

# COMEDY AND WOMEN: THE PROBLEM OF GENDER IN HOKKABAZ

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## Abstract

This study argues that representations of the female protagonist in the Turkish film *Hokkabaz* (*The Magician*, Cem Yılmaz & Ali Taner Baltacı, 2006) replicate gendered masculine hegemony. Using the concept of hegemonic masculinity and genre theory, we suggest that *Hokkabaz* contributes to the inequality of gender through its treatment of the father-son relationship. We first examine the formation of gender roles by means of the conventions of comedy and then, in terms of hegemonic masculinity, analyse the impact of the father on the son in a patriarchal society. The main elements of the essay, which employs the technique of textual analysis, are the collective discourses about women as represented in mainstream comedies and the hegemonic relationships between men found in the literature of hegemonic masculinity.

**Keywords:** Comedy films and women, hegemonic masculinity, Turkish cinema.

## Komedi ve Kadın: Hokkabaz Filminde Cinsiyet Problemi

### Öz

Bu çalışmada toplumsal cinsiyet alanında erkeklik hegemonyasını yeniden üreten anlatılar sunan *Hokkabaz* (*The Magician*, Cem Yılmaz & Ali Taner Baltacı, 2006) filmindeki kadın kahraman temsili incelenmektedir. Filmin toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliğini desteklediği yerler, tür kuramı ve hegemonik erkeklik kavramı yoluyla incelenmektedir. Çalışmada ilk olarak güldürü türünün toplumsal cinsiyet alanındaki uzlaşımları araştırılmaktadır. Ardından, ataerkil toplumda babanın oğul üzerindeki anahtar rolü ve hegemonik erkeklik kavramı incelenmektedir. Çalışmada metin analizi tekniği kullanılmaktadır. Analizin temel birimleri anaakım güldürü filmlerinde kadınlar hakkında geliştirilen kolektif söylemler ve hegemonik erkeklik literatüründe üretilen erkekler arası ilişkilerdir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Güldürü filmleri ve kadınlar, hegemonik erkeklik, Türk sineması.

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Bu çalışma 30 Kasım 2015 tarihinde *sinecine* dergisine ulařmış, 20 Haziran 2016 tarihinde kabul almıştır.  
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## I. Introduction\*

There has been a proliferation of popular Turkish comedies since 2000. These films, the narratives of which are usually centred on a male protagonist, are the products of a male-dominated industry with male producers and/or directors. A common characteristic of these films lies in their interpretation of the social consequences of economic crises through the ridiculization of male characters by highlighting their shifting positions and insecurities in an ever-changing social structure. Solidarity among men goes hand in hand with a crisis of confidence opposing women in these narratives. Women are depicted either as the objects of desire for men or untrustworthy individuals, and in that situation friendship and solidarity among men is manifested through rage against women. Hence, by depicting women as subordinate to men or as their enemies, these narratives strengthen the hierarchy of gender relations. Examples of such films are *Maskeli Beşler* (*The Masked Gang*, Murat Aslan, 2005), *Recep İvedik* (Togan Gökbakar, 2007), *Muro* (Zübeyr Şaşmaz, 2008), *Kolpaçino* (Atıl İnaç, 2009), *Çakallarla Dans* (*Dance with the Jakals*, Murat Şeker, 2010) and *Kutsal Damacana: Dracoola* (Korhan Bozkurt, 2011). In these comedies, women are the targets of men's desires or hatred. Women in swimsuits next to swimming pools are depicted as objects of desire in almost all of these films. The loss of confidence in women is a dominant theme in *Çakallarla Dans*; one of the male characters in the film, Hikmet, mutters to his friends, "Hey man, all of your problems are about women. Women kill men. Look at me—no women, no problem". In *Muro*, Çetin mutters to Muro, "Captain, how will we succeed in the revolution? How could two women manage to do something that we could not?". Muro's answer supports Segal's (1992, p. 133) critical view on the sexuality of women and fertility: "Once we get married with two beautiful women and lead this village, it will surely become a town of global revolution, and the population will increase rapidly".

This study argues that the representation of the female protagonist in one of these films, *Hokkabaz* (*The Magician*, Cem Yılmaz & Ali Taner Baltacı, 2006), contributes to the reproduction of gendered hegemony. While *Hokkabaz* is different from many of the aforementioned films, depicting women as an enemy or as being in a subordinate position, the film contributes to the inequality of gender through its treatment of the father and son relationship. *Hokkabaz* offers a narrative worth considering because it focuses on fathers and sons, the psychoanalytic perspective of the father of the male

\*Bu makale "Popüler Türkiye Sinemasında Gülünçleştirilen Erkeklik" adlı doktora tezinden üretilmiştir. Ankara Üniversitesi SBE, 2014.

protagonist and the female protagonist, and the further marginalization of the female protagonist.

The characteristics of comedies and the theoretical framework of the literature on masculinity are used in this analysis. In line with that, the technique of textual analysis, which is useful for researchers working in cinema, is employed. Through this technique, films can be interpreted in order to illustrate how cultures make sense of the world (Mckee, 2003, p. 12), and it demonstrates “how images, sounds and statics are organised and presented, and where relevant, how these various elements are combined” (Deacon, Pickering, Golding, Murdock, 1999, p. 17). Textual analysis focuses on higher-level organizational properties, which are combinations of words and images (Fairclough, 1996, pp. 3-4). The main elements of this analysis deal with collective discourses about women produced in mainstream comedies and the hegemonic relationships between men that are produced in the literature on hegemonic masculinity. This study also explores depictions of women in Turkish cinema through the conventions of the mainstream comedy genre.

The first section of this study examines the formation of gender roles by means of the common characteristics of the comedy genre. This part includes a categorization of the representation of women in comedy along with the images that have been proposed as “normal” or “collective” for women. Portrayals of women as ridiculous, muddled, or inadequate—and hence incapable of assuming a higher position or taking on additional responsibility—are among the innate characteristics of the comedy genre. Popular comedies are embedded in narratives in which female characters are integrated with patriarchal values, sexualized, and presented as sources of pressure or boredom.<sup>1</sup>

The subordinate position assigned to women is scrutinised through the concept of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1998) and the father and son relationship is taken up in the second section. The concept of hegemonic masculinity, which elaborates on the formation of definitions of gender as a continuous process of reproduction in social practices, provides a theoretical framework which explains such struggles in various social patterns and the priorities given in the balance of power. Hegemonic masculinity, which is based on the reasoning of the patriarchal gender system, defines a system that propagates the dominance of men over women and subordinate men (Connell, 1998, p. 245). This study analyses the mechanism of hegemonic masculinity through the lens of the father and son relationship and from that

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<sup>1</sup> See Schatz (1981), Horton (1991), Rowe (1995), Karnick & Jenkins (1995), and King (2006) for a review of the literature on comedy and the representation of women.

standpoint focuses on the representation of women as a source of pressure and boredom. In that way, the study examines how comedies portray women while constructing the hegemony of males.

