratum, according to Bakhtin.

Bülent Üstün's "Kötü Kedi Şerafettin" features some elements of grotesque realism as well. The birth of Şerafettin, for example, can be considered grotesque on two levels. Firstly, Şerafettin is a cat fathered by a human being and is a half cat-half human creature. Secondly, his birth causes the death of his mother because he is too large. Bakhtin exemplifies the theme of birth-giving death with the birth of Pantagruel, whose mother dies during labour because his son is too large. The banquet imagery is also an important part of Şerafettin stories. Şerafettin and the cats of Cihangir feast on food, wine and drugs occasionally in an atmosphere of abundance. The festive spirit is also apparent in the group sex scenes of the cats in Cihangir in March.

Sexual intercourse acquires an earthly, filthy and jovial character in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok*. It is represented with all bodily liquids and gases. The bodies in sexual act are often drawn in an exaggerated way with hair, fat, cellulites, potbellies et cetera. Apart from the works of such cartoonists like Bülent Üstün, Cengiz Üstün, Oky, Memo Tembelçizer, Kenan Yerar and Bahadır Baruter, Faruken Bayraktare's "Rezil-i Rüsvan" (Sleazy Rüsvan), which is about a procurer called Rüsvan, his son Fistan and a prostitute called Rehvan with a brothel as a setting.

Other grotesque themes in *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* can be found in the representation of the devil as a jovial and promiscuous figure in Kenan Yerar's "Hilal"; the representations of festive madness in Alpay Erdem's "İsmail: Hasta Ruh" (İsmail: Psycho), Gökhan Dabak's "Deli Cevat" (Mad Cevat), and Cengiz Üstün's "Deliler Koğuşunda Fikir Alışverişi" (Exchange of Ideas in the Psych-Ward); the use of oaths, curses and profanities in all the narratives, but particularly "Robinson ve Cuma" (Robinson and Friday); and exaggeration and excessiveness in Cengiz Üstün's "Kunteper Canavarı" ("The Anal Sex Monster"), who is a monster with a huge penis with a taste for anal sex and Mekar Hastası Nihan (Dick Addict Nihan), who can insert anything into her vagina. The exaggeration element is also present in several covers of these magazines, on which bodies transgressing their limits are drawn.

*L-Manyak* and *Lombok*, therefore, have an overall tendency to negate and subvert the norms and values of the dominant culture on a symbolic level, although in some cases, they reflect the opinions of the dominant culture as well. They were regarded by the media as apolitical, perverse, disgusting, and degenerate. In these magazines, the humour style became marginalized, and distanced itself from the general tastes of the readers of humour magazines. One of the reasons that underlie this tendency was the increasing number of private television channels, and the fact that these private channels broadcasted shows that reflect a similar style of humour to that of humour

magazines. Another reason was the explosion of sex in all media and the field of culture during the 1980s and 1990s, which were the decades when the values of the new right, particularly its emphasis on conservatism and the free market, were on the rise. Thus, humour magazines were obliged to produce more radical works, which media cannot cover, and they gradually grew away from active politics, as a result of the depoliticized character of both their producers and target audience during these decades.

It has been claimed in this thesis that *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* have been gradually appropriated by the culture industry and have become convenient products for reconsumption. Humour magazines, as cultural products are obliged to create demand, ideologically. Two basic discourses to construct the need for humour magazines have been traditionally put to use: laughter is one of the basic needs of human beings; and humour magazines provide an oppositional view of the current events.

The second discourse lost its credibility, when it turned out that humour magazines belonged to large media groups, some of them owned by political families. When some humour magazines became independent during the 1990s, they regained their credibility as oppositional publications. Their financial status allowed them to expand their investments. As mentioned before, *Leman* opened café/bars, published new magazines and dominated the market of humour magazines until 2001. *Lombok* entered the market as a rival of *L-Manyak* and published another magazine called *Kemik*. In 2002, the cartoonists Erdil Yaşaroğlu, Metin Üstündağ, and Selçuk Erdem left *Leman* and joined forces with the *Lombok* staff to publish *Penguen*, which dethroned *Leman*.

