

Politics of Motherhood and the Experience of
the Mothers of Peace in Turkey

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Thesis Abstract

Özlem Aslan, Politics of Motherhood and the Experience of the Mothers of Peace in Turkey

This thesis questions the limits of politics of motherhood in Turkey within the context of the Mothers of Peace. It focuses on the narratives of the women in the Mothers of Peace and the public discourses about motherhood in Turkey questioning the way motherhood became a contested space in the Turkish public sphere. By analyzing the narratives and the public discourses, it argues that appropriating a universal discourse like motherhood itself is not sufficient for gaining popular support for a peaceful solution for the Kurdish issue in Turkey and questions its reasons. By conceptualizing the experience of the Mothers of Peace within the framework of the interface between politics and motherhood, this thesis shows how motherhood becomes a tool of categorizing women -as proper and nonproper mothers- in the Turkish context rather than a universal bond among women. It is demonstrated that motherhood is identified by the Turkish public with the activity of raising proper Turkish subjects who are willing to sacrifice their lives for the unity of their nation and country. In a context where the Turkish state defines the Kurdish issue as a problem of terrorism and where motherhood is identified with bringing up “proper citizens” for the state, women who do not conform to this definition are excluded from the category of motherhood in Turkey.

Tez Özeti

Özlem Aslan, Türkiye’de Annelik Politikası ve Barış Anneleri Deneyimi

Bu tez Barış Anneleri bağlamında Türkiye’de annelik siyasetinin sınırlarını sorunsallaştırmaktadır. Barış Anneleri İnisiyatifi’nde yer alan kadınların anlatılarına ve annelik üzerine üretilen söylemlere odaklanılarak, Türkiye’de anneliğin nasıl bir mücadele alanı olarak kurulduğuna bakılmaktadır. Anlatılar ve söylemler incelenerek annelik gibi evrensel bir söyleme başvurma’nın Türkiye’de Kürt sorununun barışçıl çözümü için kamuoyu oluşturmaya yetmediği ileri sürülmekte ve bunun nedenleri sorgulanmaktadır. Barış Anneleri deneyimi siyaset ve annelik arasındaki ilişki bağlamında incelenerek, Türkiye bağlamında anneliğin kadınlar arasında evrensel bir bağ olmaktan çıkıp nasıl kadınları-hakiki ve sahte anneler olarak-sınıflandırmaya yarayan bir araç haline geldiği gösterilmektedir. Türkiye’de anneliğin vatanı ve milleti için kendini feda etmeye hazır çocuklar yetiştirmekle özdeşleştirildiği, bu tanıma uymayan annelerin ise annelik kategorisinden dışlandıkları öne sürülmektedir.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In Turkey, motherhood has been among the themes of various political organizations formed by women after the 1970s. Despite their different political agendas and historical contexts, these organizations showed a remarkable congruence of attitudes concerning the social and political identity of women as mothers. These conjunctural organizations of mothers have mostly grounded their movements on maternal qualities of caring, compassion and responsibility for the vulnerable. Women as mothers have consecutively been visible on the streets under the names of *Cuma Anneleri* (Friday Mothers), *Cumartesi Anneleri* (Saturday Mothers), *Bariş Anneleri* (Mothers of Peace) and *Şehit Anneleri* (Mothers of Martyrs). This thesis is about one of these groups, the Mothers of Peace.

The Mothers of Peace is an organization composed of Kurdish mothers who lost their children in the armed conflict between the PKK and the Turkish military between 1984 and 1999. The aim of the organization, which was established in 1996, was to gain support from the national and international public in order to force the Turkish state into opting for a peaceful solution of the Kurdish issue. The organization defined motherhood as universal, natural and beyond politics. The main idea was that in this way, Kurdish mothers would succeed in freeing themselves from being stamped as “political”, meaning being the pawns of the “terrorist organization” and of its separatist perspective. This was an attempt to build an alternative politics of concern for the losses caused by the armed conflict in Turkey. Their formulation

of motherhood as a non-political space was supposed to enable the communication of the pain felt by both Kurdish and Turkish mothers. Their activism consisted, therefore, in opposing the dominant belief that the ethnic divide renders pain incommensurable. The demand for being recognized as a neutral mother was a strategy in their case to encourage internal and external support for peace in Turkey. However, the Mothers of Peace cannot be said to have succeeded in bringing this about. They were marginalized by the Turkish public sphere. Not only is their claim concerning “the innocence of motherhood” rejected, but they are also blamed for being manipulated by the “terrorist organization”. Through the thesis, I will not only try to understand the factors that prompted the women in the Mothers of Peace to appear in the public spaces as mothers, but also question the effectivity of politics as such. Hence, the main questions this thesis purports to answer are: How can we think of gender in the context of the Kurdish issue in Turkey? What does it mean to be a Kurd and a woman with respect to the Kurdish resistance movement and Turkish nationalism? How did claims to motherhood become a contested space in Turkey? How can the pain deriving from a loss be something incommunicable despite the identity of motherhood? And what are the consequences of these questions for the limits of politics of motherhood?

These questions are prompted by feminist attempts to approach motherhood as a basis for peace activism. Having recast maternal thinking as a distinctive way of political reasoning and practice, Sara Ruddick argues that:

Maternal practice responds to the historical reality of a biological child in a particular social world. The agents of maternal practice, acting in response to the demands of their children, acquire a conceptual scheme—a vocabulary and logic of connections—through which they order and express the facts and values of their practice. In judgments and self-reflection, they refine and concretize this scheme. Intellectual activities are distinguishable, but not separable from disciplines of feeling. There is a unity of reflection, judgment, and

emotion. It is this unity I call "maternal thinking." (...)It is important that maternal thinking is no more interest governed, no more emotional, no more relative to its particular reality (the growing child) than the thinking that arises from scientific, religious or any other practice.¹

Ruddick does not propose maternal thinking as something innate. Rather, she argues that particular ways of seeing and thinking arise from the experience and the practices that women engage in through their caring activity. Ruddick's argument is appropriated by the Mothers of Peace, as well as many other mothers' groups around the world. In this study, my approach to motherhood is similar to the one espoused by Nancy Scheper Hughes who refuses to accept any easy distinction between motherhood and politics. As Hughes, I take motherhood "as social and as fluid a category as fatherhood."² This thesis does not ask whether politics lies behind claims to motherhood or whether motherhood is beyond politics. Rather, it looks at the dynamics through which certain constructions and representations of motherhood are labeled as possessing the original innocence of motherhood while others are labeled as tools of politics.

Drawing on the case of the experience of the Mothers of Peace, this thesis considers how motherhood is used and represented in the Turkish public sphere by different actors. It will be argued that, rather than being a neutral and universal identity, motherhood is constructed with a strict orientation in Turkey, implying the act of rearing Turkish national subjects. This is such that appealing to motherhood to gain support ceases to generate political empathy and solidarity for mothers who do not conform to the republican norms. Appearance of the Mothers of Peace and

¹ Sara Ruddick, "Maternal Thinking," *Feminist Studies* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1980), pp. 348.

² Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. "Maternal Thinking and the Politics of War." In *The Women and War Reader*, edited by L. A. Lorentzen and J. Turpin (New York: New York University Press, 1998), pp. 233.

circulation of the Kurdish women's narratives in the Turkish public sphere as signs of a distinct identity burdened with an experience of violence, loss and state terror disturb the official discourse on the Kurdish issue by raising questions about the presumed justice of the sovereign. This position of radical questioning results in the denial of the motherhood of the Kurdish mothers by the Turkish public sphere. This situation can not be explained without considering the Turkish state's approach to the Kurdish issue. Although the Kurdish identity is recently recognized by the Turkish state as a requirement of the European Union integration process, the responsibility of the Turkish state regarding the armed conflict and the human rights violations following it is still not recognized. In such a context, Kurdish mothers as the mothers of PKK militants are not regarded as respectable by the Turkish public, since they try to unmask the violence of the sovereign power regarding the Kurdish issue and do not negate the agency of their children.³

I argue that to explain the Kurdish mothers' political activism as a manipulation is a way of denying the political consciousness and agency of these women. I suggest that the image of the manipulated Kurdish woman is another reflection of the official story in which the "Kurdish Question" is an ethno-political question and rearticulates it through the discourses of "political reaction, tribal resistance or regional backwardness"⁴. I argue that this approach obscures the intersection of race and gender within the process of the formation of subjectivities regarding the Kurdish women in the Mothers of Peace. The very experiences of being a Kurd in a society in which sovereignty is constructed upon the identity of

³ Turkish state recognizes the pain of the Kurdish mothers as long as they define their children as the victims of the "terrorist organization" rather than conscious subjects who rise against the violations of the state.

⁴ Mesut Yeğen, "The Kurdish Question in Turkish State Discourse," *Journal of Contemporary History* 34, no. 4 (October 1999), pp. 568.

Turkishness, and the experience of being a woman in a patriarchal society are concurrently incorporated into the construction of the subjectivities of the women who take part in the Mothers of Peace.

Trying to understand the construction of the subjectivity of Kurdish women is thus very significant in terms of revealing the meanings incorporated within the local configuration of the conflict and of tracing down the processes that reshape women's identities in Turkey. In studies on the Kurdish issue, there is an absence of the voice of the witnesses. I believe that my interviews with the women engaged in the Mothers of Peace will provide clues that are largely lacking with respect to how Kurdish mothers/women have experienced the war between the Kurdish guerilla and the Turkish state. As a result, this is an attempt to break with the narratives that have excluded women and Kurdish identity from their records and to question the hegemonic political discourse in Turkey which constructs the Kurdish issue as a problem of terrorism.

Field and Methodology

Narratives are the primary sources in this study to understand how women construct their sense of self and relate and negotiate this self to different interlocutors.

According to Charlotte Linde a life story is a site where an individual makes a point about her/himself rather than about what the world is.⁵ Life stories as narratives are significant tools that help explain the ways individuals construct an understanding of who they are and what they are becoming and how they view the world. Referring to Barthes, Hayden White also stresses narrativisation as a universal way of translating the "knowing into telling" which blends human experience with meaning.

⁵ Charlotte Linde, *Life Stories*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp.7.

This suggests that far from being one code among many that a culture may utilize for endowing experience with meaning, narrative is a meta-code, a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted. Arising, as Barthes says, between our experience of the world and our efforts to describe that experience in language, narrative “ceaselessly substitutes meaning for the straightforward copy of the events recounted.” And it would follow that the absence of narrative capacity or a refusal of narrative indicates an absence or refusal of meaning itself.⁶

Narratives by the women I interviewed are intended to explain and legitimize the transformation that they underwent from an ordinary woman to a political activist. The stories ended when the women became a part of the Mothers of Peace organization. In that sense, each narrative also carried the political intent of publicizing the reason for this transformation. The narratives were thus significant both in understanding the construction of the Kurdish mother as a subversive figure against the official discourse and the way women developed their agency with their attempt to transmit their cause to different interlocutors through their narratives.

During my fieldwork, I collected life-story narratives from seven Kurdish women working actively in the Initiative of Mothers’ of Peace. Most of the women I conducted interviews with experienced the loss of their relatives as a result of the armed conflict in southeastern Turkey. Through their narratives, it was explicit that they experienced pain deriving from that loss, accompanied by a serious trauma. The personal reason pushing them to organize into an initiative was to handle this pain. Among my informants, A lost five of her six children in the conflict, M lost all of her four children, S lived with the fear of the possibility that her two sons come up against each other, because one of them was in the army and the other was a guerilla simultaneously, and yet she has not been able to hear from her son who joined the

⁶ Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse & Historical Representation*, (Baltimore: JHU Press, 1987), pp.1.

guerilla ten years ago. N., who is the youngest among the mothers, lost her husband at the age of 26. P. is wondering about her daughter who recently joined the PKK. L. is sorry for her son who is a life sentence prisoner. N. lost one of her daughters.

Due to the fact that I attempt to give meaning to the ways the Kurdish mothers give meaning to their experiences, this thesis is not about the “reality” of the events, but about how events are situated within the narratives and are given different meanings. Following Joan Scott’s approach, I will try to look at the experiences of women by examining the mechanisms through which particular subjectivities are configured, rather than taking experience as something self-evident.⁷ So the central point becomes the narration and its ability to inform us about *experience*, rather than about the empirical ‘reality’, because it is the mothers’ version of the reality that matters for their positioning and acting in a social world. What I tried to understand is not what the Kurdish mother is, but how a woman’s account of her experience of Kurdishness and motherhood is constructed and practiced and how different accounts become different means of reaching different addressees. As Hall points out:

...the past is not waiting for us back there to recoup our identities against. It is always retold, rediscovered, reinvented. It has to be narrativized [...] it is not possible to use oral histories and testimonies, as if they are just literally, the truth. They have also to be read. They are also stories, positionings, and narratives.⁸

My experience in the field and the process of writing was not a comfortable one actually. There has been always a tension between me as the interlocutor and the women about the limits of what they were willing to tell. As an outsider, I was not allowed to learn about the “inner” problems regarding the organization. I was a “fellow” and “suspect” at the same time for very valid reasons. Through my

⁷ Scott, Joan. “Experience.” In *Feminists Theorize the Political*, edited by Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 37.

⁸ Hall, Stuart. “Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities.” In *Culture, Globalization, and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, edited by Anthony D. King (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp 58

encounters with the women, this unequal relationship between us, which derives from the “editorial power” I possess, rendered my trustworthiness for the narrators essential. What I mean by editorial power is “ordering the material according to *my* own sense of priorities, framing the chapters and determining the questions”⁹.

Although I did not interfere with how they narrated their stories, the tension deriving from the asymmetric editorial relation still haunted us during our meetings. This was because of the fact that the attempt to fix the meaning of the narratives would be made by me -as the researcher- in the last instance of the writing.

What made this tension endurable for the women was their intent to bring the violations they faced to the attention of a wider community through my mediation. The mothers narrated the general social, political, economic crises Kurdish women and families faced as a result of the armed conflict since the 1980s and talked about their consequent transformation into activists on behalf of their community. In foregrounding this collective stance, each of the speakers seemed concerned to inform me that her life story was interchangeable with any other story of her people, that her experiences and choices were only (and barely) particular, but not unique. In that sense, in the mothers’ narratives “the narrative voice has a metonymic function that is a latent aspect of its narrative convention by which each individual testimony evokes an absent polyphony of other voices, lives, and experiences.”¹⁰ I was simultaneously constituted as a witness to “Kurdish women’s experiences”, as a mediator between the Kurdish and Turkish communities, as an audience/interlocutor who should be persuaded that their cause is just and as a “suspect” about whom more information should be received for security concerns.

⁹ Marc Zimmerman, “Testimonio in Guatemala: Payeras, Rigoberta, and Beyond,” *Latin American Perspectives* 18, no. 4 (Autumn 1991), pp. 31.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Asking questions was a way to get more information about me to measure my trustability. The need to trust was related to the need to feel secure. It is the sense of insecurity that prompted the women in the organization to ask questions to me and it is the sense of insecurity which showed itself as uneasiness on our faces. Coming from a life that is dominated by violent interactions with the state forces, they were wondering about the reasons lying behind the interest held by this middle-class Turkish girl in front of them. They wanted to be sure that I was a trustable person for two reasons. First, they were going to reveal their ideas about the state which is still a dangerous attempt in Turkey. Second, I would be the one who was going to write about their story, which made my credibility more critical for them. They wanted to be sure that their story would not be misrepresented.

The sense of insecurity I experienced derived from different reasons from the women in the organization. First, I was nervous as a researcher with academic concerns. As a researcher, my concern was about the course of the interview and particularly about whether the questions in my mind and their expectations of this meeting would overlap or not. I was also nervous as a middle-class young woman because I was entering a new space which is not one of those “secure” places I know. Security here refers to one’s immunity from state violence. I was beyond my own area of security. The women’s houses and the building hosting the organization might well be spied upon by police officers keeping a record of the people going in. The women were under the constant threat of police raids any time, raids which could result in arrests. The insecurity I felt in the houses of the women was also significant, since home is socially constructed as a place where one is supposed to feel protected from threats coming from other spheres of life. Although as a feminist, I know that the idea of a home being immune from violence is an illusion

considering domestic violence against women, the experience of being under the threat of the sovereign in your home is related, yet also different from the domestic violence women are subject to.

In that sense, home is the absence of home which is dominated by the sense of uneasiness and insecurity. Referring to Jean Franco's analysis on Latin America, Linda Green names places like home, church, and family "sanctuary spaces" that are considered to have immunity from violence. Green points out how these so called sanctuary places shifted meanings during the counter-insurgency and became vulnerable to violence. These places stopped offering any protection to those living in the margins of the state. Borrowing the term from Franco, Green names this process of shifting boundaries as "deterritorialization". She argues that this immunity was destroyed during the time of counterinsurgency in Guatemala by the military forces:

Jean Franco (1985) notes that attacks on civilian populations as part of counterinsurgency deployment also represent a war over meaning. She argues that assaults by repressive states in Latin America on priests, nuns, women, and children are not only violations against individuals but also transgression on "sanctuary spaces". The spatial and symbolic boundaries of home, church, and family that offer some immunity from violence are ruptured through acts of state terror, their meaning resignified insofar as they no longer offer protection from repression. Their erstwhile meaning subtly shifts a shift that Franco, borrowing from Deleuze and Guatarri (1977), calls the process of "deterritorialization."¹¹

This fact that home is vulnerable to violence breaks with the usual imaginary of home as a secure place. This makes one think about the disingenuousness of the middle class sense of security. This security conceals the insecurity others live by dismissing them as exceptions. Levinas explains the "criminal" nature of our existential spaces as such:

¹¹ Linda Green, *Fear As a Way of Life*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 9

My being-in-the –world or my “place in the sun”, my being at home, have these not also been the usurpation of spaces belonging to the other man whom I have already oppressed or starved, or driven out into a third world; are they not acts of repulsing, excluding, exiling, stripping, killing? Pascal’s “my place in the sun” marks the beginning of the image of the usurpation of the whole earth.¹²

This call for responsibility constitutes the Kurdish mother as a signifier of the violence of societal power in the context of Turkey. This mission that I was called to carry out burdened me in the process of writing, since writing was not only a production of knowledge for me but an issue of solidarity. Thus, the process of writing made me better understand the women’s concerns about trustworthiness. Writing for me was the displacement. I was displaced from the “dialogical” context of our meetings with the women. During the writing process, I was alone with the words they spoke out and the literature that would help me interpret these words. What made the writing so difficult for me was the strength of the original texts in depicting “what happened”. In that context, rather than a thematic analysis of the texts concentrating on “what they say”, approaching the texts as narratives constructed in the context of my presence as the interlocutor helped me to preserve the “dialogical” context of the narration process and to understand the functioning of the texts in constructing the subjectivities of both the narrator and the interlocutor. I thus decided to look at how the narrative worked rather than its content. Rather than addressing the question of what really happened, I decided to look at how the women constructed it.