The third section of the study explores the film *Hokkabaz*, which displays the main characteristics of this theoretical framework, by focussing on the classical elements of the narrative such as theme, plot, and characters, as well as the representation of the female protagonist. In the narrative of *Hokkabaz*, in which the relationship between the father and son becomes stronger, the female character fades away, thus standing at the intersection of comedy and the problematics of masculinity.

## 2. The Comedy Genre and the Representation of Women

Representation in cinema is created through the choice of colour, place, the position of the subject, conversations, and attitudes. This makes it possible to naturalize a particular way of seeing, and hence accounts for the political importance of culturally dominant representations (Ryan and Kellner, 2010, p. 37). Their prominence originates from their power to influence common ideas about the current state of the world and prospects in a broader system of cultural representation.

Such a perspective on films requires a focus on critical social ideology theory, and this analysis assumes a symbiotic relationship between ideology and cinema. Louis Althusser (2014) has argued that social apparatuses reproduce the dominant ideology not through violence but primarily through ideology itself. The media is one such apparatus which uses ideology to manipulate people who do not necessarily adhere to a given system. Ideology in turn portrays people as being in harmony with the system by making them adopt hegemonic values.<sup>2</sup> Hegemonic ideology exists in the layers of social formations.

Films are the verbal and visual representations of certain ideologies and social consciousness. They encode social discourses and transform them into

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<sup>2</sup> According to Althusser, hegemonic ideologies exist in all facets of a social formation. Here, some distance is required regarding the potential of the subject to use his or her own will in a world surrounded by the hegemonic ideology. The Althusserian account of the subject understates the capacity of subject. Nevertheless, as Fairclough argues, “Subjects are ideologically positioned, but they are also capable of acting creatively to make their own connections between the diverse practices and ideologies to which they are exposed, and to restructure positioning practices and structures. The balance between the subjects as active agent is a variable which depends upon social conditions such as the relative stability of relations of domination” (1996, p. 91).

cinematographic narratives. Either through cinema or alternative platforms, the appearance of images undergoes a certain transformation in between the alternative dimensions of a social discourse at a historical conjunction. The visual appearances of images that construct and safeguard the social order build social reality, and in this way, films contribute to political struggles in the formation of social reality via the topics/issues that they make visible and the creative ways they are shown to the viewer.

The concept of genre in cinema is related to the categorization of films in certain ways. Genres are a combination of rules and expectations recognized both by directors and spectators as an aesthetic and industrial practice (Gledhill, 2000, p. 223). Genre theory has gained prominence as opposed to auteurism, which argues that cinema is a unique medium that can express the feelings and ideas of the director. By providing a formal and thematic categorization of Hollywood films, genre theory has offered up an important critical framework through the analysis of these films.<sup>3</sup> Genre films include a repetition of structures, characters, rules, and meanings. The categorization of films with the use of certain characteristics can take into account the common structures in narratives. Hence, genre films represent a way of forming a collective cultural explanation. As asserted by Schatz (1981, p. 25), “Genres are associated with social and cultural problem sets, uncertainties, ambiguities and conflicts. They provide valuable knowledge on explaining ideas, cultural values, ideals and ideological dilemmas”. In this context, they are considered to be an important medium for the transmission of cultural traditions and one of the forms that serve cultural hegemony (Gitlin, 1986, p. 3).<sup>4</sup> Genres perform this task by using cultural representations, constructing a common social reality, and assigning conventional feelings, ideas, or attitudes (Ryan & Kellner, 2010, p.129).

Conflicting ideas in genre theory have arisen over time, along with difficulties in defining their distinctive characteristics and the emergence of atypical films. It has been argued that genres are not exclusive or heterogeneous but rather that they are mechanisms of chains of events in genres, icons, or discourses that work together (Neale & Krutnik, 1990). While the borders of genres in film industry have blurred, one can still identify distinctive established practices in film genres which problematize social life and suggest possibilities for resolutions. The narratives of horror films, comedies, and melodramas continue to operate inclusive of certain conventions while

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<sup>3</sup> Popular genres do not only exist in Hollywood films, and other countries' cinemas have also been discussed as important social and cultural phenomenon (See, McHugh & Abelmann, 2005; Malhotra & Alagh, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Gitlin's analysis could also be applied to cinema.

overcoming certain problems.<sup>5</sup>

This section examines the conventions of the representation of women in comedy narratives. Genre films include conventions that construct and safeguard the social order, but on the other hand the effectiveness of these conventions depends on their ability to disguise themselves in such a way that they do not serve certain social and cultural interests. In a social context, these conventions are principals that reproduce the given order. Below, we develop three main categorizations concerning the types of images that are presented as “normal” or “collective” regarding women with a focus on the conventions on comedies.

### 2.1. The Ridiculization of Women as a Source of Pressure or Boredom

The first examples of comedy films included funny moments in the lives of the protagonists.<sup>6</sup> In almost all comedies throughout history, male characters are subversive, childish, and playful, whereas women are depicted as a source of pressure or boredom; in other words, they are boring representatives who comply with the rules of civilization (King, 2006, pp. 129-144). For example, silent comedies usually included the frightening and repressive wives who were married to the male characters. John Bunny’s wife in *A Cure for Pokeritis* (Laurence Trimble, 1912), Harry Langdon’s wife in *Saturday Afternoon* (Harry Edwards, 1926), and the wives of Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy in *Sons of the Desert* (William A. Seiter, 1933) are repressive figures in marriage, and hence they are portrayed as frightening characters. *Saturday Afternoon* opens with the script, “In 1864 when Lincoln declared all men free and equal, did he, or did he not, include husbands?”. *The Hansom Cabman* (Harry Edwards, 1924) and *Hot Water* (Fred C. Newmeyer, 1924) convey a sense of hostility towards older women. In *The Hansom Cabman*, Betty Brief

<sup>5</sup> Schatz (1981, p. 159) describes common characteristics of genre films in the following terms: “In its animation and resolution of basic cultural conflicts, the genre film celebrates our collective sensibilities, providing an array of ideological strategies for negotiating social conflicts”. Byre and Miller (1991, p. 2) argues that one of the characteristics of “screwball films” is their limited reference to economic crises or war, conveying the idea that the roads to the happiness are only temporarily blocked.