The managers of this new group of magazines have laid aside the discourse of radical political opposition to a great extent. They do not have reservations against

cooperation with large capital holders. The books of collected works by the cartoonists of *Penguen* and *Lombok* are now published by Doğan Publishing. The managers of this group, Bahadır Baruter, Metin Üstündağ and Selçuk Erdem also founded a company called Cominic, and started producing content for mobile phone entertainment, based on the popular characters of humour magazines, in cooperation with Sony Ericsson. “Kötü Kedi Şerafettin” is turned into a mobile phone game.

The market is now dominated by the *Leman* group and the *Penguen* group. The various attempts of entering the market by other humour magazines have repeatedly failed during the last five years. In September 2006, the latest separation in the humour magazine sector occurred and a group of cartoonists from *Lombok*, *Penguen* and *Kemik*, created a new weekly humour magazine called *Fermuar*, led by Bülent Üstün. Bülent Üstün explains the reason for publishing a new humour magazine as the wearing out of the style peculiar to *Lombok*. He believes that the new generation of readers is not shocked easily by the sexual and violent aspects of humour, and a new understanding of humour based on childhood, naiveté and innocence.

It is almost certain that the marginality in humour magazines will gradually lose their influence and no longer be widespread. Their popularity has resulted from the specific conditions of the 1990s, which necessitated a radical approach towards humour. *Penguen*, on the other hand, proved that a more populist, mainstream, entertainment-oriented humour magazine, that does not use sex, violence, profane language or radical politics can still be the most popular humour magazine in Turkey. The future humour magazines are more liable to follow the example of *Penguen*. It might be concluded that the style of *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* is about to change.

This study does not discuss *L-Manyak* and *Lombok* in all its characteristics. The future studies on these magazines can take into consideration the reception of the narratives by the readers. They can also make use of techniques of oral history, by

doing interviews with their producers. *L-Manyak* and *Lombak* can also be handled in a context of the history of subculture, sexuality, and obscenity in Turkey. These approaches will surely produce new questions and answers regarding these magazines, and bring new expansions to the subject.

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## APPENDICES

### A. FIGURES

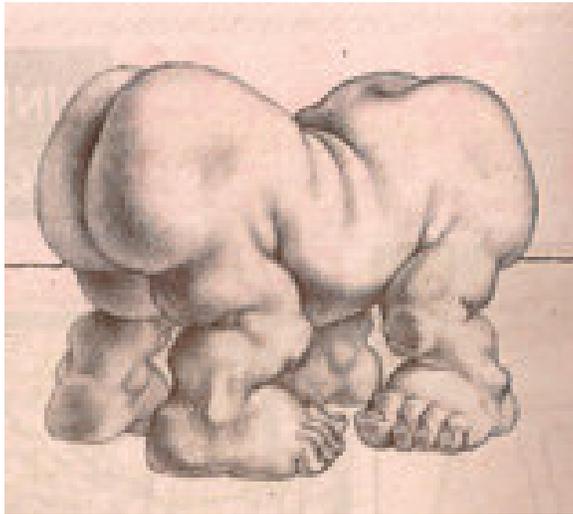


Figure 1. The symbol of *Lombok*



Figure 2. A *L-Manyak* advertisement.



Figure 3. Kötü Kedi Şerafettin drinking beer and smoking a joint



Figure 4. "Cihangir'de Bi Ev"



Figure 5. Ayşe Özgün, repulsed by *L-Manyak*

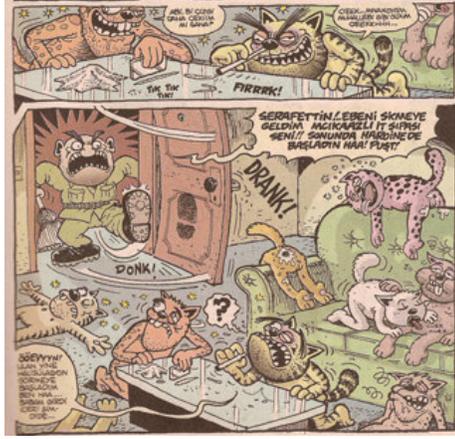


Figure 6. Şerafettin and his friends in an orgy.



from Cihangir

Figure 7. A scene



Figure 8. Atatürk with Memcoş and Baruter.



Figure 9. Okay, planning his next story set in Cihangir, with punk characters.



Figure 10. Bülent Üstün as a punk character.



Figure 11. An inside cover by Bahadır Baruter.