The call for responsibility interpellates subjects to become witnesses of the injustice that this signifier makes visible. However, in Turkey, instead of questioning

¹² Levinas, Emmanuel. “Ethics as First Philosophy.” In *The Levinas Reader*, edited by Sean Hand (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), pp. 81-82, quoted in D.G. Myers, “Responsible for Every Single Pain: Holocaust Literature and the Ethics of Interpretation,” *Comparative Literature* 51, no. 4. (Autumn, 1999), pp. 272.

the responsibility of the sovereign identity-embodied in both the institutions and the individuals- vis-à-vis the violence experienced by the bodies accommodating these unhomely homes, Turkish nationalism immediately dismisses these places as exceptions and the subjects occupying these spaces as abject. In that sense, the identification of home and security is reproduced by the exclusion of these exceptional homes from the category of home.

This distinction between homes and non-homes also works in differentiating mothers from non-mothers, i.e., the residents of the unhomely places. The sacredness of the motherhood is constituted through service done to Turkish nationalism. When Kurdish mothers “failed” to perform this service and appeared in the public sphere opposing this role, they were immediately excluded from the notion of motherhood. This act of exclusion keeps the assumptions on motherhood fixed, while deciding who is involved in this definition and who is excluded from this definition. Understanding this process of exclusion is significant for the discussion about the limits of politics of motherhood concerning the Mothers of Peace in Turkey. Focusing on the public discourses concerning the PKK militants and “the martyrs” relating them to the question of proper motherhood, I will try to analyze the ways the notion of proper motherhood is constructed through the exclusion of the Kurdish militants’ mothers and in so doing demonstrate the way motherhood is constructed as a contested space in the Turkish public. Tracing the ways the Mothers of Peace are excluded from the notion of proper motherhood also renders nationalized construction of Turkish motherhood visible. In that context, the case of Mothers of Peace functions as a “space off” of the representation of motherhood in Turkey. Teresa de Lauretis defines “space off” as:

...those other spaces both discursive and social that exist, since feminist practices have (re)constructed them, in the margin (or

'between the lines', or 'against the grain') of hegemonic discourses and in the interstices of institutions, in counter-practices and new forms of community. These two kinds of spaces are neither in opposition to one another nor strung along a chain of signification, but they coexist concurrently and in contradiction.¹³

According to de Lauretis, inhabiting “the space off” is a refusal to be represented by existing discursive systems. Kurdish mothers both maintain their proximity to the discourse of motherhood by calling themselves mothers while remaining at the margin as they are the reproducers of different historical subjects that are assumed to be different from Turkish subjects. It is because they occupy the space off of the discourse about Turkish motherhood that their appearance in the public sphere locates them as the others of the Turkish motherhood. Thus, understanding the process of exclusion of the Kurdish mothers from the notion of motherhood also becomes a tool for understanding the nationalized construction of Turkish motherhood.

The chapters in this thesis are parts of an attempt to reflect upon the possibility and impossibility of a politics of motherhood that hopes to bring together subjects who are currently in a position of conflict by proposing pain as a basis of communication. In the first chapter, I will first provide a historical outline of the Kurdish issue in Turkey and of the emergence of the Kurdish women, particularly the Mothers of Peace, as political figures in the public sphere. In the second chapter, I am going to analyze the women’s narratives, aiming to how the Kurdish mother as a “peacemaker” is constructed as a subject position. And in the third chapter, I will look at texts and newspaper articles relating parenthood with PKK militancy that are

¹³ Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*, (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987), pp. 26.

circulating in the public sphere in Turkey, to analyze show how the Kurdish mothers are positioned within Turkish public sphere, and reveal the conditions under which they are included in and excluded from it.

CHAPTER II

THE KURDISH ISSUE IN TURKEY AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE KURDISH MOTHERS AS POLITICAL ACTIVISTS

In the introduction, I stated that when Kurdish mothers appeared in the public sphere opposing the official ideology, their honesty as mothers are questioned and they are blamed as the pawns of the “terrorist organization”. This kind of marginalization of the Kurdish mothers in Turkey invites a questioning of the limits of politics of motherhood as a resistance strategy. I argued that motherhood is always associated with the nation state politics in the Turkish public sphere and it has never been an identity that directly provides women with legitimacy for their acts. However, the processes through which certain performances of motherhood gain respect while others are marginalized are significant for this thesis in terms of broader questions of politics and motherhood.

The Kurdish mothers’ appearance in the public sphere and the reactions they faced must be analyzed within the context of the historical process and the dynamics that shaped the Kurdish question in Turkey. Two main discussions are at issue here. First, it is because the imagination of the Turkish nation as a collective entity presupposed a dominant identity, which is constructed through repression, denial and assimilation of the Kurds as well as other ethnic identities and cultures in Turkey, the Kurdish issue is politicized. Kurdish women’s appearance as political actors of the Kurdish movement is directly related to this process of politicization. Second, the Turkish state still refuses to recognize its responsibility in the rise of the armed

conflict and in the subsequent human rights violations and defines Kurdish issue as an issue of terrorism and this renders the Kurdish mothers' voices even more marginal in the Turkish public sphere. In this part, I will first outline the way the Turkish nation is imagined at the expense of the different cultures existing in the territory. Second, I will try to give a historical account of Kurdish resistance movements since the foundation of the Republic. Third, I will present an overview of the attempts to solve the Kurdish issue within the space of legal politics. Finally, I will outline the dynamics of the context from the late '90s on within which the Mothers of Peace appeared.

On Nation Building

In this thesis, I espouse Benedict Anderson's view that a nation is an "imagined community"¹⁴. Defining nations as "imagined communities", Anderson defines nationalism as a process in the course of which a shared experience is created through an extended community. Modern Turkey emerged out of the Ottoman Empire, which ruled over three continents. The founding elite of the Republican Turkey were composed of the young military and civilian officers of the Ottoman administration who had strong centralist tendencies. As a result of this centralist tendency, the elite presented the national project as a closed reform package determining every detail of the new social and political organization in the country.

Feroz Ahmad also describes the creation of a shared experience in Turkey as an operation of the founding elite which was to "set in motion to create a new Turkey and a new Turk".¹⁵ Underlying this concept of national identity was the attempt to

¹⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1983), pp. 95.

¹⁵ Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 3.

create, after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, a nationally and culturally homogenous, unified state on the territory of the Turkish Republic with the help of a new integrating ideology of Turkish nationalism.

The Lausanne Treaty also served as the basis upon which a legal understanding of Turkishness was to be developed. According to this understanding, every Muslim living in the territory of the new Turkish Republic was accepted as a Turk. The motto of the founders of the Republic was *Ne mutlu Türküm diyene* (Happy is he/she who calls himself/herself a Turk). Although this motto is still presented as if Turkishness were not defined on the basis of ethnic origin but instead on an implied civic attachment to the state, it was a sign of exclusion of differences for the non-Turkish citizens of the Republic.

The official ideology requires not just control over the territory, but , it also requires control of the people. As a result, population becomes the site where the affirmation of the indivisibility of nation and state will be accomplished. As Ahmet İnsel observes, the nationalization process is the creation of an official ideology in Turkey which acts as a holistic ideology in the sense that it defines norms that are supposed to determine the various practices of the state and individuals.¹⁶ The practices of the state aiming to construct and protect this unity can be traced through the laws that limit the representation of the difference in the Turkish public. Even today, Article 3¹⁷ of the Turkish Constitution asserts the unity of state, nation and territory. The Article 5 of the Association Law clearly demonstrates how the

¹⁶ Ahmet İnsel, "Türkiye'de Resmi İdeoloji Yapımcı ve Bütüncüdür," *Birikim*, no. 105–106, (January-February, 1998), pp. 20–23.

¹⁷ The Article 3 of the Turkish Constitution is as follows: *Türkiye devleti, ülkesi ve milletiyle bölünmez bir bütündür. Dili Türkçedir* (The Turkish State, with its territory and nation, is an indivisible entity. Its language is Turkish). This article is forbidden to be changed. For a full discussion of these points see TÜSİAD report written by Zafer Üskül, *Türk Demokrasisi'nde 130 Yıl* (Istanbul: TUSİAD, 2006), pp. 201.

differences are repressed and denied through limiting the everyday practices of the citizens for the very sake of the unity of the nation and state. It forbids to found an association for the purpose of:

putting forward the proposition that there are minorities within the Turkish Republic based on differences of class, race, language, religion or region, or creating minorities by protecting, promoting or spreading languages or cultures separate from the Turkish Language and culture, or making people from any region or race or class or any religion or sect dominant over or privileged above others.¹⁸

Political expression of “differences of class, race, language, religion” has been forbidden by the article above. This confirms that the Turkish state perceives articulation of cultural difference as a threat to cultural and national unity.

The representation of Kurdishness in the public sphere has also been perceived as a threat to the national unity. The visibility of Kurdishness has challenged the dominant Turkish national narrative, revealing that the imagined community of the Turks was neither homogenous nor unified. As a result, the Kurdish identity and its various political and cultural manifestations were suppressed through various ways. By the late 1930s, the Kurdish language, Kurdish dress, Kurdish folklore and Kurdish names had been banned. Non-Turkish names of villages, towns, mountains, hills and rivers have also been changed since 1949.¹⁹ According to the population law of 1977, citizens were not permitted to give non-Turkish names to their children, which also prevented Kurdish people from giving

¹⁸ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti ülkesi üzerinde ırk, din, mezhep, kültür veya dil farklılığına dayanarak azınlıklar bulunduğunu ileri sürmek veya Türk dilinden veya kültüründen ayrı dil ve kültürleri korumak, geliştirmek veya yaymak suretiyle azınlık yaratmak (...) amacıyla dernek kurmak yasaktır. For a full discussion of these points see Baskın, Oran. *Türkiye’de Azınlıklar: Kavramlar, Lozan, İç Mevzuat, İçtihat, Uygulama* (İstanbul: Tesev Yayınları, 2004), pp.81.

¹⁹ This law was still operational until 2006. For a full discussion of these points see Üskül, pp. 198.

traditional names to their children officially.²⁰ Until 2001, the constitution also banned publications in Kurdish language.²¹ The constitution still bans the teaching of the Kurdish language in schools.²²

According to the official story, Kurds are of Turkish origin, but “they have culturally and linguistically degenerated and now speak gibberish comprised of Persian, Arabic, and Turkish and incapable of expressing sophisticated thought.”²³ While the Turkish state long denied the existence of Kurds as such, individuals of Kurdish origin were able to participate in Turkish political life. They served as members of parliament, cabinet ministers, mayors and as state prosecutors.²⁴ Yet, Kurds were able to reach high office in Turkey only by leaving their Kurdish identity in the private sphere. In other words, they were welcomed to be assimilated unless they demanded recognition: “As members of the Turkish nation, the Kurds have equal rights in all aspects; however, the right to care for and develop their ethnicity, culture and language is not included in the understanding of equality.”²⁵

However, neither the politicization nor the visibility of Kurdish identity has been tolerated by the state.²⁶ Until the last ten or fifteen years, even the existence of

²⁰ The same law banned non-Turkish surnames since 1934. For a full discussion of these points see *ibid.*

²¹ For a full discussion of these points see *ibid.*, pp. 199.

²² Only in 2003 was the law changed to permit private courses to be opened to teach Kurdish. For a full discussion of these points see *ibid.*, 201.

²³ Martin Van Bruinessen, “The Kurds in Turkey,” *MERIP Reports*, No. 121 (February 1984), pp. 6.

²⁴ There are many prominent politicians in Turkey who are in fact of Kurdish origin. In addition to Turgut Özal, former Prime Minister and President, these include Hikmet Çetin, a former Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister and Kamran İnan, a former cabinet minister. For a full discussion of these points see Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth M. Winrow, *The Kurdish question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-State Ethnic Conflict* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), pp. 144-147.

²⁵ Gürbey, Gülistan. “The Development of Kurdish Nationalism Movement in Turkey since 1980s.” In *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in the 1990s*, edited by Robert Olson (Lexington, Ky.: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996), pp. 27.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Kurds as an ethnic group was not admitted by the state and they were referred to as the “Mountain Turks”²⁷. Mesut Yeğen’s critique of the Turkish state’s discourse unmasks the way the Turkish state ignored the “Kurdishness” of the Kurdish issue.

Yeğen argues that:

despite denying the existence of the Kurds, the Turkish state nevertheless had to ‘think’, ‘speak’, and ‘speculate’ on the Kurdish question. Hence many texts were produced regarding the Kurdish question. However, distinguishing characteristic of these texts was a deep ‘silence’ on the Kurdishness of the Kurdish question. Whenever the Kurdish question mentioned in TSD [Turkish State Discourse], it was mentioned as an issue of political reaction, tribal resistance or regional backwardness, but never as an ethno-political question. In TSD, the Kurdish resisters were not Kurds with an ethno-political cause, but simply Kurdish tribes, Kurdish bandits, Kurdish sheikhs-all the evils of Turkey’s pre-modern past.²⁸

Resisting Kurds

The Kemalist policy of the nation state and its attempts to merge all ethnic minorities in Turkey into one homogenous nation led to serious resistance through several Kurdish uprisings. Between 1925 and 1940, there were over twenty Kurdish uprisings²⁹ in the Kurdish regions of southeastern Turkey, which were violently suppressed by the Turkish military. The main ones can be listed as the Sheikh Said Revolt in 1925³⁰, the Dersim Revolt in 1930, and the Mount Ararat Revolt in 1936-

²⁷ Anna Secor, ““There Is an Istanbul That Belongs to Me”: Citizenship, Space, and Identity in the City,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94, no. 2, (June 2004), pp. 355.

²⁸ Yeğen, pp. 555.

²⁹ Hamit Bozarslan, “Some Remarks on Kurdish Historiographical Discourse in Turkey (1919-1980)”. In *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism* edited by Abbas Vali (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2003), pp.14.

³⁰ After 1925, the leading families and tribes involved in the rebellion were forced to leave their motherland and settle in the western part of Anatolia by the Turkish state. See Yeğen, pp.561.

38. The nationalist character of these revolts has been controversial for a long time. All these uprisings were evaluated as reactions of “traditional, reactionary and irrational order of past”³¹ by the official discourse, although many writers noted the nationalist characteristic of these mobilizations. This controversy showed itself mostly in the discussion as to whether the Sheikh Said rebellion was a nationalist or a religious movement.³² Although the degree of nationalist sentiments varied in these rebellions, the common point among all of them was that they were acts of resistance to the imposed “national” identity of Turkishness and the modernization that accompanied it. However, official discourse “reconstitutes” these rebellions as the resistance of pre-modernity to modernity and the resistance of tribal relations to the nation. According to Mesut Yeğen, this reconstitution was grounded on the “discourse of westernization and modernization assisted by the discourse of centralization”.³³

With the introduction of the 1961 Constitution, the Kurdish struggle for recognition took a new turn. The freedoms and protections granted by the new constitution opened the way to leftist activism among the Turks and the Kurds. Initially, there was solidarity between these two in their fight against capitalism and

³¹ Ibid., pp. 566.

³² Martin van Bruinessen was one of these scholars who argued that the nationalist components of Sheikh Said rebellion cannot be ignored. However, according to Bruinessen it was “neither a purely religious nor a purely nationalist one...The primary aims of both Sheikh Said nor the Azadi (nationalist) leaders were the establishment of an independent Kurdistan. The motivation of the rank and file was equally mixed, but for them the religious factor may have predominated” For a full discussion of these points see Maarten van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: On the Social and Political Organization of Kurdistan*. Published Ph. D. Dissertation (Utrecht: Ryksuniversiteit, 1978), pp. 404-5, quoted in “The Kurdish Rebellions of Sheikh Said (1925), Mt. Ararat (1930), and Dersim (1937-8): Their Impact on the Development of the Turkish Air Force and on Kurdish and Turkish Nationalism,” *Die Welt des Islams* 40, no.1. (March 2000), pp. 67-94. On the other hand, Robert Olson suggests that the nationalist component of the movement stood in the forefront of the mobilizations. For a full discussion of these points see Robert Olson, “The Kurdish Rebellions of Sheikh Said (1925), Mt. Ararat (1930), and Dersim (1937-8): Their Impact on the Development of the Turkish Air Force and on Kurdish and Turkish Nationalism,” *Die Welt des Islams* 40, no.1. (March 2000), pp. 67-94.

³³ Yeğen, pp. 563.

imperialism. A main demand on the agenda of the leftist Kurds was the socioeconomic restructuring of eastern and southeastern Anatolia to eliminate tribal social structures and hierarchies. In the late 1960s, the Kurdish issue was defined by both leftists and the state as a problem of underdevelopment. *Türkiye İşçi Partisi-TİP* (Turkish Workers' Party) was the first legal party to discuss the Kurdish problem as an ethnic problem at its party congress in 1970. Here is how Martin van Bruinessen accounts for the main branches of the Kurdish movement in the 1960s :

An important part of the Kurdish movement in Turkey emerged within Turkey's socialist movement of the 1960s, and its emergence was possible because the number of Kurds studying at universities in Istanbul and Ankara had been increasing. There was also a relatively small but devoted circle of nationalist intellectuals who remained outside the left movement and who were generally more concerned with Kurdish history and culture and with national oppression than with the analysis of economic oppression and exploitation from a Kemalist or Marxist point of view. A number of short-lived cultural and political journals were published (and, in most cases, immediately banned): *İleri Yurt* (1958), *Dicle-Fırat* (1962-63), *Deng* (1963), *Roja Newê* (1963), *Yeni Akış* (1966). Inspired by the Kurdish movement in Iraq, where Mulla Mustafa Barzani and the KDP were leading a successful guerrilla struggle against the central government, young members of the Kurdish traditional elite founded in 1965 the clandestine Kurdistan Democratic Party in Turkey (KDP-T).³⁴

1967 was also significant in terms of the emergence of Kurdish identity politics. In this year the nationalist and the left wing of the Kurdish movement organized the *Doğu Mitingleri* (Rallies of the East). It was a series of mass rallies in Kurdish towns aiming to raise a voice against cultural oppression and economic backwardness. *Doğu Devrimci Kültür Ocakları* (Revolutionary Cultural Societies of the East) was the organization involving both groups. It addressed questions of cultural oppression, economic backwardness and targeted "American imperialism and its local

³⁴ Van Bruinessen, Martin. *Ismail Beşikçi: Turkish Sociologist, Critic of Kemalism, and Kurdologist* Available [online]: http://www.let.uu.nl/~martin.vanbruinessen/personal/publications/ismail_besikci.htm#_ftn1 [1 September 2007]

collaborators, the large landholders and capitalists”³⁵. It had branches in Ankara, İstanbul, Diyarbakır and other Kurdish towns.