<sup>6</sup> One of the first examples of comedy films is Louis Lumiere’s *The Sprinkler Sprinkled* (1895) (Robinson, 2003, p. 103). The ludicosity of the drenching scene arises from the difficult situation that one person gets into. The post-WWI era reveals the hegemony of American films (Rotha, 1996, p 41). Early American comedy often dealt with gold-diggers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, show girls who are employed to entertain men such as passengers or men-with-arms, musical shows, and comedians (Dorsay, 1977, p. 220).

decides to visit her fiancé Harry Doolittle after talking to him over the phone, suspecting that there is something wrong with him. She takes her mother with her. This sequence starts with the script “Fearing the Worst, Betty brought Mother”. The rest of the film tells us the story of Harry, who is in a difficult position with three women.



*Saturday Afternoon* (1926)  
Director: Harry Edwards



*A Cure for Pokeritis* (1912)  
Director: Laurence Trimble

In *Hot Water*, an “uncomforting” old woman attempts to sit in the front seat of the car instead of the back seat, creating a lot of problems for the male protagonist. Her scarf blocks the vision of the driver, and she plays with the steering wheel and pushes a button, leading the car to accelerate and crash into another car. This accident is the beginning of a series of more severe accidents involving the male protagonist. The old women are disturbing subjects for the childish male protagonist in these films from one of the great actors of silent motion pictures.

Old women are obstacles in the transformation of social life because they always repress men, and they are depicted as being horrible or muddled, further demonstrating a certain hostility towards matriarchalism. Sweet Sue in *Some Like It Hot* (Billy Wilder, 1959) is a dominant female orchestra conductor. She gives orders to everyone in the orchestra, the members of which are all women, during a train journey. The hostility against matriarchalism in the narrative structure of *Throw Mamma from the Train* (Danny De Vito, 1988) is noticeable in the experiences of Larry Donner in his relations with his ex-wife Margaret and Owen Lift in his dealings with his mother. Short and shy Owen lives in the same house with his despotic and arrogant mother, and he dreams about killing her because she treats him so badly. Literature professor Larry Donner does not like his ex-wife Margaret, who stole and published a novel Larry had written. Owen offers up a double murder plan: Owen will kill

Margaret and Larry will kill Owen's mother. Fischer (1991, p. 65) describes these two men as each other's alter egos, especially when Owen asks Larry to carry out the murder that he always dreamed of but could never go through with. This man, who has been oppressed by his authoritarian mother his entire life, realizes that the only way to achieve his fantasy of murdering his mother is through his alter ego.



*Saturday Afternoon* (1926)  
Director: Harry Edwards



*Saturday Afternoon* (1926)  
Director: Harry Edwards

Turkish cinema has similar representations. Early Turkish comedy films produced between 1918 and 1940s consisted of comedies adapted from theatre plays. The comedy films of this era are in concert with operettas, musicals, *Orta Oyunu* (traditional light comedy in Turkish theatre) and historical tales. Naşit Özcan, a *tuluat* (improvisational theatre) player, plays in a comedy film named *Naşit Dolandırıcı* (*The Impostor Naşit*, Muhsin Ertuğrul) in 1933. Similar to Naşit Özcan, another *tuluat* player, İsmail Dümbüllü was a major comedy actor in Turkish cinema. Dümbüllü was the lead actor in a series of comedies: *Dümbüllü Macera Peşinde* (*Dümbüllü in Search of Adventure*, Şadan Kamil, 1948), *Dümbüllü Sporcu* (*Dümbüllü the Sportsman*, Seyfi Havaeri, 1952), and *Dümbüllü Tarzan* (*Dümbüllü Tarzan*, Muharrem Gürses, 1954). There was an increase in the number of films starting in the 1950s (Esen, 1996: p. 26). In this era of emerging capitalism in Turkey, Yeşilçam produced films under the influence of a concept that became dominant in social, cultural, and economic relationships (Bayram, 2006, p.105). In the Dümbüllü films, ridiculous elements are constructed around the narratives of a male protagonist and his desire to be rich, as well as hegemonic femininity and masculinity.

In *Ne Sihirdir Ne Keramet* (*Neither Magic nor Miracle*, Esat Özgül, 1951) Dümbüllü is respected by his wealthy, authoritarian wife, and at times uses the language of the male hegemony. In the narrative, the woman, who is a source of pressure and boredom, longs for her husband's power and authority. Such a narrative suggests that authoritarian women seek an image



of social and cultural hegemonic masculinity which is described in terms of power and violence. Dömbüllü falls in love with Aysel (Luiza Nor) in the theatre where he works, but Aysel tells him that it is impossible for her to marry him unless he earns more money. Throughout the film, she reminds him that she will only marry a man who can offer her a life of luxury. Dömbüllü gets fired from the theatre because he is lazy, and Aysel tells him that she will go to Istanbul. Dömbüllü's plan is then to marry Hanife, a rich woman. However, he is shocked by her authoritarian and intimidating nature. Hanife has pictures of her 11 ex-husbands in her living room and she tells Dömbüllü what happened to each one of them. He obeys the commands of his wife, who always humiliates him in a violent and intimidating way while doing the housework and knitting. He tells one of his friends about the torture his wife inflicts on him. His wife's attitude changes when Dömbüllü shouts at her, "How dare you insult your husband?" Hanife says, "Oh my God! Is this a dream? I have finally found the authoritarian man that I sought during 11 years of searching. Order me, my Pasha! I await your orders!". Such words do not create a change in the hegemonic social meanings that surround sexuality and gender; rather, they add to the continuation of male hegemony, strengthening hegemonic sexual ideas about the supposed submissive nature of women. The narrative echoes the mechanisms of pressure and violence that men wield over women, hence revealing who is truly in power. Yet, without any emphasis on social or economic injustice, the male character is pictured as being unjustly treated.

In Dömbüllü's comedies, his relationships with women develop in two ways: assault and voyeurism. Like in *Ne Sihirdir Ne Keramet*, the women who dance on the stage in *Fındıkçı Gelin* (*The Flirtatious Bride*, Orhan Erçin, 1954) are objects to be stared at. In such narratives, depending on the complexity of the conflict, Dömbüllü's fantasies involve being close to women or touching them. In the 1960's, Bedia (Mualla Sürer) played the grumpy and authoritarian wife of Horoz Nuri (Vahi Öz). In *Turist Ömer* (Hulki Saner, 1964) the relationship between the male protagonist Turist Ömer and Bedia is used to create a comedic yet tense atmosphere. The romantic comedies of the 1970's established class and cultural conflicts, and solve them in a way that strengthens traditional values. Behind this attempt to reconcile with modern values is a struggle to realize a reconciliation with rationalizing the traditional values of marriage and patriarchal male hegemony (Bayram, 2002: p. 94). In the 1980's, films focused on the individual adventures of male characters instead of comedic narratives based on social reconciliation. Comedies about changes in social class, bankers, and *başlık parası* (money paid to the bride's side of the family) became prevalent. In the *Gırgıriye* (Kartal Tibet, 1981) sequels



*Ne Sihirdir Ne Keramet* (1951)  
Director: Esat Özgül



*Gırgıriye* (19281)  
Director: Kartal Tibet

of the 1980's, which depicted the people of Istanbul's district of Sulukule, Sabahat (Perran Kutman), the mother of Güllüye (Gülşen Bubikoğlu), is one of the funny obstacles for the male protagonist, Bayram (Müjdat Gezen). All the women, except those who show affection towards the male protagonist, are ridiculized in these films.