However, with the coup on March 12, 1971, TİP and DDKO were banned, their leaders were tried and sentenced. Martin van Bruinessen notes that after the coup both the left and the Kurdish movement reemerged, “but”, he says

...both were fractionalized, and the Turkish left no longer openly supported Kurdish demands. The Kurdish movement radicalized, its aims came to include national self-determination besides cultural and economic demands. By the late seventies, several Kurdish organizations were to proclaim the armed liberation struggle.³⁶

Since the 1980s, Kurdish nationalism has posed a direct challenge to Turkish nationalism’s claim of the homogenous sovereign nation. And among these, the last and most crucial embodiment of the Kurdish Question was the armed insurgency of the PKK, the Kurdish acronym for the Kurdistan Workers’ Party. The PKK was created in 1974 on the campus of Ankara University. The PKK’s emergence in the public sphere coincided with the martial law that preceded the 1980 military coup. During the repression of the 1980s, hundreds of people were captured and imprisoned and experienced systematic torture. Chris Kutschera tells the prison conditions in this manner:

The few journalists who managed to attend trials in Diyarbakır wrote that prisoners were sometimes brought to court in metal cages loaded on trucks, hardly able to walk or stand. Prison conditions were so harsh that prisoners staged prolonged hunger strikes that lasted more than a month at a time, or in more than a few cases, committed suicide.³⁷

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Chris Kutschera, “Mad Dreams of Independence: The Kurds of Turkey and the PKK”, *Middle East Report*, no.189 (July-August 1994), pp.12-15

The violent treatment of Kurdish nationalists during the 1980 coup triggered a long lasting armed conflict between the PKK guerillas and the Turkish state military. It is known that in the following years the PKK gained popular support from the predominantly Kurdish region. The Turkish state steadily increased its military presence in the provinces under emergency rule. In order to root out the PKK, the Turkish state used extensive counter-insurgency methods, which also targeted the civilian population.³⁸

The PKK was established under the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan as a Marxist-Leninist political party, advocating the creation of a Marxist-Leninist Kurdish state. The PKK, like other left-wing Kurdish organizations, viewed the tribal nature of Kurdish society as the main target of revolutionary struggle. Yet, the policies of the military and subsequently of democratically-elected governments helped to enhance “Kurdish national consciousness more than the propaganda work of the PKK”.³⁹ In 1984, the PKK launched an armed uprising against the Turkish state with the goal to establish an independent Kurdistan. The state responded by imposing *olağanüstü hal* (emergency rule) in 1987, which empowered regional governors and village guards and suspended the civil rights of citizens in predominantly Kurdish populated provinces. The Emergency Law exempted official authorities, such as governors, military and police forces from juridical scrutiny and responsibility. This led to the spread of social and political violence which resulted in lootings, kidnappings, assassinations and murders committed by those identified with the state—the gendarmeries, the army, the political police, the intelligence service,

³⁸Human Rights Watch, *Displaced and Disregarded*, vol.14, no. 7(D), October 2002.

³⁹ Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth M. Winrow, *The Kurdish question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-State Ethnic Conflict* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), pp. 144-147.

anti-terror units, village guards—as well as by PKK militants. Covered by the stipulations of the Emergency Law, no state perpetrators were investigated and held judicially responsible for such acts of violence. The atrocities were overlooked within the vicious circle of, the “law-making” and/or “law-preserving” violence of the sovereign, to borrow Benjamin’s terms.⁴⁰

In 1991, the Anti-Terror Law (Terörle Mücadele Kanunu) was introduced. Terrorism was defined as acts involving “repression, violence and force, or the threat to use force, by one or several persons belonging to an organization with the aim of changing the characteristics of the Turkish Republic including its political, legal, social, secular and economic system”.⁴¹ Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law banned any propaganda written and verbal, demonstrations, or other acts which threatened the unity of Turkey, regardless of methods, intentions, and ideas behind such activities.

The violent armed conflict between the Turkish armed forces and the PKK in southeastern Turkey left more than 30,000 dead. State security forces evacuated more than 2250 villages suspected of helping the PKK or supporting Kurdish separatism.⁴² This involved the relocation of about two million people to large cities for security reasons⁴³. The system was also supported by the village guard system of thousands of civilian, pro-government Kurds to supplement the state’s control in the region.⁴⁴ The International Institute for Strategic Studies suggests that the normal

⁴⁰ Benjamin, Walter. “Critique of Violence.” In *Reflections*, edited by P. Demetz (New York : Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978).

⁴¹ Kirişçi and Winrow, pp. 128-129.

⁴² Kirişçi and Winrow, pp. 128-129.

⁴³ Doğu Ergil, “The Kurdish Question in Turkey,” *Journal of Democracy* 11, no. 3 , (July 2000), pp. 128.

⁴⁴ According to Aliza Marcus Turkish security forces had made a classification of “good” villages from “bad” taking into consideration the villagers choices about joining the village guard system. She notes that if villagers did not agree to join the village guard they immediately become the suspected

number of the troop deployments in the area was 90,000 until 1994. This number reached the level of 160,000 by June 1994. By the end of 1994, there were 300,000 security forces deployed in eastern and southeastern Turkey taking into account also the number of police, village guards and special forces. Until 1999, 30,000 people lost their lives during the fight between the Turkish armed forces and the PKK.

Attempts to Develop Political Solutions to the Kurdish Issue

The first change in Turkish policy toward the Kurds occurred during the era of Turgut Özal (1983-93).⁴⁵ This era was generally characterized by a policy of structural change with economic and political modernization and a gradual forcing out of the traditionally dominant and established elite from the bureaucracy and military in favor of the functional elite, predominantly from business circles.⁴⁶ The legalization of the Kurdish language through the abolition of the law prohibiting other languages on 12 April 1991 can be listed as one of the important steps taken towards a new orientation in the Kurdish issue. Within this context of liberalization, the attitude changed towards Kurdish citizens in Turkey. This can be regarded as an illusory relaxation of the relations between the Turkish state and Kurdish citizens; it is an illusory relaxation considering that the “the temptation of neutralizing the

subject. a full discussion of these points see Aliza Marcus, “City in the War Zone,” *Middle East Report*, no. 189, (July-August 1994), pp.16-19.

⁴⁵ Bozarslan, Hamit. “Political Crisis and the Kurdish Issue in Turkey” In *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement In the 1990s*, edited by Robert Olson, (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), pp.135.

⁴⁶ Gürbey, Gülistan .“The Development of Kurdish Nationalism Movement in Turkey since 1980s.” In *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement In the 1990s*, edited by Robert Olson, (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), pp.27.

armed forces by containing them in a civil war and by offering any required financial means has been a strategy that Özal used until 1990.”⁴⁷

On 21 November 1991, the coalition government of Social-Democratic People’s Party (SHP) and the True Path Party (DYP) came to power by making promising declarations of their intention. However, this government has refused to recognize Kurds as an ethnic minority even though they declared that they wanted to recognize the “Kurdish reality”. As a result, their recognition of “Kurdish reality” did not go beyond a mentioning of the Kurdish identity, as they rejected to do anything on the issue in terms of the protection of minority rights. Referring to the provisions of the constitution, their main argument was that all Turkish citizens have equal rights and responsibilities under the law. Regional or cultural autonomy was not viewed as a solution as the indivisible nature of the national unity was not an issue open to debate. Moreover, institutionalization of the rights of minorities would lead to a division of the Turkish Republic in their opinion.

The People’s Labor Party (HEP) was founded by seven SHP representatives who were expelled because of statements made during a conference on the Kurdish issue in Paris in October 1989. In the 1991 elections, HEP made an agreement with SHP to include HEP candidates on the SHP party roster. As a result, at the end of the elections, members of HEP were voted into parliament in October 1991. The first reactions came during the swearing in of the Parliament, when two HEP parliamentarians added remarks in Kurdish at the end of their oath. The HEP parliamentarians were accused of “separatist propaganda”. As a result of these reactions, HEP was banned by the Constitutional Court for “separatist activities”. In May 1993, the former HEP parliamentarians founded the Democracy Party (DEP).

⁴⁷ Bozarslan, pp.135.

DEP focused its criticism on government policies that employed only a military solution to the Kurdish issue. Both the government and a significant portion of the press and media called DEP an “extended arm of the PKK.”⁴⁸ In March 1994, the Turkish Parliament abolished the parliamentary immunity of six DEP parliamentarians who were accused of “separatist activities”. On 25 February 1994, DEP withdrew from the local election, due to increasing intimidation and the murder of several DEP politicians. The abolition of the DEP parliamentarians’ immunity have been called the civilian coup of 2 March 1994.

On 16 June 1994, DEP was banned by the Constitutional Court; the DEP parliamentarians’ mandates were repealed. The Constitutional Court justified the ban with the claim that DEP developed “separatist activities and propaganda against the indivisible unity of the Parliament” on the ground of Article 125 of the Turkish criminal code, which carried the death penalty. However, in early December 1994, because of fear of consequences that would affect the international reputation of Turkey, eight members of Parliament were sentenced to imprisonment.

By the end of the 1990s, however, there were two important developments that marked a transition in terms of the state’s attitude towards the “Kurdish Question”: the capture of the PKK’s leader – Abdullah Öcalan and the acceleration of the negotiations between the European Union and Turkey concerning Turkey’s integration in the European Union were the main determinants of the political context in these years. Doğu Ergil argues that 1999 introduced a new phase in the Kurdish issue in Turkey. According to Ergil, Öcalan’s statements in the court emphasizing the brotherhood of Turks and Kurds, the unilateral ceasefire declared by

⁴⁸ Gürbey, pp.27.

the PKK and the recognition of Turkey's candidacy for membership for the European Union marked a turning point in terms of democratization in Turkey.

The Helsinki Summit in December 1999 was one of the most critical incidents that shaped the conjuncture. This summit introduced Turkey as a candidate for membership in the European Union. After the summit, government officials really believed that Turkey could become a future member of the European Union. This motivation prompted the officials to take the main step necessary for the process of integration. This step was the implementation and the application of the Copenhagen criteria which imposed serious demands for Turkey to bring about ambitious changes in terms of its human rights policy.

In this context, the EU membership was certainly the leading incentive behind the constitutional amendments and legal reforms. These reforms broke certain taboos particularly those concerning the role of the military in public politics and the Kurdish rights, and consequently opened new debates within the socio-political environment of Turkey. Political discourse thus began to change in the late 1990s. The Turkish Parliament recognized the cultural rights of the Kurds. The Parliament passed a series of reform packages known as "harmonization laws" in 2002 to meet the EU guidelines (the Copenhagen criteria), lifting the ban on Kurdish-language broadcasting and publishing and allowing Kurdish-language education. In fact, the state television channel TRT aired its first Kurdish language news. Thus, the Turkish state recognized the linguistic and cultural difference of the Kurds. In June 2004, Leyla Zana and three other former Kurdish members of Parliament were released from prison.

Examining state policy on the internal displacement problem, Deniz Yüksek and Bilgin Ayata argue that the official policy also shifted in these years

“from denying this phenomenon and ignoring its consequences to an ambiguous policy of regulation”.⁴⁹ However, this change in the perception of the Kurdish issue did not entail recognition of the state’s responsibility in the rise of the armed conflict and the human rights violations coming after that. Yüksek and Ayata stress that the Turkish state still defines the issue as a problem of terrorism, refusing any responsibility in the present situation. I argue that this insistence of the state on defining the Kurdish issue as a problem of terrorism and the fact that the armed conflict did not end are two main reasons of the marginalization of any voice claiming the state’s responsibility in the Kurdish issue in Turkey. In the next discussion, I will concentrate on exploring the appearance of the Mothers of Peace in the public sphere and the terms they make politics appropriating an emotive discourse of motherhood. I will first give a brief overview of the emergence of a Kurdish women’s movement and then focus on the activities of the Mothers of Peace.-

Kurdish Mothers

By the 1990s, Kurdish women began to appear as public figures voicing their own discontent about the issue. Their appearance in the streets and other public arenas was a kind of response to repressive policies of the Turkish state against the Kurdish people.⁵⁰ The late 1990s also marked the transition of the Kurdish movement’s strategy from “the war of manoeuvre” to a “war of positions” in Gramscian sense.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Deniz Yüksek, Bilgin Ayata, “A Belated Awakening: National and International Responses to the Internal Displacement of Kurds in Turkey,” *New Perspective on Turkey*, no. 32. (Spring 2005), pp. 6.

⁵⁰ Yeşim Arat, “From Emancipation to Liberation: The Changing Role of Women in Turkey’s Public Realm,” *Journal of International Affairs* 54, no.1.(Fall 2000), pp 107-127.

⁵¹ Gramsci makes a strategic distinction between a “war of position” and a “war of manoeuvre”. According to this distinction, the war of position is a culture war in which oppositionary movements struggle for gaining a dominance through media, organizations, and educational institutions against the systemic powers. The war of movement on the other hand engaging in the frontal attack against

This transition in the politics of the PKK can also be noticed in the ceasefire it declared in 1999. Abandoning the project of separation, a struggle in civil society is adopted by the movement with the slogan of *iktidar için değil özgürlük için mücadele* (struggle for freedom not for power). This new mode of struggle involves the discourses of ecological democratic society, democracy, human rights and women's rights.⁵²

Shahrazad Mojab considers these years as a turning point in terms of the women's existence within the Kurdish movement. According to her, the increasing violence women and their relatives faced and the Kurdish movement's change of agenda in terms of women's participation in the movement were the major factors that enabled Kurdish women to enter the public sphere. She also argues that there is a change in Kurdish women's involvement in the movement which is "visible from a marginal non-presence to a more active involvement in the conduct of war and politics."⁵³ Kurdish women have participated in the national movement in diverse ways as mothers, fighters, activists, and as politicians gathering around the pro-Kurdish associations, parties and journals namely *Roza*, *Jujîn*, *Jin û Jiyan* and *Yaşamda Özgür Kadın*.⁵⁴

In terms of the Kurdish women's movement, the 1990s symbolize the peak point of its organizing power and the period in which women appear in public spaces in large numbers. Handan Çağlayan links this development to the change in the discourse of the Kurdish movement on gender relations. One of the many virtues of Handan Çağlayan's work is that it offers an alternative to conceiving the Kurdish

the system. For a full discussion of these points see Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. Q. Hoare, and G. Nowell Smith. (New York: International Publishers, 1971)

⁵² Handan Çağlayan, *Analar, Yoldaşlar, Tanrıçalar*, (İstanbul: İletişim 2007)

⁵³ Shahrazad Mojab, "Vengeance and Violence: Kurdish Women Recount the War," *Canadian Woman Studie* 19, no.4, (Winter 2000), pp.89.

⁵⁴ Çağlayan, pp. 57.

women's political activism through the binary terms of dependence or independence vis-à-vis the male dominated political structures of the Kurdish movement. Looking at the experience of Kurdish women in politics through the 1980s and 1990s, she wishes to call our attention to a more complex involvement of Kurdish women in the Kurdish movement. According to her, during the 1990s Kurdish women emphasized women's significance in the freedom movement and started to question patriarchy in the constitution of masculinity and femininity. She adds that these ideas were circulated through channels such as Öcalan's book *Erkeği Öldürmek* (Killing Masculinity). There Öcalan exposed his ideas about sahte *erkeklik* (fake masculinity). Other such channels were training programs within the party on topics like women's emancipation and the deconstruction of masculinity, and the broadcasting on Med TV and Roj TV which air programs that touch upon issues of gender equality. This context is both a significant determinant for and a result of the appearance of Kurdish women in public spaces as political activists, according to Handan Çağlayan.

Mothers of the guerillas were one of the most visible figures among the Kurdish women in terms of their activism. They came together and established an organization under the name of the "Mothers of Peace" in 1996. The initial aim of the organization was to generate public support for a peaceful solution of the armed conflict between the Kurdish militants and the Turkish state. Although the prospect for this kind of organization was developed earlier, until 1999 there had not been a remarkable activism of the women in the public sphere. The politics of the Mothers of Peace can be described in three ways: developing a solidarity network between the Kurdish mothers, voicing their demands to the outsiders through press releases and

demonstrations, and creating different networks with different oppositional groups in the Turkish public sphere.

The members of the organization consisted mostly of women who lost their children in the war between the Turkish military and Kurdish militants. They were mostly housewives. All of the women I talked to learned Turkish in their adolescence but spoke Kurdish as their mother tongue. However, the Mothers of Peace was not the first experience with active politics for many of the women I talked to. They had participated in the activities of GÖÇ-DER, Başak Kültür, and HADEP. Among these HADEP was the most prominent one in terms of providing a site for the collectivization and politicization of the Kurdish identity. Nazan Üstündağ describes the significance of HADEP as such:

...HADEP played a key role in the lives of Kurdish women and had an enormous influence in shaping the narratives of Kurdish women's pasts... For both HADEP and GÖÇDER, similar to other Kurdish organizations, the figure of the displaced migrants and wronged Kurdish woman as witness to ethnic violation is crucial. The displaced Kurdish women in other words are sites of memory of state violence, of loss and of domination for both HADEP and GÖÇDER. It is through intensive documentation, extensive collecting of testimonies of displacement, arrangement of international meetings and cultural events that HADEP and GÖÇDER organize the narratives of different Kurdish women into a single narrative of ethnic suffering⁵⁵

In that context, coming from a background of identity politics, the political rhetoric of the women is highly similar to the rhetoric of the Kurdish movement. The demands that shaped their agenda were improving the imprisonment conditions of Abdullah Öcalan, ending military operations, obtaining the right to education and publication in the mother tongue, providing a suitable environment for freedom of expression, obtaining a bilateral ceasefire, abolishing the village guard system, indemnity for burnt villages, the trial of war criminals, those officials who

⁵⁵Zülal Nazan Üstündağ, *Belonging to the Modern: Women's Suffering and Subjectivities in Urban Turkey* (Ph.d diss., Indiana University, 2005), p. 268.

perpetrated such acts as murder, sexual harassment, infringement, investigation of murders with unidentified perpetrators and amnesty for political convicts and guerillas in the mountains.

However, the originality of the Mother's of Peace derived from its transformation of the language of ethnic suffering to a language of maternal suffering. The organization explains the war through a gendered perspective in two senses. First as it is stated in the founding proclamation, they emphasize the particular impact of wars on women like sexual harassment, rape and loss of relatives and identify women as the most vulnerable victims of war. Second, they define war as something related to masculinity, while identifying femininity with life-giving and life-preserving.⁵⁶ Through these distinctions, they sharply separate the victims from the perpetrators of the war and diagnose women as its main victims. However, women are also seen as the main constitutive actors of peace. Through this division between the perpetrators and the victims of the war, women are interpellated as "victim-mothers" and are called to take action against their victimization.

Their target is the state as the repressive authority which did not give their rights to Kurds and caused the war to start, thus depriving the Kurdish people of an alternative. By doing this, they attempt to reverse the discourse of terrorism against the state. Their strategy of action is to speak against the discourse of terrorism which is used by the official ideology to explain the Kurdish issue. The organization is constituted to reclaim the motherhood of Kurdish women, since in the Turkish public they are constructed as abject mothers. They oppose the representation of their children as "bare lives" who are conceived as killable for the Turkish official ideology.

⁵⁶ This representation disregards the experience of the militant women fighting against the state forces for years.

Public Displays

Visibility is the criteria of existence of the Mothers of Peace as it aims to change public opinion about the war by displaying the violations of the state to the ordinary citizens in Turkey. Visibility is the way to open the path to new ways of approaching the Kurdish issue which does not ignore the suppressed stories of injury and victimhood regarding “the Kurdish people”.

In 1999, the first activity of the Mothers of Peace was a march from Diyarbakır to Ankara, the capital city of Turkey. Their slogans were “*Geride kalanlar aşkına*” (For the Sake of Survivors), “*Biz anayız barıştan yanayız*” (We are mothers, We are for peace) . The aim of the march was going from the city where “the pain is most strongly experienced to the city where the source of the pain is”. 40 women started their journey by bus and went to Ankara, the capital city of Turkey, to see the president, the prime minister and all the other ministers of Turkey, to convey their desires for peace. However, their march was stopped by security guards at the entrance to Ankara for security reasons.

The demonstrations of the Mothers of Peace have generally taken place in front of the Galatasaray High School. Ceasefire in the short term and a consolidation of a permanent peace in the long term were the major demands of these demonstrations. The format of the demonstrations changed from sit-down strikes to press releases.

One of the activities of Mothers of Peace, most widely noted by the mainstream media, was their visit to Hilmi Özkök in Ankara. Özkök was the General Chief of Staff in 2004. Although they were not permitted to see Hilmi Özkök, 120

mothers from Istanbul, Diyarbakır, Batman, Şanlıurfa, Kızıltepe, Siirt, Nusaybin and Gaziantep left a white scarf, white flowers and a CD to officials who promised that all of these would be conveyed to Hilmi Özkök.⁵⁷ This visit was published in the most popular newspapers of Turkey such as *Milliyet*.⁵⁸

Participating in *Newroz*⁵⁹ and March 8th⁶⁰ demonstrations appear as a “space of reclaiming” not only the Kurdish identity and the possibility of living together with different identities, but also the agency of women as political subjects. *Halay*⁶¹ and *zılgıt*⁶² are the essential parts of these public demonstrations. *Halay* functions as a reinforcement and affirmation of solidarity through the community participating in the demonstrations and provides visibility to the Kurdish identity through the particular dance figures belonging to Kurdish culture and Kurdish songs accompanying it. *Zılgıt* is a kind of high toned voice extracted from the beating of the tongue to the root of the mouth. It symbolizes revolt, grief, affirmation of identity in the demonstrations. News about their activities mostly finds a place in

⁵⁷ Although high ranked politicians usually do not admit to meet with the representatives of the mothers of peace, some of them send greeting messages to the organization for special dates such as *Ramazan Bayramı*, *Kurban Bayramı* and for mother’s day. According to *Barış*, in 2000 65 deputies sent cards to the mothers in 2000. Among these deputies are: Tunca Toskay (Government Minister), Yıldırım Akbulut (Parliament Speaker), Ayhan Çevik (MHP Van Deputy), Nazlı Ilıcak (Fazilet Party İstanbul Deputy), Hayri Kozakçıoğlu (DYP İstanbul Deputy), Eyüp Aşık (ANAP Trabzon Deputy), Celal Adan (DYP İstanbul Deputy)

⁵⁸ Available [online]: <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2004/12/31/guncel/agun.html> [1 September 2007].

⁵⁹ Newroz refers to the celebration of the spring equinox which falls mainly on 21st March. The Newroz has an important place in the terms of the visibility of the Kurdish identity in the urban spaces. In Turkey in the last decay through the activities of Newroz masses are mobilized in cities like İstanbul, Mersin and Diyarbakır. Kurdish music and dances are performed and political speeches are made during these organizations. Kurdish women wear coloured clothes and flags of green, yellow and red, the colours of the Kurdish people are waved.

⁶⁰ The International Women’s Day. Mass meetings have been held in İstanbul since 1996 by the women’s organizations.

⁶¹ It is a popular dance in the Middle East played within a circle or a line. Dancers hold each other with the fingers, shoulders or hands.

⁶² It is a loud sound made with the tongue. It currently became a symbol in demonstrations, marches of the Kurdish movement.

oppositional newspapers like *Özgür Gündem*, *Evrensel*, *Atılım*, or websites like www.savaskarsitlari.org, www.bianet.org. The organization also published the periodical *Barış* (Peace) consisting of short articles discussing war and peace in Turkey, and the strategies of the mothers of peace. The journal also functions as a historical document recording the activities of the mothers. Different people write in each issue. They were mostly Turkish and Kurdish intellectuals such as Sevim Belli, Pınar Selek, Evrim Alataş and Cezmi Ersöz writing on the issues of a politics of peace. It was published in Turkish.

By appearing in the public spaces, Kurdish women want their voices to be heard. Recognition in their case is a very significant demand, because the Turkish state and the Turkish public in a very general way do not consider these women as mothers to be listened to, and respected. I will further elaborate on this in Chapter III. The Mothers are viewed as pawns of the PKK which is accepted as a “terrorist organization” by most people in the Turkish public and the Turkish state.

Networking

Herbst agrees with scholars who study social movements that the establishment of an alternative discursive public space is a prerequisite for the development of any social movement initiated by those who are marginal. Networking also promotes dialogue and creates a parallel public space within which critical opinions, which are otherwise excluded and marginalized by the dominant discourse, can be expressed and publicized.

...such networking is strategically important, for it connects local movements that face isolation and limits of scale with other social movements that have been gaining broader power. Networking independent movements and collective is a process of gradually

constructing an alternative sphere within which the marginal can enact their own political agenda. Networking cultivates a new collective identity and fosters a sense of community without which those who are marginalized can have very little sense of their own political efficacy.⁶³

Formations of networks may play significant roles in establishing new counterpublics. Networking functions in establishing both local and global links. Progress in communication technology helps social movements to get in touch with each other and build solidarity networks. The contact between different groups helps the circulation of news about groups worldwide which popularize the agenda of these groups and increase support for it. Women's platforms and the relations with the European Union officials and groups from abroad can be considered among these significant networks which enable the continuity of Mothers of Peace.

Women in Black⁶⁴'s campaign for the release of Müyesser Güneş, a member of the Mothers of Peace was a significant example for the solidarity among the women's groups on a global level. Müyesser Güneş was arrested because she had participated in a demonstration protesting the Turkish state for its insistence on the military solution of the Kurdish issue. Below is the petition of the Women in Black demanding the release of Müyesser Güneş declaring her as a prominent peace activist.

Freedom for Müyesser Güneş, Freedom for peace

Nearly a month has passed since the arrest of Müyesser Güneş of the Istanbul group of Mothers for Peace and of 57 other people during a peaceful demonstration in Derik calling for an end to military actions against the Kurdish population of Turkey. Imprisoning Müyesser Güneş

⁶³ Chuengsatiansup, Komatra. "Marginality, Suffering, and Community." In *Remaking a World*, edited by Veena Das et. al. (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 67.

⁶⁴ Women in Black is an international peace network. It started in Israel in 1988 by women protesting against Israel's Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Women in Black has developed in countries such as Italy, Spain, Germany, England, Azerbaijan, Colombia, and in FR Yugoslavia..

means putting peace in chains. On May 5th, 58 citizens will be put on trial, accused of contempt of public officials for having participated in a demonstration without authorization. We call on the Turkish government to set Müyesser Güneş and all the other others at liberty; we call on the government in Ankara, on the Turkish institutions, and on all citizens of Turkey to unchain peace. The path of arms will never be the path to peace for anyone in any part of the world.

Women in Black

Please, send this communication to the Turkish Embassy in your country.⁶⁵

In that sense, networking appears as a significant part of the organization in the case of the Mothers of Peace. They visit civil society organizations, human rights activists, bar associations, trade unions, universities, televisions, radios, journalists, intellectuals, writers, artists, deputies, mayors, political party leaders, conveying their desire and need for peace.

The Mothers of Peace established relations with women's organizations in Turkey and from other countries. They are part of the Kurdish women's platform *Demokratik Özgür Kadın Hareketi* (Democratic and Free Movement of Women) composed of Kurdish women activists from different organizations where Kurdish women discuss and evaluate the problems regarding their activism in terms of their relationship with men in the organizations they work in, their relations with other women's groups coming from different cultural backgrounds and their organizational processes and the ways and strategies to incorporate more women into the organizations.

Also the organization is still part of the women's platforms in Diyarbakır, Van and Istanbul where they have offices. Being part of the women's platforms,

⁶⁵ Available [online]: http://snellings.telenet.be/womeninblackleuven/muyeser_gunes_english.htm#WiBLEuven_demands [1 September 2007].

defining itself as a women's organization, the Mothers of Peace is a part of the women's movement in Turkey trying to draw public attention to issues like honor killings and gender inequality in general. These platforms are significant stages where women encounter and debate with other women and organize collective action to change the existing political conditions. In 2003, the Mothers of Peace was among the women's organizations that demanded the corpse of Şemse Allak, a victim of an honor killing in Diyarbakır and to bury her with a proper funeral.

The Mothers of Peace were also members of the Women's Platform Against War which was composed of seventeen women's organizations in Istanbul in 2003⁶⁶. The agenda of the platform was the ongoing war and rising militarism in everyday life in Turkey.

In June of 2002, the Mothers of Peace was invited to Europe by the members of the European Parliament. One of the members went to visit and contact with the civil society organizations in Europe and met members of European parliaments. For the parliamentarians and activists especially from the European Union, the organization appeared to be an address for the officials coming from the European Union. The visit of Italian parliamentarians Sylvia Pisa, Elettra Deiamo and activist women from the organization of Women in Black to the Mothers of Peace in 2003 are significant events in terms of showing how the Mothers of Peace have become the vehicle for the outsider (both non-Kurdish people in Turkey, and the international community) to understand the conditions of Kurds living in Turkey in those years.

⁶⁶ These organizations were Amargi (A Women's Cooperative), *Barış Anneleri* (The Mothers of Peace), The Women's Table of Human Rights Association, *Cemre* (A Women's Journal), Women's Culture Center of Dicle, *Emekçi Kadınlar Birliği* (Worker Women's Association), *Feminist Kadın Çevresi* (Feminist Women Circle), HADEP Kadın Kolları (Women Branches of HADEP), *Halkevlerinden Kadınlar* (Women from People's House), *Jiyan Kürt Kadın Kültür ve Sanat Merkezi* (Jiyan Kurdish Women's Culture and Art Center), *Kadınlarla Dayanışma Vakfı* (Foundation for Solidarity among Women), *MKM'li Kadınlar* (Women from Mesopotamia Culture Center), *Yeni Demokrat Kadın* (New Democratic Women), *GÖÇDER'li kadınlar* (Women from GÖÇDER))

In that sense, the Mothers of Peace have been among the significant actors that drew international attention to the Kurdish issue. They offered an alternative vision to the official version of the war and placed themselves as active subjects directly challenging state violence. The significance of the Mothers of Peace for the international community was also confirmed when Müyesser Güneş⁶⁷, a member of the Mothers of Peace in Istanbul, was chosen as a candidate with 999 other women for the Nobel Prize for Peace within the action ‘1000 women for peace’.⁶⁸

To sum up, Turkish state denied the existence of the Kurdish identity for a long time and used repressive measures in order to suppress the visibility of the Kurdish identity. The upheaval of the PKK and the popular support it gained can not be thought apart from these policies. By the 1980s, Kurdish women appeared in the public sphere voicing protests against the armed conflict. The Mothers of Peace was the most visible one among the Kurdish women’s organizations. The Mothers of Peace appropriated the discourse that defines motherhood as a sacred and neutral identity and reclaimed their motherhood. They defended the “unquestionable”

⁶⁷ Available [online]:
http://www.ucansupurge.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2158&Itemid=78 [1 September 2007]

⁶⁸In its website the campaign is described like that: “Since 1901, 80 men, 20 organizations and 11 women have received the Nobel Peace Prize. The Project 1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize 2005 intends to make visible grassroots women's effort to counter injustice, discrimination, oppression, and violence. By undertaking the nomination of 1000 peace women, we can also provide reflections on Nobel Peace Prize, which conventionally dominated by male politics, and the concept of peace at large. The Project is initiated by Swisspeace in Switzerland and led by the Swiss parliamentarian Dr. Ruth-Gaby Vermont-Mangold. The idea came to her while she was visiting developing countries, such as Armenia, Bosnia and Kosovo, in her capacity as a member of the Council of Europe. She saw women working in refugee camps, that were involved in peace work with children, other women, men and soldiers. She was impressed by these women and their work, but she was aware that the Nobel Peace Prize is very often awarded to men. The aim of the Project - partly financed by the Swiss Foreign Ministry and supported by the Swiss Peace Foundation - is to increase international awareness of the fact that peace is more than treaties, ceasefires and handshakes between heads of state. . For a full discussion of these points see [online]: “<http://www.1000peacewomen-hk.org/introduction.htm>” [1 September 2007].

authenticity of a mother's grief as motherhood is a respectable identity in the Turkish public sphere. Through this identity, they tried to challenge the discourse of terrorism which constructed their children as bodies without stories and faces.⁶⁹ However, in Chapter III, I will explain how Turkish nationalism constituted motherhood as an activity of raising proper citizens for the Republic. It offered women a certain legitimacy and authority in a society that values mothers almost to the exclusion of all other women. According to this understanding, women as mothers of the nation are sacred and should be respected as long as they bring up proper citizens to the Republic.

⁶⁹ The number of killed militants appears as statistical data concerning "terrorists" eliminated for the sake of the unity of the nation. As militants are not considered as human beings, their mothers are not considered as mothers also.

CHAPTER III

THE MOTHERS OF PEACE AS A COUNTERPUBLIC

In the case of the Mothers of Peace, motherhood is proposed as a neutral identity that can be a channel to convey the truth regarding the Kurdish issue in Turkey.

Accordingly, a mother is a neutral witness who can distinguish the perpetrator from the victim. Through this discourse of neutrality, women construct themselves as witnesses who can create a just outcome by speaking. Speaking in the form of storytelling is the central means that women use to engage in politics. Through storytelling, they make their story public, gain visibility and agency by transforming each other into activist Kurdish mothers and aim to transform interlocutors into advocates of the Kurdish people.

Storytelling in the form of sharing stories of loss within the Mothers of Peace functions in two ways. On the one hand, it is the way internal organization is achieved since it is through the intersubjective construction of the stories that women appropriate the collective identity of the “Kurdish mother”. On the other hand, it functions as a way to approach others outside the organization. In both cases, it is the central mechanism through which politics is engendered in the context of the Mothers of Peace.

I start my exploration of the politics of Mothers of Peace by describing the interactive space of the organization. This space is significant for understanding the context in which part of our meetings were held, the narratives were transmitted and the way the members of the organization related to each other and to the outsider.

Then, I analyze the narratives through which the women give meaning to their lives and construct their political agency. This effort to understand the women's symbolic world through their narratives helps to reveal how the Kurdish mother as a "peacemaker" is constructed as a subject position.

The Space of Engagement, or the Spatial Area of Activist Practice

The main office of the Mothers of Peace is in Aksaray. In Istanbul, offices of oppositional organizations are normally in Taksim. However, in the case of the Mothers of Peace, Aksaray was chosen in order to make the transportation easier for the women who are living in the nearby districts like Bağcılar or Esenyurt. "Barış Dergisi" is what is written on the door, since the women carry out legal procedures under this name.

The apartment is divided into a hall where members spend most of their time talking and discussing with each other and receiving guests, a room furnished like an office with a computer, telephone, fax machine and one photocopier, all necessary devices for communication both with the outside world and with members, a kitchen for cooking, a meeting room and a bathroom.

The hall is near the entrance to the apartment. It is the locus of daily activities of socializing and watching TV. The hall is designed like a living room of an ordinary household of a middle or lower middle class family in Turkey including a sofa set, a television set, a glass cabinet, a table with chairs. In that sense, the hall functions as a space to display the political affiliation of the women working in an organization for peace. There is a flag of the Women in Black on the table as the table cloth; *pace* (peace) is written on it pointing to the transnational links constituted

with the social movements in other countries. Next to the table, there are shelves which carry the awards given to the Mothers of Peace.

At the other corner of the room, there is the television set with the sofa set. The television is on unless there are meetings or a visitor is hosted. Usually, TV channels broadcasting in Kurdish are watched. Watching these channels also appears as a way of relating to the outsider. Questions like “Do you know Kurdish?”, “Do you want me to translate it for you?”, “Do you know where this place is-probably it is somewhere in Northern Iraq, another place in the Middle East, or southeastern Turkey?--” are the ways to start these kinds of conversations. The television and Kurdish broadcasting channels become vehicles of manifesting the difference and an opportunity to talk about Kurdish identity and the Kurdish people in these everyday encounters. Needless to say, television is a significant vehicle of self-imagination of Kurdishness for the women in the organization.

There are books instead of the tea-set and pots and pans in a household but lacework lies on shelves with little knick-knacks. The images of a sorrowful mother reminding one of the destruction of the war and pigeons symbolizing peace are on the walls, mostly given as gifts to the members of the organization. Cooking and cleaning are accomplished in rotation. Everyday one of the mothers is held responsible for the opening and closing of the office. Cleanliness is important as the place is open to guests during the daytime.

Responsibilities accompanying the organizational structure are the issues mostly discussed within the routine of the organization alongside their repetitive acts of sharing the stories of loss and strategies and action plans regarding the conjuncture. Controversies among women are mostly visible during the discussion of these issues. In that context, what differentiates this hall from the living room of an

ordinary household is its constitution as a public space for women to discuss issues relating to the organization.

According to Fraser, members of subordinated social groups tend to constitute alternative publics which she names “subaltern counterpublics” as “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, and needs.”⁷⁰ She argues that these groups possess an awareness of their subordinate status, which will supposedly encourage them to engage in collective action. According to her, such counterpublics have two main characteristics: “On the one hand, they function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment; on the other hand, they also function as bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics”⁷¹. Pnina Werbner also conceptualizes the public sphere as a realm that will enable a redefinition of citizenship. From her point of view, the public sphere is a space which enables a ground for the marginalized and excluded to claim their rights and to gain visibility. She argues that “to affect the redefinition of citizenship, non-citizens must first move into the public sphere. Indeed they have often to redefine what that public sphere is and its very limits.”⁷²

In the case of the Mothers of Peace, the space enabled through the apartment serves as a meeting place for the Kurdish women. Kurdish women who are marginalized were invited to tell their stories within this space. Individuals narrated their suffering, named their own histories and claimed the collective force to resist

⁷⁰ Fraser, Nancy. “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy.” In *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, edited by C. Calhoun (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 124.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Pnina Werbner, “Political Motherhood and the Feminisation of Citizenship”, in” in *Women, Citizenship and Difference*, Nira Yuval Davis and Pnina Werbner eds. New York, Zed Books, 1999 pp.1-38.

the sovereign power. This creates a space connecting women to each other through the very act of storytelling. Sharing the difficulties of family life and the problems occurring in everyday life and the hardships that result from different encounters with the state are common stories through which women relate to each other.

However, the stories of loss are a significant part of the conversations. These mothers hold their group and supporters together through their loss and pain, igniting their strength to become the protectors of their children's memory.