In newer popular comedies, women are either the object of the voyeuristic male gaze or they create problems for the male characters by stirring up chaos. Masculine solidarity in the mafia is shaped around the blessing of macho values, and the treatment of women is overtly repressive. Especially in the films *Her Şey Çok Güzel Olacak* (*Everything's Gonna Be Great*, Ömer Vargı, 1998), *Eyvah Eyvah 1,2* (Hakan Akgül, 2009, 2010) *Maskeli Beşler*, *Recep İvedik*, *Muro*, *Kolpaçino*, *Çakallarla Dans* and *Kutsal Damacana: Dracoola*, women are targets of men's desires or hatred, as mentioned in the introduction. In *Her Şey Çok Güzel Olacak*, homosexuality, penis references, and women are the target of laughter. Hatred for the father in such an Oedipal scenario is shifted towards women and matriarchalism in the film. The ambitious and confident bride Ayla is erased from the scenario when she commits adultery, revealing a negative attitude towards matriarchalism (Rowe, 1995, p. 105). As Ryan and Kellner suggest, portraying women as scapegoats who are responsible for breaking up the patriarchal family model emphasizes traditional anxieties regarding women (2010, p. 251). In *Eyvah Eyvah 2*, the mother of Müjgan deflects the threats of violence made against her when she soothes male fears. Edremit yells at her daughter, who is loyal to authority, when he learns that she has been having a relationship with Hüseyin: "What a shame! If you give freedom to your daughter, she will either marry a drum player or a *zurna* (clarinet) player! From now on, you will go to work and come back straight home" He also directs the anger he feels for his daughter towards his wife: "You! Take your dog and get out!" The narrative ends with Edremit, who is

soothed by his wife, giving Müjgan permission to have a relationship with Hüseyin. As Ryan and Kellner argue, when women soothe the anger of men, they soothe an anxiety that could turn into violence against them. In this way, male violence against women is contained within the family and placated (2010, p. 223).

## 2.2. The Reconciliation of Women with the Patriarchal System

As Laura Mulvey (1999) first asserted in her seminal paper dating from 1975, one of the common characteristics of mainstream narrative cinema underlines a profound problem for women. Traditionally, women have two roles in cinema: first, they are erotic objects both for the characters and the audience (1999, p. 838). But women bring to mind one more issue: Her lack of penis, which implies a threat of castration and hence unpleasures (Mulvey, 1999, p. 840). Women are a visual source of pleasure for the male protagonists and the audience. Nonetheless, they are a source of anxiety as well, since they are reminders of sexual differences and hint at the threat of castration. Mulvey argues that there are two ways for the male unconscious to cope with this anxiety. The first is to render women worthless, by either punishing or saving them. The second is to ignore the castration threat by turning the women into a fetish as a comforting figure. The star cult of women is the product of this second approach (1999, p. 840). Hollywood cinema creates such a *mise-en-scène* for women.

Women transformed into comforting figures in a patriarchal order are also seen in romantic comedies. Romantic comedies often have narratives that adapt women into the patriarchal system. The theoretical underpinnings of this argument go back to Schatz (1981), Horton (1991) and Rowe (1995).<sup>1</sup> In Hollywood romantic comedies, male and female characters have a strong desire to create a new world that they plan out. These films imply that the various obstacles to these dreams can be overcome via the protagonists' efforts and that those who are good will be happy in the end. In such comedies which depict daily life in terms of joy and happiness, the conflict that establishes the narrative is resolved through the defeat of the bad characters and the victory of the good (Horton, 1991, p. 19). The last scenes, in which the man and the woman come together, tell us about their integration with society, conveying the message that social coherence has been upheld (Schatz, 1981, p. 159). *It Happened One Night* (Frank Capra, 1934) and *Bringing up Baby* (Howard Hawks, 1938) are prominent examples of this tendency. As stated by Rowe

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<sup>1</sup> A study by Bayram (2002) examines this in the context of Turkish cinema.

(1995, p. 47):

The lovers tested, and finally find themselves by retreating from the ordinary world, where their union seems impossible, to a “magical” place apart from everyday life, such as the moonlight island in *It Happened One Night* (1934), the Connecticut forest in *Bringing Up Baby* (1938), the cruise ship in *The Lady Eve* (1941), and the enchanting moments at the Metropolitan Opera and on the streets of New York City in *Moonstruck*.

Comedies in which reconciliation and acceptance play the main role reconstruct the hegemonic structure of gender relationships. In particular, romantic comedies, family comedies, and sitcoms disregard class and gender inequalities. By rationalizing patriarchal customs and a need for the current socio-economic system, the comedy genre can deepen the establishment of codes and viewpoints created by these suppositions. In Hollywood-made romantic comedies such as *My Best Friend's Wedding* (Paul John Hogan, 1997), *Nothing Hill* (Roger Michell, 1999), *You've Got Mail* (Nora Ephron, 1998), and *Bridget Jones's Diary* (Sharon Maguire, 2001), love is a framework of reconciliation. In these films, by accepting traditional patriarchal values and behaviour, the male and female protagonists reproduce this system and its values. One can argue that in comedy films there is a space for rebellion and the antagonistic behaviour of women. However, according to Byrge and Miller (1991, p. 4), even such a space would serve the purposes of the approval of the dominant male culture. Although a female protagonist could pursue her romantic goals fighting against a repressive society and the law of father, such an antagonistic decision is mostly depicted as a form of behaviour that is temporary and amusing. Rowe discusses this issue within the context of *The Unruly Woman* (1995). He argues that the iconographic revolutionary space given to women in comedies cannot carry out an ideological function capable of overcoming the gender hierarchy. As he argues, the rebellion of women cannot be seen as a symbol of freedom. Instead, comedy shows how frightening it could be once women unite.<sup>2</sup>

### 2.3. Women as the Focus of Sexual Interest

The gender problem, which is one of the sources of the elements of ridicule in popular comedy films, is constructed against what is thought of as “normal” or dominant gender roles. Dominant perceptions of women are based on sexual attractiveness and submissiveness. Hence, in these