I lost one of my sons here. Suffering from such a cruelty, my third son participated in the guerrilla warfare in Istanbul. I was a wreck. I begged for help. I mourned with my silent cries. I could not cry out in this metropolis, they would hear me otherwise. Why do you cry? My son had become a guerrilla. I could not do this. That is why, I mourned silently. Sometimes, I even went into fits of hysteria and they took me out of Istanbul. I cried out and got it off my chest out there and came home again. I experienced such pain those days. We also had relatives under captivity, I occasionally visited them. There were many people around us who migrated with us. There were thousands of mothers who had the same grief. I only had the opportunity to reach them and find consolation with them; because they mourned like me. We put our sorrows together and thus started to endeavour to establish peace.⁷³

The space created through the Mothers of Peace functions in collectivizing and sharing experience. It is the site where women give meaning to their loss through stories of oppression, dispossession and discrimination and construct themselves as witnessing subjects. Butler situates loss within the context of intersubjectivity. Loss,

⁷³ Ve bir tane de oğlumu burada kaybettim. Bu kadar zulmün altında benim bu oğlum da İstanbul'dan gitti. Tamamen yıkıldım. İmdat istiyordum. Sessiz çılgınlıkla ağladım. Çünkü sesli çılgınlıkla ben bu metropolde ağlayamazdım. Duyacaklılar niçin ağlıyorsun? Oğlum gitmiş dağa. Ben terorist de tam olamıyordum. Bunun için ben hep gizli ağlıyordum. Bazen ben çok krize giriyordum beni çıkarıyorlardı İstanbul'dan. Orada ağlıyordum içimi döküyordum tekrar eve geliyordum. Böyle bir acı içersinde yaşandı. Tabii ki o zaman bizim tutsak akrabalarımız varlardı. Zaman zaman onları da ziyaret etmeye gidiyordum. Bizimle birlikte göç eden insanlar bizim çevrelerimiz doluydu. Anneler, benim acılarımla yaşayan anneler binlerce vardı. Ben onlara ancak ulaşıyordum tesellimi onlardan buluyordum. Çünkü onlar da benim gibi ağlıyorlardı. Beraber acılarımızı birleştiriyorduk ve böylece barış ortamını yaratması için çabalamaya başladık.

according to her, is not the difference between existence and non-existence only but it signifies a loss in the way a person gives meaning to herself. According to Butler: “It is not as if an “I” exists independently over here, and then simply loses a “you” over here, especially if the attachment to “you” is part of what composes who “I” am. If I lose you, under these conditions, then I not only mourn the loss, but I become inscrutable to myself. Who “am” I, without you?”⁷⁴

The Mothers of Peace office is one of the sites where women heal this sense of meaninglessness deriving from losing someone. Seremetakis, in her article on the relation between gender identity and death in Inner Mani of the Southern Peloponnese, defines screaming as a socialization of the news of death and explains the silent death ceremony as “bad death” which lacks the support of the community.⁷⁵ Seremetakis takes screaming as a sign of breaking the isolation of the death:

Screaming is a collectivizing act that can collapse social and cosmological distance within its perimeters. Acoustic of death embodied in screaming and lamenting as well as the presence or appearance of kin signify the “good death(...)Screaming the dead counters the isolation of death. It separates the mourner from residual social contexts, yet registers her entry into social relation with the dead and the rest of the mourners the silent death is the asocial “bad death” without kin support.⁷⁶

“Bad death” in the context of the Kurdish mothers is experienced due to the meanings attributed to the dead bodies of their children by the sovereign power. The solitude and silence the women experienced when they faced violence and their children’s loss is appeased through their gatherings in the organization. The fear of

⁷⁴ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*, (New York: Verso, 2004), pp. 22.

⁷⁵ C. Nadia Seremetakis, “The Ethics of Antiphony: The Social Construction of Pain, Gender, and Power in the Southern Peloponnese ,” *Ethos* 18, no.4. (December 1990),pp. 481-511.

⁷⁶Ibid.

isolation and threat of being labeled as a militant's mother in urban space prevent women from sharing their stories with outsiders. The freedom of sharing the pain in this space is called "breathing" by the women.

They are also mothers like me who suffered a lot. I sometimes visit them and feel better. One tells her sorrow. I see that the other woman is more sorrowful than her and another is more sorrowful than me. I take a breath when I get it off my chest. I do not know why. Sometimes I feel depressed and hope for a company to tell my sorrow. Sometimes I feel like this. That's why.⁷⁷

Breathing in this sense describes the organization firstly as a space where the rehabilitation of the pain through telling and sharing stories is achieved; mourning and crying occurs, agency is developed. Through these tellings and retellings, the intersubjectivity of the experience of pain and suffering is reproduced, helping the constitution of a shared identity and collective empowerment on which political action will depend. Komatra Cheungsatiansup argues that this kind of an emphasis on the collectivity of the suffering moves out suffering from the private sphere by rendering it a collective concern rather than an individual one, and transforms it to an object of political struggle.⁷⁸ Michael Humphrey explains the transformation of pain to a medium of expression in the context of the truth commissions like that:

In the former, pain is 'the medium through which society establishes its ownership over individuals' while in the latter, 'pain is the medium available to an individual through which an historical wrong done to a person can be represented, taking sometimes the form of describing individual symptoms and at other times the form of a memory inscribed on the body' (Das 1995:176). One emphasizes the

⁷⁷ Onlar da benim gibi ciğeri yanmış analardır. Onların içine gidiyorum biraz kendime geliyorum. O bir derdini söylüyor öbürü bakıyorum ondan daha çok. Öbürü benden daha çok... Ben dertlerimi anlatınca biraz nefes alıyorum, gerçekten. Niye alıyorum bilmiyorum. Bazen içim doluyor doluyor diyorum; bir kişi olsa dertlerimi anlatsam. Bazen böyle daralıyorum. O yüzden.

⁷⁸ Cheungsatiansup, pp.32.

conditionality of social participation, the other the morality of social participation.⁷⁹

The space created by the organization/the women for the women provides an opportunity for the inexpressible to be expressed loudly in that sense. The space enabled by the Mothers of Peace functions as a mechanism of survival in a sense. By survival, I mean reoccupying life after the loss and in spite of the oppression. The Mothers of Peace as an organization enables the development of a spiritual solidarity between women and encourages them to participate in political activity and to give meaning to themselves by loading on them a mission of change.

Storytelling is also a tool of collectivization. It is a tool of solidifying the identity of Kurdish motherhood, thus creating identification for other mothers. Storytelling as a way of molding experience implies a significant process through which the political subjectivity of the women is constituted in that sense. The way the stories were shared within the organization constituted the experiences as political experiences which included a formation of an agency to change the existing conditions. This blending of one's lived experience into a political view of social relations is defined as "the political experience" which means "the experience of an engagement to change the world in which they live from a particular social position."⁸⁰

The narration of women involves the interpenetration of cultural rights in view of the personal experience transforming them into the representatives of

⁷⁹Michael Humphrey, "From Victim to Victimhood: Truth Commissions and Trials as Rituals of Political Transition and Individual Healing," *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 14, no.2. (2003), pp. 176.

⁸⁰ Begona Aretxaga, *Shattering Silence*, (Princeton, New jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp.8.

collective experiences. The circulation of these collectivized experiences appears in the public sphere as the means through which a counterdiscourse is created against the official story. Veena Das and Arthur Kleinman describe how the space where the wounded communities came together can become a site for the production of counterdiscourses like that:

The social space occupied by scarred populations may enable stories to break through routine cultural codes to express counterdiscourse that assaults and even perhaps undermines the flow of taken for granted meanings of things as they are. Out of such desperate and defeated experiences stories may emerge that call for, and even at times may bring about, change that alters utterly the commonplace—both at the level of collective experience and at the level of individual subjectivity.⁸¹

The circulation of the stories as political experiences is carried out on public occasions such as conferences and seminars targeting the interlocutors who are called to acknowledge the narratives. Narration appears as a central vehicle for claim-making as well. The women's narratives enter circulation through newspapers, periodicals or the internet reaching different publics simultaneously. The narration of the experience within different publics constitutes the "necessary condition of agency" in Dominick LaCapra's words. LaCapra argues that "for memory to be effective at a collective level, it must reach larger numbers of people. Hence, the acts or works that convey it must be accessible"⁸²

Women in the Mothers of Peace testify against oppression, fear and powerlessness, by recounting in emotive detail their observations and experiences in the war. These occasions become a space of rousing public intimacy; mark the

⁸¹ Das, Veena and Arthur Kleinman. "Introduction." In *Remaking a World: Violence, Social Suffering and Recovery*, edited by Veena Das et. al. Berkeley: University of California Press. (2001), pp. 1–31.

⁸² LaCapra, Dominick. *History and Memory after Auschwitz*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), quoted in Victoria Sanford, "From *I, Rigoberta* to the Commissioning of Truth," *Cultural Critique* 47, (Winter 2001), pp.47.

beginning of “a process of identification with the tragedy of the victims and survivors”.⁸³ Stories of the mothers are constitutive of public spaces that accompany the hearing, identifying with, and even adopting the pain of victims and survivors. These spaces transform what was a social and private silence into a publicly narrated victimhood. In the case of the Mothers of Peace, these stories were presented as a counterhistory –to the official story- of oppression, dispossession and discrimination. Witnessing in their case does not appear as a position of a passive bystander. Through a witness position that says “I saw” and their agency emerges. Storytelling appears as a way to do politics. Through the agency they gained in the organization, women are provided with a vision of a future.

In the next part, I will try to explain how Kurdish motherhood is constructed in the context of life story narratives of mothers and trace the way the narratives are constituted as vehicles to political agency. In this site, a collective narrative of victimization is produced. Through the act of story telling a common story emerges. The stories generally conform to a similar model, thematically organized to invoke similar histories of abuse, violence or degradation. The stories of women utilize similar modes of address that make an emotive appeal. These stories fix the life and identity of the women. They solicit empathetic identification between tellers and their audiences and encourage awareness of discriminatory practices.

The Representative Voice of the Kurdish Mother: The Politics of Motherhood

The life stories that the women related to me between 2004 and 2007 possessed the main characteristics of a narrative as they had a beginning and an acceptable end that

⁸³Juliana Ochs, “The Politics of Victimhood and its Internal Exegetes: Terror Victims in Israel,” *History and Anthropology*, 17, no.4. (December 2006), pp. 358.

was constructed as the end of all past moments. The basis of the plot in the women's narratives was their transformation from ordinary women to political activists. Their story was constructed as a story of transformation from unawareness to consciousness. Unawareness signifies the inability to explain the injustices they faced through structural reasons. This state of being was described by such expressions as "we were not aware in those days"⁸⁴. Consciousness, on the other hand, signified the present mode of being for the women who at last found the symbolic means to explain their experiences through a political language. These symbolic means which included the discourses of oppression, exploitation, discrimination provided the narrators with the necessary tools to question the wrongs done to them, articulating these problems within a wider issue of Kurdishness.

The narration aimed to legitimize the transformation of the women -from ordinary women to political activists- in the eyes of the listener. This was also intended to transform the listener. In that sense, the narration in the Mothers of Peace became a vehicle to gain a voice in order to claim the recognition of their pain and their love for their children as mothers.

In interpreting a narrative, Ricoeur proposes the term "plot" as the "intelligible whole that governs a succession of events in any story"⁸⁵. According to Ricoeur, an event in a narrative receives its definition from its contribution to the development of a plot. Through the action of emplotment, the storyteller sorts out elements, establishing the sequence of events and constructing meaningful configurations out of scattered fragments. Time is the essence of this process, in that

⁸⁴ Biz o zamanla bilmiyorduk.

⁸⁵ Paul Ricoeur, "Narrative Time," *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 1, (Autumn 1980), pp. 167.

the construction of narrative shapes the lived experience of nonlinear temporal reality into a coherent whole, with a beginning, middle, and end.

The plot concerning the transformation of the Kurdish mothers from unawareness to awareness was developed via events that functioned as subplots. In telling their stories, the narrators ordered events, constructing what their experience of being an activist mother meant to them. In that sense, the events in the life story narrative were chosen from the multiple alternatives within their lived experience. They reported the catalyzing experiences through which their political consciousness was fundamentally changed. These events included the encounters of the narrator with different kinds of discrimination and oppression, of which violence gradually increased. Each event, through which the tension rose gradually, functioned to explain the change in the perspective of the narrator.

As the story proceeded, along with the plot which was based on the awakening of the narrators, other transformations parallel to this one were also narrated. Narrators' transformation followed complex processes in different levels and through different motives. The transformation of the children to enlightened, questioning subjects, the transformation of community relations as a result of the war, the transformation of home as a secure space to an unprotected space, the transformation of sociality from community relations to relations in political organizations are all different levels through which the narrator's transformation can be traced. In that sense, the development of the consciousness of the Kurdish people had its counterpart in the personal narrative of the narrator in the form of her becoming active in politics. The personal story and stories of collectivity constructed each other.

The narrative was developed through the responses which the narrators and their families gave to the experiences they faced. These were the experiences of violence, discrimination, exploitation and marginalization. These oppressive encounters through the narratives were not resolved, but prepared the interlocutor for more violent ones step by step, increasing the catastrophic side of the narrative and constituting the wounded self of the narrator. Each of these unresolved encounters depicted the violence of the sovereign power and questioned sovereignty as such, reinforcing the need to act against injustice. In this way, narratives reversed the dominant conceptions of what is just and what is unjust by deciphering the injustice in the acts of sovereign power. J.M. Bernstein pertinently describes how justice becomes a reference for opposing the existing structure of relations which entails suffering, fear and threat. Referring to Theodor Adorno, Bernstein writes:

These notions of justice, precisely, sublate into a normative ideal the political *struggle* of the indigent subject against a dominating, sovereign universal, or, even worse, sublate into procedures and modes for warranting the assertibility of moral and legal norms the primary world reference of justice in its biblical sense. Justice in its emphatic sense, justice as a fiery sword, is the always practical, always eventful, always political struggle for the elimination of injustice. The normative *force* of the idea of justice, its urgent claim, is parasitic upon the acknowledgement, without any mitigation, of ‘the undiminished persistence of suffering, fear, and threat’ that remains in a world ‘which could be paradise here and now – [yet] can become hell itself tomorrow’.⁸⁶

In the narrations of the Mothers of Peace, justice appeared as the key to the passage from a world of injustice to a world of paradise. The interlocutor was called to occupy a position of jury member between the just and the unjust. The struggle between the just and the unjust was presented as a struggle between the natural and

⁸⁶ J.M. Bernstein, “Suffering Injustice: Misrecognition as Moral Injury,” *Critical Theory International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 13, no. 3, (2005), pp. 304.

the artificial. This struggle between the natural and the artificial appeared in different levels through the narratives also. Naturalness was signified as Kurdishness as an ever existing identity of the women and “the law of the family” in Hegelian terms through the emphasis of motherly love.⁸⁷ And the artificial was the state and “the law of the state”. Kurdishness in the narratives appeared as something natural albeit oppressed. This was reinforced by the emphasis on the mother tongue as an essential characteristic that can not be changed.

Furthermore, “the law of the family” appeared through the narratives as the intimate relationship between the mother and the children. This relationship was constructed as natural and it conflicted with the artificial law of the state. The emphasis on the struggle between the natural and the artificial in the end renders the transformation of the mothers from ordinary women to activist women natural, since they are the symbols of the natural.

The narratives ended with the women’s entrance into the Mothers of Peace initiative. This change in perspective or awareness of the structural inequalities created a truth effect in the narrative. This truth effect set up an ethical demand through the texts, which was solidarity against the violence of law of the state. This solidarity depended on the audience’s capacity to identify with the expectations, and values of another person. In that sense, the change in the consciousness of the narrator was expected to find its parallel in the interlocutor’s consciousness. This expectation can also be traced through the way the women related to me during the interviews. They said: “you are our representative”; “you are our advocate”. These

⁸⁷ Hegel reads the Antigone’s confrontation with Creon through the opposition between the law of the state and the law of the family. As Veena Das quotes: “The public law of the state and the instinctive family-love and duty toward a brother are here set in conflict. Antigone, the woman, is pathetically possessed by the interest of family: Creon, the man, by the welfare of the community.” For a detailed discussion see Das, Veena. “The Act of Witnessing: Violence, Poisonous Knowledge, and Subjectivity.” In *Violence and Subjectivity* edited by Veena Das et. al. (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2000), pp.205-226.

were accompanied by the request: “go and tell our story to the other people” after they were convinced that I was a trustable person. This way of relating to me was significant in terms of depicting their expectations from our meeting. The position of representativeness in that sense involved something more than the recognition of their story. To bear witness to their stories entailed being called for action against her people’s victimization as well as her own.

Temporality was a significant aspect of the foundation of narratives of the women in the Mothers of Peace as they incorporated the past, the present, and the future simultaneously constructing each other. The form they used was a chronological episodic narrative embodying a non-chronological characteristic also. It began with an assertion of the reality of Kurdishness and was supported by various kinds of testimonial evidence to support that assertion. Ricoeur defines *poiesis* as a central term which “both reflects and resolves the paradox of time”; and he continues: “It reflects it to the extent that the act of emplotment combines in various proportions two temporal dimensions, one chronological and the other non-chronological”.⁸⁸ The chronological aspect is the episodic dimension which constructs the narrative as the sum total of events. The second dimension is the configurational dimension which constructs meaningful wholes out of these events linking them to the development of plot. The organization of this narrative and the meaning that emerges from the organization constructs both the chronological and non-chronological/configurational dimension of the narrative. In that context, the reality of Kurdishness and the necessity of changing it and the transformation of the women into activists were constructed on the personal level through the subthemes of discrimination, poverty and violence experienced within different events. The

⁸⁸ James Olney, “I Was Born: Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature,” *Callaloo*, no. 20. (Winter 1984), pp. 47.

transformation of the women into activists aiming to change this situation became a natural outcome with the help of the construction of the temporal structure of the narratives.

In the narratives, time was constructed upon the main turning points in the narrators' lives; their childhood, their adolescence, their marriage, immigration to the city, returning to the hometown, losing their children and their entrance to the initiative of the Mothers of Peace. Time in that sense appeared not only as the dates that were following each other and the episodes not only related to each other in a before and after relationship, but also in a relationship of causality developing the plot to the end. According to Olney, it is in the nature of narration "that events are lifted out of time to be resituated not in mere chronological sequence but in patterned significance." Through the narratives, the relation between past, present and future was not a linear progressive relation. The past as a condition of pain and loss occupied both the future and the present. Judith Butler tells how the loss preoccupies both the past and the future in different terms like that:

The presumptions that the future follows the past, that mourning might follow melancholia, that mourning might be completed are all poignantly called into question in these pages as we realize a series of paradoxes: the past is irrecoverable and the past is not past; the past is the resource for the future and the future is the redemption of the past; loss must be marked and it cannot be represented; loss fractures representation itself and loss precipitates its own modes of expression.⁸⁹

Through the narration, the women looked back over their past from the present -the speaking time- and recounted it to show that present state of being is an inevitable result of the past history. The speaking person, as the present self, always reflects

⁸⁹ Butler, Judith Eng, "After Loss, What Then?." In *Loss : The Politics of Mourning* edited by David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, (USA: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 467.

back to and re-constructs the past self, making the difference between the past self and the present narrator and provides an account of how the past self became the present narrator. In narrating the events, the narrator continuously reflects back and forth from the person narrated to the person speaking within the context of change in every relationship and the reflections of this change on both the narrator and her people. They constructed the future as something struggled for but can not be predicted at the moment. The constitution of the present is rather ambivalent through the narrative. It is in a way an ending but not a closure. An uneasiness with that ending is at stake, which is determined both as an end of a subjectification process as an activist mother and but it is not a closure in the sense that narrative reflects on the future in which marginalization, living within the limits of life and death will end for them as a result of just struggle. Through their reflections on the past, present and future and through their construction of the experience of transformation, the narrators continuously made a moral point. This morality was constructed upon a demand to act against the victimization of Kurdish people.

That is no matter, daughter. We struggle for your future. Let there be peace. There have always been Turks and Kurds in this country. Neither could disappear. The languages of them are both beautiful. All the citizens living in Turkey are equal. No matter they are Alevite, Armenian etc. We all have the right to be equal. As mothers we want all citizens; whether Armenian, Alevite, Laz, Circassian etc. to have the right to be equal.⁹⁰

Through the narratives the interlocutor was called to question the modern history of the Turkish Republic, the supposed justice of the acts of the Turkish state, and her/his position with regard to the sovereign. In that sense, the very act of

⁹⁰ Olsun kızım biz sizin geleceğiniz için biz mücadele ediyoruz. Barış olsun kızım. Gerçekten yan Türk-Kürt vardır senelerce ikisi de bitmez. İki dil de güzeldir. Bütün halk, bütün Türkiye’de yaşayan insanlar eşittir. Ne olursa olsun ya, ister Alevi olsun, ister Ermeni olsun, o da bir şeydir yani bir eşitlik hakkı olsun. Eğer vatandaşsa, eğer Ermeniyse, eğer Aleviyse, Lazsa, Çerkezse, tüm insan hakkı olsun. Biz bunu istiyoruz anne olarak.

representation of their victimhood opened a space for the women to speak and act as political actors through the narratives. Also the interlocutor was called to develop an agency by interrogating her/his position with regard to different and similar ways they related to the sovereign. Narration was often interrupted by a repeated series of interlocutive and conversational markers which constantly put the reader on the alert, so to speak: “Would you become a terrorist without any reason?”⁹¹; “How can this much oppression and cruelty be committed?”⁹²; “Imagine that I am a mother and I discriminate between my two children, I do not give one of my children his due, I beat him, imagine I am a step mother. What would this child do? S/he will run away because s/he does not have a mother.”⁹³ In that sense, the addressee who was interpellated as “you” was constituted by the narrator as someone who had the capacity to construct a relation of empathy with her in terms of conceiving her pain as her/his own knowing that it was not her/his pain.

The way women narrated their life stories was not only a construction of coherent selves but also a vehicle for them to speak out the repression and state sanctioned violence suffered by Kurdish people/women in Turkey. They were constituted as first person accounts of the state violence which were spoken out to change the public consciousness concerning the Kurdish question in Turkey. In that sense, women’s narration of their life stories can be counted as testimonies which were constituted as emergency narratives “involving a problem of repression,

⁹¹ Sen oturduğun yerde terrorist olur musun?

⁹² Bu kadar baskı bu kadar zulüm olur mu?

⁹³ Eğer ben bir anneyim, ben çocuklarımla birisini ayırıyorum ve bir çocuğumun birisine hak vermiyorum ve onu vuruyorum sen bir üvey anneyi düşün. Peki, senin o çocuk acıdan, anasızlık napacak kaçacak.”.

poverty, marginality, exploitation, or simply survival that is implicated in the act of narration itself”.⁹⁴

Through the narration, the mothers constructed themselves as the representatives of Kurdish women, Kurdish mothers and the Kurdish people making clear that their stories were collective in the sense that they were depicting the pain and the suffering of their people. The pain they narrated in that sense went beyond losing their children but it encompassed the sense of being marginalized, being rendered voiceless, the experience of losing loved ones, living at the limit of life and death. Narratives in that sense were both about voicing this pain itself and transforming this pain into a cause for political activism.

Personal narratives about the past were always told from the temporal perspective of the present. The narrated past matters because of its relation to the present and the future. The narrators told personal narratives about the past primarily to understand and cope with their current concerns. Thus, narratives were often launched in response to current worries, complaints, and conflicts. In a reciprocal way, in the course of their telling, portions of narratives may provoke interlocutors' concerns about the present and future.

James Olney in his essay entitled “I was Born” states that the examples of slave narratives contradicts the assumption that every narrative is a unique production. This remark stems from his analysis of slave narratives which shows that “a sense not of uniqueness but of overwhelming sameness is almost certain to be the result”⁹⁵ in these narratives as a special form. This repetitiveness of the social content, theme, form, and style was also at issue in the narratives of the mothers. The

⁹⁴ John Beverley, “Testimonio, Subalternity, and Narrative authority.” In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd Edition, edited. by Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2000), pp. 548.

⁹⁵ Olney, pp. 46.

recurrent story line in the mother's narratives showed a developmental sequence starting with the story of early poverty, migration, discrimination in the city, the children's questioning of the inequalities they faced and their joining the guerilla forces, the family's becoming a target of the state forces and ending with the politicization of the women.

Kurdishness as a Site of Victimization

One central theme of the narrative was "the reality of Kurdishness" within the context of Turkey and the desire to change it. Their organization of the events in the narratives as illustrations of what Kurdishness was really like was founded upon this moral demand. The content of the narrative was constituted by a series of events and descriptions that would make the audience see and feel the pain and suffering experienced by the Kurdish people. The women started their narratives from their childhood. Childhood constituted the entrance into the narrative as a point of innocence, which meant being unaware of the contrivances of life. This beginning reinforced the impact that the transformation from unawareness to consciousness was an effect of women's lived experiences:

In the village, they say that the Kurdish language will not be used anymore. There are the leftists and the rightists. These were told during the September 12 period. I was a little child; I did not understand what was going on. I watched television and asked myself; "Why is this language spoken but not ours?" This impressed me very much. My identity card is in Turkish. My brother also joined the army. My father also fulfilled his military service. But is my language different and why am I deprived of everything? We are deprived of everything, our language or culture. We have got a different world. My identity card does not reflect this difference; but I am deprived of everything. I was really impressed and I joined the struggle.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Köyde diyor Kürtçe dili çıkacak. Solcu var, sağcı var. O zaman söylüyorlardı, 12 Eylül. Ama sen çocuksun bir şey bilemiyorsun. Yani anlamıyorsun. Ben kendi kendime bazen televizyona bakıyordum yani diyordum ki bu dilden var niye bizim dilimizden yok. O da çok etkiliyordu beni. Yani benim bu

This was accompanied by a description of the poverty of the hometown, comments on the oppression of patriarchal relations and the state. The narrators placed their stories within a context of the collective story of Kurdish women explicitly by repeating “we as Kurdish women” and using “we” instead of “I” as the subject pronoun. In this account, Kurdish identity implicitly existed as an oppressed identity which was revealed through phrases like “oppression in our country” and “we are colonized”. Kurdish identity was constructed as a homogenous identity describing a condition of oppression and marginalization. The narrators’ combining their story as women with the story of oppression of Kurdish identity created a rupture in the constitution of Kurdish identity/people as a homogenous identity, this time constructing Kurdish women as a homogenous entity:

You know the conditions in my hometown. Shall I speak in Turkish? The conditions and the repression there, especially the pain of the Kurdish woman is an unforgettable one. I was given away at the age of fourteen; that is the tradition there. Everyone knows the conditions in our country; we are colonized. The Kurdish women are oppressed both by religion and the state. This is, of course the policy of the state. The religion separates. This is something gloomy. This is not the real religion. I do not accept it. The women are given away at the age of fourteen. There wasn’t any possibility of going to school those days, as the religion forbids women from attending school.⁹⁷

ülkede kimliğim Türkçe yazıyor. Benim kardeşim de askere gidiyor, benim babam da bu vatan görevini yaptı. Ama neden dilim farklıdır neden bütün her şeyden mahrumum yani... O şeyin üstüne sen düşünüyorsun ya “neden farklıyım, neden böyle bir dünyam yoktur?” Mahrumdur yani her şeyden dilden kültürden. Farklı bir dünya vardır. Benim bir farkım kimlikte yok. Ama her şeyden mahrumum. her şeyden farklısın yani o vardır. Çok etkilendim mücadelenin içine girdim.

⁹⁷ Şimdi mesela bizim o tarafları biliyosundur, Türkçe anlatayım değil mi? Bizim ülkemizin şartları ve yani baskıları, hele Kürt kadınının şeyi çok ezgin ve hiç unutulmayacak bir acıdır. Ben mesela on dört yaşında, orada öyleydi; veriliyoduk yani. Bizim ülkenin şartlarını herkes biliyor, sömürgecinin altındayız. Hele Kürt kadını hem din tarafından hem devlet tarafından-tabii bu devletin politikasıdır. Yani dini koymuş dinde bölücülük vardır yani. Böyle bir şey var karanlık bir şey. Gerçek bir din değildir. Kabul etmiyorum gerçek bir din olduğunu. On-dört yaşında bayanlarımız, yani kızlarımız veriliyor. Herhangi bir o tarihlerde okul falan yoktu. Çünkü din şeyleri günahtır bayan gitmesin.

The patriarchal burden on women was depicted through the stories of early marriages. These stories constituted the significant subthemes in the narratives which constructed Kurdish women's subjectivity:

I was shepherding the sheep when they called my name. They told that a man came to see me. I asked who he was. He was a man from the village. I told that I did not want to be married. They held me by the hand and took me home. It was not possible to oppose even if the uncles married me to a dog. It would be immoral. I did not accept. My father understood me then. Three people had come from the village. I was very beautiful; I was tall and very hard-working. I was making sacrifices for my father. My mother had eleven little children. Then I did not want to marry. "I won't get married!" I said. "You will get married", my uncles said. "I will, if my father really wants me to get married", I said. "I won't give my daughter away", said my father. "She is small, she is like my son". My uncles said "You will give her away. These men have come a long way from the village." My mother said: "Then I will marry her to my uncle's son." I remember. One of my uncles was slapping and stirring me up. One was putting on my socks and the other was dressing me up.⁹⁸

These accounts of forced marriages had different effects in the narratives. First, the dominant dichotomy of the just and unjust appeared here as, on the one side, those who had patriarchal power and, on the other hand, the women, constructing the women as just. The image of women as victim of the victim Kurds reinforced the innocence and the neutrality of the women in the eyes of the interlocutor. Second, through these accounts the women revealed their present consciousness about gender inequality and the difference between their past and present selves. This difference

⁹⁸ Ben koyun peşindeydim baktım beni çağırdılar. Dedim "ne oldu?" dedi "gel sana görücü gelmiş". "Kimdir?" dedim. "Köyden biri dedi". Ben dedim "valla ben evlenmiyorum". Benim elimi tuttular getirdiler. Ben dedim "Yok, ben evlenmiyorum". Önce, amcalar deseydi ben seni bir köpeğe veriyorum sesini çıkartmayacaksın. Çıkartırsan ayıp oluyor. Ben kabul etmedim. Babam o zaman beni anladı. Köyden üç kişi kalkmış gelmiş. Ben ne güzeldim, benim boyum bu kadardı, ama çok çalışkandım. Babama fedakârlık yapıyordum. Evde, annemin çocukları küçücük küçücük. Anam on bir tane çocuk etmiş hepsi böyle küçük küçük... Ondan sonra ben istemedim. Dedim "evlenmeyeceğim.". Dedi "Yok zorla vereceğiz. Ben dedim "zorla verirse verir."" Babam dedi "ben kızımı vermiyorum kızım benim erkek çocuğumdur daha küçüktür". Amcalar diyor "vereceksin köyden üç kişi kalkmış gelmiş ;o diyor bana o diyor bana". Annem de diyor "o zaman ben de amcamın oğluna veriyorum". Ben hatırlıyorum yatmıştık baktım bir amcam tokatla vuruyor benim uykumu götürüyor, bir amcam çorabımı giydiriyor, bir amcam elbisemi giydiriyor.

constructed the present selves as conscious political subjects criticizing gender inequality while presenting their past selves as only victims. This empowerment of the women vis-a-vis their victimization within the community reinforced the effect of the justness of their cause. Third, patriarchy appeared as a reflection of the Kurdish issue in Turkey. It was constructed as an effect of the oppression of the state which repressed the people in the region by protecting traditional structures (like the sheikh and aga) and preventing the development of the region. In that sense accounts of patriarchy were primarily mentioned by relating it to the general problem of state oppression of the Kurdish people.

The Mothers of Peace that I interviewed presented their story as a sample of the collective story of Kurdish women who were oppressed by the state, the religious and communal leaders (agas and sheiks) and by patriarchy in the families, but in the last instance by the state. By defining these as sites of oppression, the narrators constructed Kurdishness as a signifier through which all the inequalities they faced are articulated. The experiences of poverty, discrimination, oppression and torture were all constructed as the defining characteristic of the experience of Kurdishness in Turkey. The emphasis on the realness of the experience which was proposed as providing the basis of the political perspective of the narrators reinforced the narrators' attempt to call the interlocutor to believe in the justness of their stance against the cruelty of the state. In that sense, the narrator's being eye-witness to the oppression and violence of the state was a significant point in constructing her legitimacy in the eyes of the interlocutor. By identifying the conditions under which they lived since early childhood as oppressive, and as being under oppression since

they have known themselves, the narrators immediately differentiated between what the world has been and what it ought to be:

No matter we are Kurdish or Turkish; this land is ours. I won't abandon Turkey even if I were offered the world. I don't want Turkey to be separated but I want to live independently. I want to live independently in my own village, in my hometown for the future generations. I am the wealth of this country, not the poverty of it. This land is enough for all people, for Turks and for Kurds.⁹⁹

One of the sites where Kurdishness provided the symbolic means to explain the lived experience was the stories of migration. The city in these stories was constructed as a place where difference became a problem of survival. Kurdishness was proposed as the vehicle giving meaning to the discrimination in social relations in this new landscape, during the process of finding a job and a house to rent in the city. The tension between the old world and the new, the expectations of the family such as success and respectability and the reality they faced which was full of suffering and poverty were seen as the effects of discrimination against their ethnic identity. Discrimination in the new place of residence, which must be overcome for survival, was clear, but the idea of political transformation was not suggested here. The oppression of the Kurdish identity here appeared as a reality which the narrators were not aware of in those times. They found themselves thrown from a pastoral world into the chaos of a modern urban society. In that sense, the survival of a Kurd was not only prevented by the state, but by social relations as well. Survival depended on a chance occurrence within the context of unequal relationships and unjust situations.

⁹⁹ Yani bizim için kürt olsun türk olsun bu ülke hepimizin ülkesidir. Gerçekten ben türkiyeyi dünyada değiştirmem. Ben türkiyenin parçalanmasını da istemem. Fakat özgürce yaşamak istiyoruz. Kendi köyümde, kendi memleketimde, kendi yerimde, özgürce yaşamak gelecek nesiller için. Yani bizim için kürt olsun türk olsun bu ülke hepimizin ülkesidir. Gerçekten ben türkiyeyi dünyada değiştirmem. Ben türkiyenin parçalanmasını da istemem. Fakat özgürce yaşamak istiyoruz. Kendi köyümde, kendi memleketimde, kendi yerimde, özgürce yaşamak gelecek nesiller için. Ben bu türkiyenin zenginliğidir fakirliği değil. tüm insanlara yetiyor Türklere de yetiyor, Kürtlere de yetiyor.

We felt as if we passed to another world when we left our village and went there. At least I felt like this. I felt as if I went to another country. We had no problem of language in the village; we were free. I lost half of my freedom when I went there. Why? I had children. They would become sick. I was criticized for not knowing Turkish when we went to a doctor's. I would suffer a lot. So I spoon-fed my children. "You don't know Turkish, you silly Kurds", they said. I tell you the truth. How can they accuse us of not caring for our children or not knowing Turkish? We couldn't answer when they asked a question. Therefore, I didn't want my children to become sick. But no way, they would be sick. Furthermore, we couldn't make ends meet, so we lived in the village in summer and in the city in winter. My husband and I decided to live in the city in winter to send our children to school and we accepted the hardships of living in the city.¹⁰⁰

Language appeared as a mark of difference and a constitutional factor of the subjectivity of Kurdish women. The Kurdish language was used only for intra-ethnic communication. But when contacting the outsiders or relating to the state, Turkish was needed. Through limiting the use of the Kurdish language in the public sphere, Kurdish identity was made more invisible and inaudible within the public sphere. However, the use of the language or the accent when speaking Turkish worked as a betrayal of identity. All these stories functioned to demonstrate how discrimination towards Kurdish people worked in different spheres of life:

I got sick once and went to the hospital. Even the nurses and the doctors were racist. We even did not hear the term democracy in Turkey then. They exploited us like slaves just because we are Kurdish. They asked for my identity card in the hospital. I said that I forgot it at home. They asked where I was from. I said I was from Samsun. I tried to change my accent but to what extent can I hide my

¹⁰⁰ Orada şimdi biz köyden oraya geldiğimiz zaman sanki bir dünyayı değiştirdik. Bizim için öyle geliyordu. Yani benim için şahsen öyle geliyor. Bilmiyorum sanki bir dünya değil bir ülkeyi değiştirdim. Şimdi biz kendi köyümüzde kendi dilimizle, öyle bir sorun falan yoktu, serbesttik, özgürdük. Oraya geldim yani özgürlüğümün yarısı gitti. Neden? Ben çocuk sahibiydim. Çocuklarım hastalanıyordu. Çocuklarımı doktora götürdüğüm zaman eleştiri alıyordum dilim olmadığı için. Çok zorluk çekiyordum, ben de çok titriyordum üzerine. Bir de birkaç kere laf almıştım ya. "Bilmiyorsun, pis Kürtler", ben gerçek neyse onu söylüyorum. Nasıl bakmıyorsun, dil bilmiyorsun, soru sorduğu zaman bilmiyorduk. O nedenle ben istemedim hiç çocuklarım hasta olsun. Ama mecburen hasta oluyordular. Baktık idaremiz de fazla olmuyor yazın köye, kışın da tekrar şehre iniyorduk. Benle kocam böyle konuştuk, dedik valla böyle olmuyor biz çok zorluk çekiyoruz, şimdi gitsek köyde otursak çocuklarımız da aynı çileyi çekiyorlar. Nasıl zor da olsa, burada kalalım, çocuklarımızı okutalım.

language? We started to lie this time to avoid being ill-treated and to receive treatment. I lied saying that I was from Samsun. I denied my hometown. I was insulted by my neighbour, in public offices, everywhere. I couldn't change my accent when I was in hospital, but I was able to change my clothes and my culture. I was young then. Sometimes they understood my words when I spoke in my native tongue. People stared at me in confusion. She dresses this way but she is Kurdish. "Are you Kurdish?" they would ask me. "Let her die if she is Kurdish". I was treated like this. My husband could not stand living like this in the city. We were charitable people indeed, I don't know.¹⁰¹

Longing for a Home

The stories of the arbitrary raids, arrests and torture in custody constituted women's lives as the sites where the way sovereignty operates both "inside and outside law" can be traced.¹⁰² Showing how their bodies were reconstituted as bare lives, the women reconstituted the image of the state by presenting it as holding the bare life as a "threat held in abeyance and a state into which any citizen could fall".¹⁰³

All my guests would be taken into custody. They were tortured, undressed, exposed to pressure water to prevent them from making visits of condolence to us. However, they kept on visiting us. We suffered all these for five years. Then I was exiled from the city. I left my home and migrated to Istanbul. I was raided 8-9 times in Istanbul. They laughed at me and said "You ran away but now you fell into our hands". Did you really think that you will escape from us? (*Almost crying*) You will never be able to escape from us. And then I was raided again but in a more cruel way. They ravaged my house with their muddy shoes. They threw our foods and drinks away. They threatened us.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Turkish version of this account is available in APPENDIX A.