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<sup>2</sup> In Hollywood comedies, the male characters are always greater in number than the female characters (Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Woody Allen and Eddie Murphy). It is the same for the Turkish comedy cinema (İsmail Dümbüllü, Sadri Alışık, Şener Şen, İlyas Salman, Kemal Sunal).

narratives, masculine female, feminine male or childish characters are put in a subordinate position (King, 2006, p. 130). In this way, the existing gender structure is rendered even stronger. The ideological function of narratives regarding manhood or womanhood is to reproduce the traditional gender discourse. Women who deviate from such codes are transformed into objects of comedy either as a source of pressure and boredom or the focus of sexual interest. By emphasizing that “real” women should always be attractive, the dramatic interest in women is thus shifted towards a dialect of sexual attractiveness.<sup>3</sup> Deleyto (2003) has taken up the issue of women in terms of how they are depicted as being the focus of male sexual interest and argued that in contemporary Hollywood comedies a woman and a man cannot be pictured as friends without the existence of sexual desire.

In comedy films, laughter targets the woman’s body, as suggested by Freud’s joke analysis. For Freud, dirty jokes that target a woman’s body are a dimension of sexual aggression. When women express their distaste for such jokes, men get pleasure from embarrassing them. In this case, jokes become hostile and harmful expressions (Freud, 1905/2002). Freud argued that jokes which cause embarrassment for women are a way of using male power. When the comedy orients its laughter to the woman in the focus of sexual interest and harassment, according to Fischer a woman “is eventually eliminated from the scene entirely and replaced by the male auditor” (1991, p. 62). By displaying a woman’s body or cliché patriarchal values as the objects of comedy, films also strengthen patriarchal concerns about abnormal situations in which women, the impoverished, people of colour, or individuals who are overweight assume power.<sup>4</sup>

When the mother figure is absent in comedies, issues related to mothers are usually materialized via the women with which the male character is interested. In these narratives, the father figure is important because the father and son compete with each other for the same woman. In these cases, the psychological replacement of the bride and the mother is implied and an interesting Oedipal scenario emerges (Fyre, 1957; Rowe, 1995). In this scenario, which takes place in many narratives, a short, petite, and weak

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<sup>3</sup> Fischer (1991, p. 63) argues that in comedies cross-dressing of men is portrayed as more convincing than that of women. *Some Like It Hot* (1959) could be an exemplary case of this privilege of men. Quoting Kuhn (1985, p. 73) “fulfils the primal fantasy of the fetishist look, a fantasy which ‘real’ women must always frustrate; it banishes the castration threat by gratifying a masculine desire for a woman to be...more like a man.” Fischer argues that for the male viewer looking at a cross-dressing man is not as disturbing as the opposite case.

<sup>4</sup> The films of Whoopi Goldberg, who was the star of many box-office champ Afro-American comedy films, offer important examples of the black woman stereotype.

young man beats the authoritarian, repressive, and strict old man and arrives at a “happy ending”. This satisfies the son’s desire to kill his father and marry his mother. This type of comedy narrative emphasizes the first part of the Oedipus story about the father and son, and authority and repression. However, it does not allow for the son to clear away the existing structures of power. Following this tendency, many comedy films exclude women in one way or another. In particular, in comedian comedies the lover of the male protagonist is erased from the narrative in this manner. This is an indication of comedy’s misogynist and anti-matriarchal characteristics. If a female protagonist who is in a relationship with the male protagonist is not erased from the narrative, she is presented as an “ideal bride” and her earlier acts of mischief are tolerated. This is important for the continuation of the male lineage (Rowe, 1995, pp. 102-105). Such endings allow for a reconciliation of the female protagonist with traditional patriarchal values through marriage.

### 3. Fathers and Sons

In most recent popular comedy films in Turkish cinema, male characters lose their dignity through ridiculous moments. In such films, in which the female protagonists are excluded in various ways, the adventures of male protagonists who usually come from low or middle class families are narrated. The relationships between the men in some of these films are friend-based relationships and in some others they are father-son relationships. *Maskeli Beşler İntikam Peşinde*, *Muro*, *Çakallarla Dans*, and *Kutsal Damacana Dracoola* are examples of the former type, whereas *Hokkabaz*, *Kolpaçino*, and *Sen Kimsin (Who are You?)*, Ozan Açıktan, 2012) describe the crisis of a male protagonist in conflict with his father or a surrogate.

Perceptions of the father’s existence and that which is represented by him introduce the children in a given family to a world that is based on sexual differences in a patriarchal system. One key role played by the father in a patriarchal system is the act of taking the son into the world of men or preparing him for manhood. As put forward by the interdisciplinary abstraction of masculinity described by Horrocks, masculinity includes the relationship between men and other sexual identities and speaks of cooperation in the patriarchal order (1995, p. 20). The fragmentation of the sexual roles of the father and mother in the family structure has major implications for children’s psychology. Children associate themselves with the father since they are raised in coherence with the social requirements of the patriarchal system. At this point, identifying with the father and refusing the mother becomes an evident form of behaviour.

In this context, Easthope (1990, p. 167) puts forth a major argument regarding the source of male hegemony. Easthope argues that patriarchalism, capitalist relationships, and the system of the representation of masculinity myths in popular culture in the contemporary era represent the layers that exist in the emergence of hegemony related to masculinity. What is learned by the father and other aspects of the system can be referred to as “masculinity fantasy”.<sup>5</sup> This fantasy contains toughness, strength, cool-headedness, braveness, and efforts to distance oneself from soft feminine characteristics. Even though patriarchalism is quite resistant to change, it is a part of human culture and hence is still subject to being transformed. Still, the basic fantasy related to masculinity in a patriarchal society includes conveying to children a sense of a male narcissism, exaggerating culture, and a phallic feeling of being “capable of everything” (Horrocks, 1995, p. 20). Men live with the possibility of being rewarded when they obey masculinity norms and the possibility of being punished when they cross these borders.

This article examines the key role of the father and son in a patriarchal society in the film *Hokkabaz* by using the concept of hegemonic masculinity and focusing on the representation of women. With this aim in mind, we first define Connell’s concepts of hegemonic masculinity and subordinate masculinities, as those concepts provide a useful framework for examining the relationship between the father (Sait) and the son (İskender) in *Hokkabaz*.

#### **4. Hegemonic Masculinity and Emphasized Femininity**

The notion of hegemonic masculinity provides a major theoretical background for examining the idea of the superiority of men over women (Connell, 1998). However, this concept is constructed not only through relationships between men and women but also through the relationships men have with other men. Hence, men are not exempt from this mechanism, which is based on repression and superiority. The repression of the ideology against men and the goal of the subordination of women necessitate a hierarchical order amongst men based on gender. Hence, hegemonic masculinity is always constructed in a way that includes subordinate men and women.