¹⁰² Benjamin (1978)

¹⁰³ Veena Das and Deborah Poole The State and Its Margins Antropology in the Margins of the State 13.

¹⁰⁴ Evime her gelen dışarıya çıkarken gözaltına alınıyorlardı. Artık saatlerce işkencelerden, artık soymalar, artık tazikli sular, sözde bunların taziye gitmesinler diye. Buna rağmen halk gene geliyordu. Beş yıl içerisinde böyle işkenceler böyle eziyetler bize yaşattılar. Ben oradan sürgün oldum. Evimi bıraktım kaçtım istanbula. İstanbula geldim istanbulda da 9-10 sefer tekrar basıldım. Gülüyorlardı diyorlardı ki sen kaçtın burada sen tam bizim göbeğimizin içine gelmişsin. Sen buraya geldin sen bizim kurtulacağınızı mı sanmışsın (ağlamaklı). Yani sen şimdi kurtuldun mu sandın. Asla kurtulamazsınız bizden. Ve biz gene de burada basılıyorduk. Hem de çok vahşi bir şekilde. Ayakkabıları ile çamur ayakkabılarıyla. Evin altını üstüne, üstünü altına. Yiyeceklerimiz,

The legitimacy of state power is questioned through these “highly mobile, tangible and embodied” spaces of encounters which surfaced by the slippage between threat and guarantee. Deborah Poole writes:

... I am interested in thinking about the slippage between threat and guarantee as a site along which the legitimacy of state rule is brought into contact with the sometimes arbitrary forms of power that underwrite the sanctity of law. Specifically, I want to think about this moment when the relation between rule and law is rendered tenuous and illegible as a margin in several senses of the word.¹⁰⁵

Poole argues that this slippage between threat and guarantee constitutes a sort of margin which creates the possibility to understand as a space where the relation between the law and the rule along with the legitimacy of the sovereign is realized. Her emphasis on slippage leads her to the conclusion that although these moments intensify in certain areas that are supposed to be “both spatially and socially ‘marginal’ to the nation state”, “the suspended moment in time that separates threat and guarantee as a “site” is neither inherently spatial nor stable”.¹⁰⁶ Deriving from her emphasis on slippage, it can also be argued that the narrative voice of the women also defines the Kurdish subjects’ encounters with the state within this slippage between the threat and guarantee as they are simultaneously excluded and supposedly included by the state. This definition of margins and the exceptions that prevails in those margins through the encounters with the state personified through the state officials, also confirm the significance of time and mobility as well as the space for understanding the way margins function.

içeceklerimiz karma karışık. Biz sizi gökte arıyorduk yerde bulmuşuz gibi tehditlerle karşı karşıya geliyorduk.

¹⁰⁵ Poole, Deborah. “Between Threat and Guarantee.” *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*, (Santa Fe, N.M. : School of American Research Press, 2004), pp. 36.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

The Kurdish women and their families were configured as the enemy and became the targets of arbitrary practices of the representatives of the sovereign. They became the objects of arbitrary arrests and torture. The households and the people entering these households were under surveillance. Home in the sense of both personal space of house and space of security was described as exceptionally vulnerable in the accounts of the women. While a sense of impossibility of possessing a home for a Kurdish woman was given through the narratives, a practical destruction was recounted with the stories of arbitrary raids by the military and police forces to their houses:

It was four o'clock in the morning when I switched on the lights. It was April. My child was born on April 23. It was April 25. He/she was 2 or 3 days old. I switched on the lights to nurse my child. I had just become a mother and I wanted to nurse my child. You should turn off the lights or you would be condemned of associating with the guerrilla. I was nursing my child. A heap of damned soldier came and knocked on the door, threw stone at the window. The door was made of iron. I was quaking in my shoes. We were illiterate. I hadn't seen so many soldiers in the village. What could they want of me? I speak Kurdish. They speak Turkish. The child was about to cry. I put my hand in his/her mouth. His face went purple. I thought he died. After ten minutes he started to move. I was alone in the house without my mother-in-law or anybody else. It was four o'clock in the morning. I would nearly sacrifice my child out of fear!¹⁰⁷

Their becoming a target for the representatives of the sovereign power was based on the claim that they were helping guerillas or knowing something about the child who had joined them. Becoming the objects of arbitrary arrests and torture, being ignored and discriminated as an effect of the hegemonic identity of Turkishness constructed the narrator as a person who was "longing for a home":

They nearly knocked down our door with their boots. They took us out of our beds with no clothes on. They didn't have any sense of honour. "We only process the orders" they said. They rummaged our house and couldn't find anything. Where could we live? ... We didn't

¹⁰⁷ The Turkish version of this account is available in APPENDIX B.

know then. The same pressure my daughter feels today was exerted by religion these days. The mufti, for example would make a speech on television or on radio and say that the people attending the Newroz celebrations had no religion and that these people would remain faithless for 40 days. We were even afraid of our relatives. Where could we live under such oppression? People warned us to remain silent even if we are beaten, imprisoned or killed. Our daughter did not make anything evident to us for two years. She knew we would be taken under custody. You weren't exposed to that violence. You were small then. You never experienced that violence. Now it's better. Those days in Batman, five people were killed everyday.¹⁰⁸

The ambivalent construction of village life can also be regarded as a reflection of the desire for a secure home. While village life was depicted as a place where women were oppressed and worked like slaves, on the other hand, village life was described as a space of peacefulness and solidarity where women had a sense of belonging, and experienced the freedom of speaking in their mother-tongue as opposed to the discrimination and loneliness they lived in the city: We didn't have any problem of language in our village. We were free. I lost half of my freedom when I moved there.¹⁰⁹

Village life here appeared as "a nostalgic representation of 'back home' as a place of idealized, simplistic harmony and coexistence, in which explicit mention of the rupture and dislocation is avoided" in Carol Bardenstein's words.¹¹⁰ Julie Peteet also explains this nostalgic construction of memory as a coping mechanism, a means of recreating the possibility of possessing a home by "essentializing the past through

¹⁰⁸ The Turkish version of N's account is available in APPENDIX C.

¹⁰⁹ Şimdi biz kendi köyümüzde kendi dilimizle, öyle bir sorun falan yoktu, serbesttik, özgürdük. Oraya geldim yani özgürlüğümün yarısı gitti.

¹¹⁰ Carol Bardenstein, "Transmissions Interrupted: Reconfiguring Food, Memory, and Gender in the Cookbook Memoirs of Middle Eastern Exiles," *Signs* 28, no. 1. (2002), pp. 366 quoted in Ilana Feldman, "Home as a Refrain" *History & Memory* 12, no. 2, (Winter/Fall 2000), pp.19.

a selectively reconstituted memory narrows the distance between people, providing a narrative basis for establishing a restored inward-looking trust."¹¹¹

In any case, longing for home appears as something that can not be cured simply by returning home. "Longing for home" was constructed as a metaphor for the longing for the reparation of this loss in the future. Loss appeared as loss of children, loss of humanness under torture. Loss was the past, present and future that can not be transformed into words. Achille Mbembe argues that slaves in the plantation were living in a context of triple loss; "loss of a "home," loss of rights over his or her body, and loss of political status. This triple loss is identical with absolute domination, natal alienation, and social death (expulsion from humanity altogether)."¹¹²

The collectivization of experience as the experience of Kurdish women helped the narrators to tell their stories by shifting their memories of the past from an individual trauma to a collective memory of suffering, discrimination and exploitation. Giving meaning to experience by naming it suffering, discrimination and exploitation was a recurrent way of telling stories. Through this act the narrators subsumed all sorts of particular events under a common abstraction of the experience of Kurdishness. By depicting Kurdishness as a marginalized and oppressed identity, the narrators immediately constructed their lives as a disaster, which affirmed the impossibility of finding a home for a Kurdish woman. These stories formed part of a broader national narrative, and longing for home were both communal and individual. Fawaz Turki describes it in very similar terms: "*Home*—a mystical, healing incantation that affirms that the link between the world in me and the world

¹¹¹ Peteet, Julie. "Transforming Trust: Dispossession and Empowerment among Palestinian Refugees." In *Mistrusting Refugees* edited by E. Valentine Daniel and John Chr. Knudsen, (Berkeley, 1995), pp. 180. quoted in *ibid*.

¹¹² Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics", *Public Culture* 15, no. 1, (Winter 2003), pp. 21

around me has not been irreparably ruptured."¹¹³ Illana Feldman argues that narration can be one form of this incantation. But the narration of a sense of longing for a home was also a longing for its possibility. Longing for home constructed the past, the present, and the future. The past in that sense was constructed from the point of view of the nostalgic gaze of the present as a time where home was imagined and a time when dispossession and the loss of home was realized. The present was the state of living these conditions of dispossession and loss and struggling for the possibility of a different future while the future was constructed as a time when people no longer suffer dispossessions and losses. Between the impossibility and possibility of finding a home, the transformation of the women was legitimized in the eyes of the interlocutor. The interlocutor was rendered homeless through a transformation of what was just in relation to unjust, what was secure to insecure, of perpetrators to victims.

Kurdish Mother as the Witness

Referring to Lacan, Veena Das reminds us of the fact that the truth Antigone gives voice to by insisting on the uniqueness of her brother is “too terrible to behold”¹¹⁴: “For, in questioning the legitimacy of a rule that would completely efface the uniqueness of a being even in death, she shows the criminality of the social order

¹¹³ Fawaz Turki, *Exile's Return: The Making of a Palestinian American* (New York, 1994), pp.5 quoted in Ilana Feldman, “Home as a Refrain” *History & Memory* 12, no. 2, (Winter/Fall 2000), pp.16.

¹¹⁴ Das, Veena. “The Act of Witnessing: Violence, Poisonous Knowledge, and Subjectivity.” In *Violence and Subjectivity* edited by Veena Das et. al. (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2000), pp..207.

itself. This truth says Lacan, needs the envelope of beauty to hide it and yet make it available to gaze.”¹¹⁵

The terribleness of this truth, according to Lacan, derives from the way Antigone addresses the criminality of societal law instead of apologizing for her act and for the crime of her brother. Like Antigone, the mothers’ appearance in the public sphere is an attempt to defend the uniqueness of the children who are defined as killable under conditions of war and they address the sovereign as the one truly responsible for all that happened. In that sense, the emphasis on the uniqueness of the children accompanied a poisonous knowledge about sovereign power. For the Kurdish mothers, motherhood was constructed as a site of ethics in Antigone’s sense, where the injustice of the sovereign as the original sin that caused the war was witnessed by the narrator as a mother. The innocence of the children attempted to be proved through the neutrality of the mother. The emphasis on the universality of the relation between the mother and the children-the uniqueness of the children for the mother- and the commonality of the pain deriving from losing someone loved was constructed as a refusal to make a distinction between the losses that are grievable and those that are ungrievable, and thus expecting the interlocutor to share their grief:

We are impartial. We say that the mothers of the Turks and the Kurds are sisters. Let them live in sisterhood. The ongoing bloodshed of the last 20 years is enough. We don’t want it anymore. Not 30.000, but 300.000 people were killed, not to mention the unresolved murders. The southeastern Turkey should develop, it can’t go on like this. Women should acquire their rights. The sufferings of the Kurdish women and the Kurdish mothers should come to an end. If the Kurdish mother suffers, the Turkish mother will suffer with her. If she doesn’t want to suffer, the inequality which leads to the discomfort should come to an end.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Biz tarafsızız, biz diyoruz ki Kürt ile Türk’ün anası kardeşdir. Kardeşçe yaşasın ülkede kan dökülmesin yirmi senedir dökülmüş. Sade 30.000 kişi değil üç yüz bin kişi de öldürülmüştür. Bunu

It was this way of presenting motherhood that involved them in a power struggle over the definitions of victim and perpetrator. The site of narration was a site of making claims to truth that was other than the dominant one which defined the Kurdish issue as a problem of terror and disregarded the state's responsibility in the rise of the armed conflict. In that sense, through the narratives, the constitution of a legitimate subjectivity through rhetorical action was precisely what was at stake. In the case of the women, the narratives functioned as performances that attempted to construct the marginalized as legitimate members of society with a powerful collective voice.

Intelligence, honesty, and kindness were the personal characteristics of the children which were highly emphasized. They were usually the most promising ones within the family. While narratives rendered the narrator's transformation acceptable and legitimate, they also prepared the interlocutor to accept their children's engagement in the armed struggle as a legitimate decision as well. These children appeared in the family as the enlightened agent who was also trying to raise the ethnic/national consciousness of the other members. Terms like "exploitation" and "discrimination" entered the sphere of the family through these young figures, considered as enlightened Kurdish subjects. Political books and periodicals appeared in the memories of women as signs of the progressing critical perspective of the children.

faili meçhulleri artık söyleme. Böyle devam etmez güneydoğu da kalkınsın. Bayanlarımız da bir hak sahibi olsun. Kürt kadını da acı çekmesin Kürt anası da acı çekmesin. Eğer Kürt anası acı çekiyorsa Türk anası da onunla beraber çekecek. Eğer çekmek istemiyorsa tabi ki, şimdi bir yerde eşitsizlik olursa huzursuzluk da olur.

I learned the struggle with him/her. I defended the struggle with his/her honesty, reality, and his/her character. If such a person participates in this struggle, this should be a real struggle, I thought. I was strongly attached to this struggle but by what? I wanted this struggle to be completed without any bloodshed. I did not join it as a warrior.¹¹⁷

Children were depicted as those who first recognized the discrimination towards Kurds. Their voicing this discrimination got violent responses by the state, which prompted these young people to get armed, according to the narratives. Their participation in the armed movement also caused their families to enter into violent interactions with the state as potential suspects. Through these interactions, the women constructed themselves as subjects who realized the truth at last. This truth signified the criminality of the societal law. The children also appeared as the victims of oppression and discrimination who inevitably joined the guerilla for the sake of their lives. Agency here appeared as a reaction to the victimization, however, it was not an effect of the free choice of the individual in the liberal sense. In that sense, the women also defined their children's joining the guerilla as a choiceless decision in Begona Aretxaga's terms. According to Aretxaga, "the concept of choiceless decisions embodies a moral discourse in which the social order is accountable for communal principles of justice that, when broken, make rebellion necessary".¹¹⁸ Narratives constructed the struggle of the children as a just one against the injustice they faced in terms of discrimination, torture and oppression again exposing the injustice in the acts of the sovereign power.

Now, when there is a pressure over this girl... She was also going to school, [seeing that] there is no justice, no rights, no brotherhood. We

¹¹⁷ Ben onunla mücadeleyi tanıdım. Onun dürüstlüğüyle, onun gerçekliğiyle, onun kişiliği ile ben mücadeleyi savundum. Gerçekten ben dedim eğer böyle bir insan bu mücadelenin içinde varsa, gerçekten bu gerçek bir mücadeledir. Öylesine bağladım, bağladım ama neyle? Ben istiyorum ki o mücadele böyle kan dökülmeden. Yani savaşı olarak girmedim. Kan dökülmeden, dökülmeden bu iş başa geçsin.

¹¹⁸ Aretxaga, p. 61.

are Kurdish and for us there is discrimination. Whatever we do, our fault is [being] Kurdish. Since our fault is [being] Kurdish, she also didn't want it, she also protested. Then pressure increased [asking] why she made such speeches. They took her into police custody. They cut her hair and stuff. She hadn't done anything. That torture, of course, that pressure, that violence made her(...) well, not much remained [of her]. She understood [that] there is no life [for her]. She went up to the mountain.¹¹⁹

The children's death was constructed as a turning point through the narratives. The women constructed themselves as the carriers of this pain. The narration of pain transformed that feeling from a mode of being to a mode of relating as the audience was presumed to be moved by the injury of the mother. The emphasis on motherly pain deriving from the loss of the children addressed the feelings of the audience. The empathy the audience should feel was presumed to make the audience act rather than be indifferent. The interlocutor was called to question his/her stance in the context of the armed conflict. What it asked of its audience was in effect the capacity to identify its own identities, expectations, and values with those of another. The audience was called to act against the oppressive state, to question the legitimacy of the sovereign power causing the suffering of the mothers, his/her own relation to that power, and his/her privileges. In that sense, the pain functioned in creating and contesting the boundaries and links between the interlocutor and the narrators as women. Tracing the effects of the representation of pain in the social and political realms, Sara Ahmed stresses "the sociality of pain" by rejecting the idea that pain is something private. She shows how pain is a constitutive element in relating one to another through "the difference between the one who would "become" in pain, and

¹¹⁹ Şimdi baskı olunca bu kıza. O da okuyordu adalet yok, hak yok, kardeşlik yoktur. O da anladı ki biz Kürdüz bize bir ayırım vardır. Ne yapsak yapsak suçumuz Kürttür. Suçumuz Kürt olduğu için o da istemedi, başkaldırdı. Artık baskı yaptı neden bu tür konuşma yapıyorsundiyse. Aldılar gözaltına. Saçlarını falan kestiler. Bir şey yapmamıştı. O işkence tabi, o baskı, o şiddet ona şey yaptı artık geri kalmamıştı. Anlamıştı yaşam yoktur. Dağa çıktı.(N)

another who already “is” in pain or “has” it”. According to Sara Ahmed, this sociality of pain comes into existence through an ethical demand: “that I must act about that which I cannot know, rather than act insofar as I know. I am moved by what does not belong to me (...) I would appropriate her pain as my pain, that is, appropriate that which I cannot feel.”¹²⁰

She argues that this “aboutness” constructs ambivalence in terms of the relation between the interlocutor and the narrator aligns them to and differentiating them from each other. She states that “feelings remain the object of my (audience’s) feelings, while my feelings only ever approximate the form of” the narrators’. The narration of pain itself transformed this feeling from a mode of being to a mode of relating as the audience was presumed to be moved by the injuries of an innocent mother. Referring to Wittgenstein, Veena Das reads the expression of pain as “the beginning of a language game”¹²¹. According to her, the sentence of “I am in pain” becomes the channel through which pain leaves the space of privacy and becomes a way of relating to one another: “Pain, in this rendering, is not the inexpressible something that destroys communication or marks an exit from one’s existence in language. Instead it makes a claim asking for acknowledgement, which may be given or denied. In either case, it is not a referential statement that is simply pointing to inner object.”¹²²

The crying and expressions of sadness- through which the narration was realized - targeted the emotions of the audience who was interpellated to act against

¹²⁰ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, (Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, 2004), pp.31

¹²¹ Das, Veena. “Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain.” In *Social Suffering* edited by Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das and Margaret Lock. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997). pp. 70.