The submission of women to men and their servitude in terms of male interests and desires is defined within the concept of “emphasized femininity”. Having sexual appeal is valuable for young women whereas motherhood is praised for those who are older. This includes fragility in flirting scenes and boosting the male ego in their relationships at the workplace. Emphasized

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<sup>5</sup> For an assessment of the masculinity fantasy and comedy relationship, see Güven-Akdoğan (2014).

femininity is displayed especially for men, and in this way, women behave according to the patriarchal ideology without resisting the pressure and superiority mechanisms of men. According to Connell (1998, p. 251), Marilyn Monroe is an important archetype of emphasized femininity as well as a great satire of it, and many women's magazines publish examples of such femininity.

Heterosexual men are superior to homosexual men in the gender hierarchy, which is based on hegemonic masculinity. This superiority results in discrimination against homosexual men in political, economic, and cultural spaces. Effeminate men are also subordinate in gender hierarchy. Black males and working class men are also represented as being far from the centre of hegemonic masculinity. In this process, homosexual men become negative symbols for masculinity. Other men are displayed in a three-tiered hierarchical structure: hegemonic masculinities, cooperating and conservative masculinities, and subordinate masculinities (Connell, 1998, p. 154). Subordinate masculinities define the majority of men who are not necessarily displaying hegemonic behaviour but it still helps the hegemonic process and constructs their own masculinity in cooperation with this model. They are the ones who benefit from patriarchy but without displaying a strong version of male repression. The main power of hegemony is held by this group (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832).

The concept of hegemonic masculinity has been criticized over time. Connell and Messerschmidt redefined the concept, emphasizing that it is not constant and unchangeable. Accordingly, masculinity does not only define a personal characteristic or bodily existence. Rather, it is a construction of a practice and realized in social action (2005, p. 836). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p. 841) have emphasized that simplified statements such as "men's power over women" should be avoided. Instead, different definitions of masculinity and the complex structures in between should be the subject of interest. They highlight the notion that hegemonic masculinities are not necessarily rooted in economic sources or institutional authority. In this context, the use of hegemonic masculinity provides a framework for understanding a certain dynamic in social processes. Connell and Messerschmidt's illustration allows for different masculinities which are defined in terms of alternative cultures, institutions, and groups in the embracing of less hegemonic or non-hegemonic characteristics. This and the following studies provide us with a broader framework for gender definitions. A continuous bargaining and reproduction process exists in the construction of hegemonic masculinity. This approach is a synthesis that embraces critiques of the concept of hegemonic masculinity. In this way, Connell and Messerschmidt point out that there is a gathering up of the elements for masculinity which are traditionally distinct and a



transformation of hegemony occurs in accordance with the historical context. As an example, they show that the increase in the visibility of homosexual men in western societies affects the masculinity which is obtained with a hegemonic position. The increasing visibility of homosexual men has resulted in some heterosexual men adopting their styles and the formation of a new hybrid gender definition. Such an adoption can be characterized as a mechanism that makes the differences between genders ambiguous and yet does no harm to patriarchy:

Hegemonic masculinities can be constructed that do not correspond closely to the lives of any actual men. Yet, these models do, in various ways, express widespread ideals, fantasies and desires. They provide models of relations with women and solutions to problems of gender relations. Furthermore, they articulate loosely with the practical constitution of masculinities as ways of living in every-day local circumstances. To do extend they do this, they contribute to hegemony in the society-wide gender order as a whole. It is not surprising that [they] exhibit contradictions (2005, p. 845).

Consequently, the hegemonic masculinity discourse may contain some contradictions and transform different definitions of superiority. For example, men who do not demonstrate traditional signs of masculinity in mainstream cinema such as emotional reticence can also be hegemonic. As a result, the definitions of “multiple masculinities” and hegemonic masculinity that are used in various disciplines offers up a fruitful framework for research on gender. The development of this new literature in place of the role theory of different genders and the categorization of patriarchy highlights the ways that hegemony functions and its impacts on all genders.

This study examines a father and son relationship by using the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and subordinate masculinity. In *Hokkabaz*, the relationships between the father Sait, the son İskender, and the female protagonist Fatma Nur Gaye is explored within a context that reveals reconciliations in the narrative structure of the comedy genre and hegemonic masculinity through the different definitions of masculinity in the literature. Hence, it is crucial to demonstrate the relationships between men and representations of woman.

## **5. Film Analysis: *Hokkabaz***

In this section, we analyse *Hokkabaz* by taking up classic narrative elements such as theme, plot, and characters with a focus on the representation of woman. The analysis utilises the framework discussed above which takes into account images of women in popular comedy films, father and son

relationships, and hegemonic masculinity. We examine the role of women's images in popular comedy films in terms of rationalizing male hegemony and highlight the role of the narrative with regards to solidarity among men. The female protagonist is either the object of the male desire or untrustworthy characters who put the male characters in jeopardy.

### 5.1. The Authoritarian Father and Subordinate Son

*Hokkabaz* tells the tale of an illusionist named İskender and his assistant Maradona as they are on tour. İskender has been interested in illusion since he was a child and claims that he is an illusionist but no one else, except his close friend Maradona, believes him and instead they call him a *hokkabaz* (magician) in a pejorative way. İskender's father, Sait, has never truly appreciated his son because he looks down on his son's occupation. İskender and Maradona run away from Istanbul to go on a country tour but they have to take Sait with them. From this point onwards, *Hokkabaz* turns into a travel film that starts and ends in Istanbul.

In the film, solidarity among men is put to the test. The conflicts between the father and son are resolved by showing that they love and are strongly tied to each other. İskender is not "visible" neither to his father nor to the audience in Istanbul. This "invisibility" creates a comic effect between melodrama and comedy throughout the film. In fact, the film tells a certain problem about "seeing". Even though İskender and Maradona's show is named "Eye-to-Eye", no one at the club looks at them. Moreover, both of them are visually impaired; they do not have enough money to have laser operations and hence they have to use high-powered spectacles. Maradona tells İskender, "We cannot see". İskender's reply to this quip hints at the film's problem: "So, everyone can see us, but we cannot see them, eh?" A similar comment is made by the female protagonist, Fatma Nur Gaye Türksönmez, who says, "Are you dumb, are you gullible? Open your eyes!". In fact, the pleasure in looking is divided between active/male and passive/female in social gender representations in mainstream cinema (Mulvey, 1999, p. 837). Men are active, whereas women are passive objects to be acquired. The male protagonist, who is in possession of the gaze, can control things and have power since he has the power of the erotic look (Mulvey, 1999, p. 838). In terms of Mulvey's psychoanalytic film analysis, the visual impairment of a male protagonist is an indication that the male does not have the power of looking. Indeed, İskender is not the subject of the look. His visual impairment could be seen as a castration symbol if we consider the relationship between men being the active subjects of the look and having patriarchal power. In fact, İskender is accused both by his father and the female protagonist of being subordinate, gullible, and passive. His father

Sait is a warrior, a stern figure who can easily show his interest in women and hence have the main characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. As a father, Sait assumes the role of describing the norms of hegemonic masculinity to his son. When İskender does not obey these norms, he is disapproved of and despised by his father.

İskender chases after his childhood interests and never loses hope that he will make them a reality. The film starts with sequences that describe the relationship between Sait and İskender when the latter was a child in the 1970's. Those sequences help us realize that İskender has been deprived of a protective father. The main problem in the story thus concerns a man whose childhood was spent with a father who is stern and careless and had a tense relationship with his wife. Gürbilek argues that the protagonists in Turkish author Oğuz Atay's novels *Tutunamayanlar* and *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* had to grow up without living out their childhood and hence act childish as adults. Atay's protagonists are "inexperienced in life", and they do not have a "free pass" in life.<sup>6</sup> The childish behaviour of the characters in Atay's novels also defines the soul of Turkey. As Gürbilek (2004) argues, those two novels are set against the backdrop of the theme of an "underdeveloped" father who casts ridicule upon his children, a father who points to an ideal yet does not hold to it himself and hence also needs to be rescued. The son turns his father into a child-man and still finds a way to love his father in spite of his past suffering (2004, pp. 53-59). In the confrontation of the wills of Sait and İskender, the son is represented as imperfect and inadequate. In the film, the father points out his son's inadequacy, mischievous behaviour, and irresponsibility, while the son displays defeatism. In *Hokkabaz*, when İskender performs his show in a small town, he asks Maradona, "Isn't my father watching?". We don't see Sait but we understand where he is at the end of the performance when the bride vanishes. Sait observes Altan's predicament from a distance and applauds. In this way, İskender is unable to get any help or sympathy from his father. However, the son needs his father's approval to attain the completeness promised by hegemonic masculinity; in other words, the son requires his father's approval even when he is an adult in order to be "complete" in a way. The father and the cultural connotations he represents are thus a qualifying examination for the son.

The hegemonic masculinity in these scenes unfolds in such a way that the male protagonist (the son) does not have a competitive spirit or an aggressive personality. He is not in harmony with his father but he always

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<sup>6</sup> Gürbilek uses the word "paso", which literally means the free pass card for buses but has the slang meaning of "a relatively easy achievement".

seeks his approval. His personality brings together sensitivity and passivity. However, he places his close friend Maradona in a subordinate position in the terms used by Connell. After each quarrel with his father, he has a discussion with Maradona that relieves his anxiety and prevents him from feeling weak. Hence, as mentioned by Connell and Messerschmidt, even at times when we are distanced from the classic appearances of hegemonic masculinity, we should focus on forms that do not degrade patriarchy or create subordinate men. Ultimately, while the film seems to propose a model that would resolve gender roles, it erases the female protagonist from the narrative and creates a secure place of reconciliation for the father and son.

## 5.2. The Erasure of Women from the Narrative as a Source of Problems

All the problems in the film add up to a psychoanalytic positioning between the father and son using the contrasts between the countryside/Istanbul, the 1970s/2000s, and an illusionist/magician. The Oedipal scenario in this tense psychoanalytic father and son relationship is also worth noting. In this situation, as Fyre suggests regarding the relationship between the mother and the lover of the male protagonist, the mother and lover Fatma Nur Gaye switches places. Father and son become rivals for the same woman. Even though he is short and weak, İskender competes again with his authoritarian, repressive, and strict father. According to the Oedipal scenario, a happy ending would require that the son kill his father and fulfil the desire of marrying his mother. However, in the film the bride is erased from the scenario. Fatma Nur Gaye is a “thieving” bride who steals the gifts of gold at the wedding and runs away. Since the genre of comedy cannot rein in the free, rebellious personality of the woman, she is declared to be a crook and is sent away. The erasure of the bride thus echoes the hostile position of comedy regarding patriarchy.

As Mulvey (1999, p. 834) argues in her psychoanalytic film analysis, men regard the sexuality of women as a threat. This threat stems from the Freudian anxiety of castration. From this standpoint, the removal of women from a film can be seen as a way for the male to the threat of castration. However, the son does not get far from the existing structures of power. The film proposes a framework for women and the repressed son which could reconcile their rage against the power of their fathers, older brothers, and lovers with traditional values. It reinforces patriarchal codes which ask, “Look, what happens if you believe in a woman?”. While the mischievous behaviour of the woman and her rebellious personality are supported when she is depicted as an ideal bride, these characteristics are presented as being the signs of a crook at the end of the narrative.



Maradona (Tuna Orhan), Sait (Mazhar Alanson) Fatma Nur Gaye (Özlem Tekin) and Iskender (Cem Yılmaz) in *Hokkabaz*.

The roots of the funny, rebellious, troublemaking character Fatma Nur Gaye could be tracked back to Medieval times to the carnivals of early-modern Europe, and the vaudeville and musical tradition of early film comedies as described by King (2006: p. 131). This tradition of assertive and troublemaking/destructive women continues in popular comedies such as in Mae West or Whoopi Goldberg films. King (2006) and Rowe (1995) argue that these performances push the limits of the patriarchal system and deconstruct the dominant gender roles. Rowe (1995, p. 98) cites the examples of the popular comedies of the 1930's and 1940's such as *Bringing up Baby*, *The Lady Eve* (Preston Sturges, 1941) and *Ball of Fire* (Howard Hawks, 1941). In these films, rebellious women are depicted with an affirmative attitude, and they are sources of energy for boring and dull male characters. Films in post-WWII America demonstrated a digression in such depictions which went along with changes in the social and the cultural environment. Accordingly, the post-war era brought about a reconstruction of feminine roles in terms of the home and power: the rebellious and strong woman became a threatening and frightening figure. Towards the end of the 1980's and the beginning of the 1990's, the strong woman became a deranged figure in horror films and thrillers instead of a comforting figure in comedy narratives.

### 5.3. Fatma Nur Gaye as Femme Fatale

Fatma Nur Gaye has a strong, ambitious, dominant personality, and these traits make her a protagonist who provides the narrative with dramatic tension. This tension is about what happens to her in her life. She relates that she was forced to be a crook by a person who is introduced as her brother, and she adds that she does not want to do such things again but rather wants a fresh new life as an active subject. İskender, Maradona, and Sait try to get her

attention. Pictured as a mysterious and dangerous woman, Fatma Nur Gaye fits the *femme fatale* character in the film noir genre.<sup>7</sup> Mulvey's psychoanalytic analysis about the male gaze offers up some clues about how this genre can be misogynist. According to this feminist view, in the 1970's and since, the *femme fatale* figure is a representation of male desire and anxiety. This figure projects post-war male anxiety about changing and ambiguous gender roles (Grossman, 2009, p. 2). Another feminist view of film noir emphasizes the *femme fatale*'s unbridled female sexuality and female independence: "The dangerous women in film noir are lawless agents of female desire, rebelling against the patriarchal relegation of women to the domestic sphere where they are deemed passive and valued only in relation to their maternal and wifely vocation" (Grossman, 2009, p. 4). According to this view, *femme fatales* threaten to transgress patriarchy. In this way, a second group sees film noir as subversive in its representation of gender. Fatma Nur Gaye is differentiated from traditional representations of women in mass media with her active, exciting, and mysterious yet brave traits.<sup>8</sup>

Provincial life brings colour to the narrative. Life in the town of Engelli is depicted as joyous and amusing, and the source of this contentment is the small-town atmosphere because everyone knows each other and lives together like a big family. The conversations are presented in a humorous way using a local dialect. Even conflicts are resolved with a ridiculized approach driven by gullibility and warm-heartedness. İskender and Maradona stop in Engelli when they run away from İstanbul. A signpost which reads "Engelli - 400 meters" ridiculizes the name of the town.<sup>9</sup> Contrasts can be seen between the town and İstanbul; what differentiates provincial life from İstanbul is the innocence of the people. Yet, Fatma Nur Gaye changes this atmosphere.

Fatma Nur Gaye is the bride that İskender and Maradona meets during preparations for a wedding after which they will perform their illusionist show. She vanishes during the show and runs off with the gold gifts that were given at the wedding. İskender, who breaks the monotonous life of the province

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<sup>7</sup> The construction of the subjects could also be analysed through the names of the characters. The first name of the female character, Fatma, was probably her grandmother's name. Nur has an Islamic emphasis while Gaye provides a modern connotation. The surname *Türksönmez* has a nationalistic emphasis. Here, the symbolic meanings of the names are ridiculed, brought together as they are in a single name.

<sup>8</sup> Suner (2006) analysed the films *Masumiyet (Innocence, Zeki Demirkubuz, 1997)* and *Üçüncü Sayfa (The Third Page, Zeki Demirkubuz, 1999)* in the context of melodrama and film noir, drawing attention to mysterious/dangerous women's motives in these films.

<sup>9</sup> Engelli means "hurdle" in Turkish.

with his show, cannot explain the situation. Moreover, in an unfortunate coincidence, the grandmother of the groom dies. At that moment, İskender is met with disapproval by his father and is regarded as incompetent and inadequate: “I have been telling you for thirty years not to do this job... Blind scoundrels!”.

The film tells us that the power of the father and fantasy, including solidarity among men, should be reapproved. İskender, Maradona, and Sait leave the town of Engelli and their paths cross with Fatma Nur Gaye again. Fatma Nur Gaye says that her brother Aslan forced her into the marriage. İskender and Maradona compete for the woman, who establishes a close friendship with the father, Sait. However, Aslan finds İskender and Maradona and takes back the gifts of gold without telling them. The soft and humorous approach in the film narrative changes from this point onwards. Fatma Nur Gaye says that Aslan is in fact not her older brother but by using that ruse they steal the gold presents given at weddings. She adds that she feels remorse because they have been swindling people that way and that she will apologize to the people of the town and give the gifts back to them. Believing her, İskender and Maradona give them their money that they had saved up for an eye operation, and Sait also gives them his savings. However, the next day Fatma Nur Gaye runs away with the money, leaving a letter behind. The end includes an optimistic emotional state (accompanied with a melancholic smile) emerging from a male fantasy that reaffirms the patriarchal codes against women. As Neale states, “Women are a problem, a source of anxiety, of obsessive enquiry; men are not. Where women are investigated, men are tested. Masculinity, as an ideal, at least, is implicitly known. Femininity is, by contrast, a mystery” (1993, p. 19). In conclusion, even though İskender and Maradona do not demonstrate hegemonic behaviour, the narrative ends with the emotional atmosphere of reunification with the father.

## **6. Conclusion**

The representation of women in mainstream cinema is still a major issue worthy of discussion. From the era of the silent comedies to contemporary Hollywood films, this issue remains relevant, and the same holds true for Turkish cinema as well. This study argued that the film *Hokkabaz* reproduces the hegemony in gender. Firstly, it offered up a description of the characteristics of the comedy genre. Secondly, it explored the functioning of hegemonic masculinity in the narrative, which is based on a father and son relationship. Within this framework, *Hokkabaz* was examined with the textual analysis technique. The study offered up three main categorizations concerning the type of images that are presented as normal or collective regarding women,

with a focus on the conventions on the comedy genre. These are the portrayal of women as the sources of pressure and boredom, the integration of women into patriarchal values, and the sexualisation of women. In a similar manner, women are positioned in different periods of time in Turkish comedy cinema as sources of pressure and boredom, and also as the object of sexual desire.

In *Hokkabaz*, the female protagonist is depicted as an object of desire for the men in terms of the reconciliations discussed above. The Oedipal switch between the mother of the male protagonist and female protagonist turns the father and son into enemies. The female protagonist enters the plot as a focus of sexual interest and then she is erased as the source of a problem. Fatma Nur Gaye's mysterious past and her strong personality in provincial life make her a femme fatale. That strong figure, who revitalizes the male figures and their relationships, is then erased from the narrative as a figure of boredom and anxiety.

The influence of the father on his son and his son's best friend is an element of tension in the narrative. The tension between the father and son is brought about by the son's choice of profession and the relationship of the son with the female protagonist. The son is in a subordinate position in terms of the social gender hierarchy discussed in the literature on masculinity. When the son is humiliated by his father for his sensitivity and passive nature, he subsequently behaves in a competitive and pejorative manner with his close friend. In other words, the hegemonic position can be subject to change, especially when it comes to the relationship of men with the female protagonist.

The narrative, in which the mother of the male protagonist is missing and which suddenly removes the female protagonist from the plot, could be seen as a statement of submission to the authority of the father. Metaphoric representations in films indicate that men find resolutions for social and psychological crises via solidarity with men. This can be regarded as an indicator of the fears and paranoia associated with the cultural and psychoanalytic male identity.

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