¹²² Ibid.

the mother's pain. Through the act of narration different groups of audiences were called to appropriate the feeling of pain the narrator as a mother lived:

My heart was burning. No one can say anything to the heart, I mean. The [most] precious thing in the world is [your] child, a part of yourself. I, thus, cry everyday. I say, how s/he grew, how s/he flew away. As if it is like a dream. For a mother, this is the hardest thing in the world.¹²³

In their narratives, the women tried to transmit the pain deriving from the loss of somebody beloved through the emphasis on maternal love as universal love. In that sense, they asked the interlocutor to take the pain as her/his own and to act against possible losses. M narrates her feelings for the death of her children like that:

Now, both of my sons, [they are] my children, of course, [my] pain for each would be separate, yet these sons of me were each really distinct children, [now all] gone. Most precious, my most beloved children they were, [now all] gone. And, my husband and I, only the two of us, went [there and] took our child from the soil, brought [back]. We ascertained [his place] from Diyarbakır, we ascertained the money, identified [him], there they gave the photocopies, they officially guided us and we went [there], [we] also went to Yedisu, we disinterred our [son's] corpse and I dug Fuat out of all the mud, and I said, I will wash [him] with some water, neither was there any permission, so that I can wash my son's face, recognize him... that permission wasn't granted [to me] either, I also didn't have this chance. We put Fuat with all the mud into the coffin, brought [him] back, because my first son did not have a [properly entombed] funeral, did not have a grave, [I thought] at least let this one have a grave, let me go [to his grave], speak to him, speak to his soil, I brought [him] with such a motherly thought. And I came with the coffin and there [was] his suitcase, they said, where will you take [him], I said, I have a family vault, I will take [him] there, and I brought [him] down to Ahlat, I already am at the downside of Ahlat, my house is still also there, our family vault is also there. I brought [the funeral], Ahlat [gendarme] station blocked our way, they didn't let us [go], they also took my husband from his way, took into the lockup, took under custody. And I insisted like that, I insisted [for] four hours, five hours, six hours, I struggled with these soldiers alone with my funeral, asked for help from the parliament, asked for help from the mayor of Bitlis, asked from the general secretary of the human rights [association], I

¹²³ Ciğerim yanıyordu. Kimse bir şey diyemez ciğere yani. Dünyada değerli varlık evlattır bir parçandır Her gün de ağlıyorum. Ben diyorum nasıl büyüdü nasıl uçtu. Sanki böyle bir rüyadır. Bir ana için en dünyada zor budur.

called the amnesty international, I said, help me, let me take my son's corpse [and] bury him next to his nanny. All of these intervened, that was the word of the [gendarme] station, [yet] none were binding. The station said, if you do not do what I say, if I am here at Ahlat, then the skeleton is at my hands [i.e. jurisdiction], you did it like that, then I desert [your funeral] here. The words of this mayor, *kaymakam*, parliament were all invalid, they were out of [this] circuit and [the gendarme] took my child from my hands, kidnapped and took [him] to a *korucu* village [and] buried [him there]. And thus, all is done with their own will, when I go there, they immediately denunciate me [to the gendarme], take me away from the grave. I will also not be able to reach there, I lost that chance either. Despite this [situation], despite all my sufferings, I asked for peace. I never asked for grudge, for hate, because grudge and hate do not become mothers. When mothers give birth to their children, bring [them] into the world, [the mother] wants to bring her children up and live with them. If she loses this also, what remains of her? I bore this pain, such that none of the sufferings of mothers should be repeated, suffering calls in other sufferings, suffering, I mean, both physical and natural and economic and social and political... in every dimension, from the dimension of humanity, in every dimension [suffering] devastates, it is a ruin, I mean. This, I never asked for, I always asked for peace, because I can't bring my children back anyhow, because I have grandchildren remaining [from all this]. The Turks and Kurds for a thousand years, I mean, now I am half-Kurdish, half-Turkish, half-Circassian and half-Laz. There is something of every person [in this country] in us. We married [to each other], became relatives, we, with these, I mean, [try to] take the nail away from the finger, you can't. We never enunciated this, never lived this, we didn't say of this suffering, because we are mothers, my call for the Turkish mothers, to the mothers of the martyrs is that, let us conduct common activities.¹²⁴

All these narratives are articulated in a language of victimhood based on exclusion, discrimination and violence. The women condemn the “Turkish state” as the “real” cause of their pain. It comes onstage as the target that is blamed during the processes of attribution, explanation and narration of different kinds of pain deriving from the inequalities of gender, race and class. The narratives produce the idea of a unified state which is experienced through the practices of exclusion, discrimination and violence

¹²⁴ The Turkish version of M's account is available in APPENDIX D.

We also do not want this war to go on. We ask until what point can it continue? There is both the Turkish and the Kurdish. I mean, this is something [we inherited] from our forefathers. Our grandfathers also fought, our uncles, our nephews. Our grandfathers are martyrs in Çanakkale. Now, my mother's uncle went to Russia, I mean, [enemies] entered Bitlis, you know that history of course, well. There they were captivated, became martyrs... together... What will we do now when there is such pressure? I mean, we say now, until when this will go on? You see, there are both the Kurds and the Turks, how much further will this go on? This war should be stopped absolutely.¹²⁵

The construction of experience through the narratives functions at the borderline between the personal and the political, amplifying the ambivalence between the public and private more deeply. The way women narrate their experiences in relation to ethnic and gender identities is a process of acquiring a voice, or having a say, in their lives. Forms of narrativising the experiences of Kurdishness and motherhood function in constructing the women's claims to citizenship within the context of the Turkish state. Reclaiming of citizenship emerges as the main point of reference within the narratives of the relationship between the self and the state.

I am here for seven or eight years, you see, some say, for example, whatever is the case you are a very good person, you have no harm here. So I have no harm here. [They say,] you are so good; you are quite the person to be loved. Even if they are terrorists they are very good people, we cannot harm them. See, we are not terrorists my brother! I went to the television [program] for peace, why are you creating this [situation]?¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Biz de bu savaşın devam etmesini istemiyoruz. Diyoruz ki nereye kadar gider? Türk de var Kürt de var. Yani bu atadan beri gelme birşeydir. Dedelerimiz de savaşmış Kıbrıs'ı savaşmış bizim enişterimiz, yeğenlerimiz. Dedelerimiz Çanakkale'de şehit. Şimdi annemin dayısı Rusya'da öyle şeye girmiştir ya.. Bitlis'e girmiştir ya işte, o tarihi bilirsin sen. Orada şehit esir olmuşlar. Beraber...Baskı olunca biz ne yapacağız şimdi. Yani biz de diyoruz ki artık bu nereye kadar sürecektir? Hani Kürt de var, Türk de var nereye kadar gider? Mutlaka, bu savaşın durdurulması lazım.

¹²⁶ Yedi sekiz senedir buradayım yani bir kısım böyle diyor mesela diyor teyze ne olursa olsun ama sen çok iyi bir insansın, senin burada zararın yok. Benim burada zararımız yok. Sen çok iyisin, sen çok sevilecek insansın. Teröristler de çok iyi insandırlar, bunlara kıyamayız. Ya terörist değiliz kardeşim, televizyonda ben barış için gitmişim. Neden bunu yaratıyorsun?

The narrative of victimhood and use of pain in the narratives as a result of the arbitrary practices of sovereignty and discrimination they face in the state institutions opens the space through which sovereignty is questioned. Against the official politics of exclusion and indifference, society is better conceived as a set of multiple potential sources of collective empowerment and as multiple spaces of resistance. Violence is depicted in the ways women modify their past as a narrative which is intertwined with the communal experience of suffering. Women's narratives are sites of deciphering the ways violence is practiced within both the state and social institutions in terms of torture, discrimination or humiliation.

We were saying, what's our fault? Your fault is that you are Kurds, you will turn out [to be] terrorists anyway. He took our underwear, he says let this be your flag. I mean, what can you do? I was taken to the judge [in the court] for instance. I said, I took off my clothes sir, [I said] do you have a mother, he said, yes I do, do you have a wife, he said yes I do, I said is she guilty? I said what is my fault? He stared into my face. I can't tell you, nightstick have they used, I can't tell you. All those tortures... Now they say, but God will ask from them. Would you become a terrorist in the place you are? Can there be such pressure, such cruelty?¹²⁷

Women in the Mothers of Peace used their life stories to construct themselves as the witnesses to the cruelty of the societal power in order to exculpate their children in the eyes of the interlocutor and within the Turkish public. The narratives functioned like testimonies which muddled the narrator's individual life experience with the collective stories of repression, poverty, marginality, exploitation and survival. Their stories were stories of struggling to survive both individually and socially as a family

¹²⁷ "Bizim suçumuz ne diyorduk? Sizin suçunuz Kürt olmanız, siz er geç terörist olacaksınız. İç çamaşırlarımızı çıkarmış, bu size bayrak olsun diyor. Yani ne yapabilirsin? Hâkimin karşısına çıktım mesela. Elbisemi soydum hâkim bey dedim, Senin anan var mı, dedi var; senin karın var mı; dedi var, dedim suçu var mı? Dedim benim suçum nedir? Yüzüme baktı. Anlatamam cop mu kullanmadılar anlatamam. O işkenceleri. Şimdi öyle diyorlar bunun hesabını Allah bile soracak. Sen oturduğun yerde terörist olur musun? Bu kadar baskı bu kadar zulüm olur mu?"

and as a community. They tried to make apparent the state's responsibility in the revolt of their children. In that context, I read the narrations of the women as vehicles that enabled women to reclaim their subjectivities as mothers and citizens. In a context where they and their children were only recognized as abject, they attempted to construct themselves as mothers and human beings in the eyes of the interlocutors through the transmission of the pain they experienced. Their narratives became the site that enabled the narrators to speak about collective problems and demands. Narrating in that sense was a way of doing politics. Speaking through their life stories was an assertion of collective identity of the narrators. This assertion encompassed the freedom to speak in their mother tongue, the freedom to be a Kurd and a Kurdish woman. Veena Das in "Trauma and Testimony" traces how people who witness violence redeem life.¹²⁸ She argues that the struggle in everyday life rather than living with the ghost of a cruel past can be a way of transforming the experience of injury into the possibility of becoming a subject again. According to her, becoming subjects again is possible by reconstituting one's self not only through remembering the past but also by the ability to "recraft the symbols and genres of mourning"¹²⁹ as a way of becoming active in the realm of politics. The narratives of the women in the Mothers of Peace were the products of the attempt of the women to redeem life. Even the ending of the narratives were about an unfinished story of struggling to survive in order "to make plans again, to choose to outlive that time when one was reduced to nothingness, beaten like an animal, ordered to do the most shameful and terrible things in order to be allowed to live,

¹²⁸ Veena Das, Trauma and Testimony: Implications for Political Community, *Anthropological Theory*, no. 3. (2003), pp. 293-307.

¹²⁹ Ibid. pp. 301.

defeated by one's abject powerlessness"¹³⁰ in Michael Jackson's words. The women in the organization attempted to reinhabit "the space of devastation again" by retelling the testimony of a "pained" past and making their pain visible in a wider public.

In the narratives, the sacredness and neutrality of motherhood was highly emphasized. Positioning themselves as mediators and claiming neutrality made it inevitable for Kurdish mothers to differentiate themselves from their children. This is because of the fact that their children are the political subjects who challenge the sovereign power in a given territory, thus a direct threat to official ideology. However, their effort to differentiate themselves from their children fails, since they identify the representatives of the state as the perpetrators of "violence" and criticize the state for suppressing Kurdish identity. In response to this stance, they are immediately blamed for being pawns of the PKK by the Turkish public.

¹³⁰ Michael Jackson. *Politics of Storytelling : Violence, Transgression and Intersubjectivity*. (Copenhagen S, DNK: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2002), pp. 104.

CHAPTER IV

KURDISH MOTHERS AS NON-MOTHERS

The appearance of the Mothers' of Peace in the public sphere was a call to put an end to the mutual indifference of mothers to each other's pain, and an attempt to make their loss and the oppression accompanying it to be recognized. Saying that they are also mothers and all mothers are the same, they speak out their exclusion and their demand for inclusion in the category of motherhood. Their activism had thus two aims: first, to make themselves included in the category of motherhood as a universal identity by deconstructing the notion of motherhood based on the identity of the Turkish mother; and second, (re)constructing motherhood based on the values of peace, tolerance, justice and empathy. Not only was this an attempt to reclaim the carework spent by the women to rear their children and their right to live with their beloved ones, but it was also a way of raising their displaced voice against the state.

However, despite their claim in initiating such a movement, the plurality - concerning the women coming from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds- in the organization has not been achieved. This failure to contain diversity in ethnic terms and plurality in terms of mutual recognition of each other's pain renders the organization a space where the subject of the Kurdish mother as a survivor and a witness is produced, rather than a site for the articulation of a universal motherhood despite differences in ethnic and cultural backgrounds. I raise this issue not because the space of the Mothers of Peace renders such an encounter impossible, but to argue that the initial aim of the women -to construct a basis for a public that is willing to

support the negotiation between the state and PKK- has failed, and that they failed to gain a popular support among the Turkish public. In other words, their failure to create a sense of commonality among mothers from different ethnic backgrounds, combined with a sense of diversity is both a reflection and one of the reasons for their ineffectiveness in transmitting their pain as mothers to the rest of the Turkish public. In that sense, the current position of the Mothers of Peace as a marginal group of women within the Turkish public is related to a broader question regarding the relation between motherhood and politics.

Within this context, the experience of the Mother's of Peace appears as a significant case through which to think how power, politics and gender are indeed interrelated. The way they are positioned in the margin within the context of the Turkish public sphere, and the conditions under which they are included in and excluded from it are of great importance to understand how the definition of an identity like motherhood that seems to be constructed as neutral and universal, are actually constructed as sites of a power struggle.

Maternal Thinking

A number of writers have argued that women have a distinctive mode of thought or set of emotional predispositions deriving from the practice of mothering. The significance of these modes of thought and emotional predisposition, is that women are presented as potential sites for challenging contemporary politics in favor of a more democratic and peaceful one. This mode of thought is mainly defended by Sara Ruddick as “maternal thinking”.¹³¹

¹³¹Sara Ruddick, “Maternal Thinking”, *Feminist Studies*, 6, no. 2. (Summer, 1980), pp. 342-367.

According to Ruddick's conceptualization, maternal thinking appears as a world view which could be the source for a different politics with different priorities other than the ones that are already dominant in the masculine world. At the core of these priorities lie human growth, life preservation and peacekeeping which are extensions of women's role as care-givers in society. Through her conceptualization, Ruddick not only renders a significant part of women's experience visible but also exalts that experience by proposing it as a starting point for social change and political agency for a better world.

Motherhood is sacred, [it is] from the heavens. No mother would wish for death [of others], the mother gives life, protects life, no mother likes warfare. That's because war takes away all her beloved ones. O mothers; so much blood has been spilt over this country, [that] blood bled more blood, hate begot hate, now it is time to give an end to all these. It is a mission of our motherhood to build a wall of love against these [evils]. As the Mothers of Peace, we call all of you, the mothers of soldiers to unite for peace, for fraternity, for democracy. We celebrate your May 14, Mothers' Day with the most sincere feelings of longing for peace, share your sufferings and wish the Mothers Day to become the Day of Peace. Let's accept only one gift from our youngsters, our children. Peace... Peace... Peace...¹³²

Similar to Ruddick's conceptualization of mothering, the Mothers of Peace associated motherhood with life, peace, empathy and love. Creatively utilizing the performative potential of public motherhood, the mothers transform maternity from a personal relationship based on reproductive labor, biological sex, and family ties into a public alliance modeled after the interconnected relationships between the mothers and their children. Through their public performance of motherhood, the members of

¹³² Analık kutsaldır, cennetliktir. Hiçbir ana ölüm istemez ana yaşam verir, yaşamı korur, hiçbir ana savaşı sevmeyiz. Çünkü savaş onun sevdiklerini alır götürür. Analar; bu ülkede çok kan aktı kan kanı akıttı, öfke öfkeyi doğurdu, artık bunlara barışla son vermenin zamandır. Bunları karşısına sevgi duvarını örmek analığımızı bir görevidir. Biz Barış Anaları olarak siz bütün asker analarını barış için, kardeşlik için demokrasi için birleşmeye çağırıyoruz. 14 Mayıs Anneler gününüzü en içten barışa özlem duygularımızla kutluyor, acılarınızı paylaşıyor, anneler gününün barış günü olmasını istiyoruz. Evlatlarımızdan, gençlerimizden bu anlamlı günde tek bir hediye kabul edelim. Barış...Barış...Barış...

the Mothers of Peace promote a social and political worldview in which nurturance, empathy, and care are privileged. In that sense, their language recalls Ruddick's term of maternal thinking proposing it as a starting point for the activism of the mothers. Through these attributions they constitute motherhood as something natural and unquestionable. The political application of this universalist vision is that the women's common identity as mothers gives them a specific moral agenda and a unifying set of concerns that could transcend other divisions.

Another function of the above statement is to differentiate mothers from their children. Mothers are constructed as neutral witnesses to the war between their children. This is a policy of depoliticizing motherhood in a polarized environment. Referring to Ferguson, Laura Jeffrey, in fact, points to the argument according to which "depoliticization" is itself politics.

Wherever we are over the world, it is always us, the mothers, who experience the sufferings of periods of violent conflicts. Pain and suffering lack any language, religion, color. Whatever our identity is, it is us, the mothers who lose the most precious thing we have, our children, the most precious part of our souls. It is again us, who know the best what war is. To end the suffering and preserve lasting peace would start only by knowing the results created by war. We haven't acted with feelings of grudge or hate while doing this. We haven't approached [the issue] with feelings of revenge [thinking that] we are deprived of the most precious thing we have. We fared forth with the most peaceful words, with our deep longings for sisterhood.¹³³

Here motherhood is constructed as a universal identity that promotes peace; it creates an image of this identity that is freed from all other affiliations. Therefore, the appearance of the Mothers of Peace in the public sphere is an attempt to deconstruct

¹³³ Dünyanın neresinde olursak olalım, çatışmalı dönemin acılarını en derinden yaşayan biz analar olmaktadır. Acının dili, dini, rengi yoktur. Kimliğimiz ne olursa olsun, en değerli varlıklarımız olan evlatlarımızı yani canımızın en değerli parçasını yitiren biz analarız. Savaşın ne demek olduğunu en iyi bilen yine bizleriz. Acılara son vermek ve kalıcı bir barışın sağlanması, ancak savaşın yarattığı sonuçları bilmekle başlar. Bunu yaparken kin ve nefret duygularıyla hareket etmedik. En değerli varlıklarımızı yitirdik diye intikam duygusuyla yaklaşmadık. En barışçıl sözlerle, kardeşlik özlerymlerimizle yola çıktık.

this distinction between legitimate lives and illegitimate lives by reclaiming their right of grieving and mourning. What the women's actions attempted to do is to reverse the de-sentimentalization regarding their loss and to reconstruct a common bond of loss with the members of the Turkish public. The grief which is materialized through the appearance of the mothers in the public sphere calls for empathy through an imagined loss of a child for any parent, and hopes to construct a likeness through that loss. The fear deriving from the possibility of losing a child is presented as a motive to constitute a community of parents who are willing to act against the war. Setting out these assumptions, and emphasizing the suffering as an effect of war, women present themselves to the Turkish public as "neutral" mothers who just want no one to die any more. Motherhood means to nurture, to preserve and to protect. Women are life givers as mothers. This suffering is constituted as a commonality between mothers living in war conditions, and is claimed to transcend ethnic and cultural boundaries. The pain of the loss of children is put at the core of this commonality. The imagination of a community of mothers who have the capacity to empathize with the loss and pain of other mothers is an attempt to blur the boundaries, especially between the "Turkish" and the "Kurdish" mothers. The mother, as witness of the war, appears here as the site where remembering of the past occurs. By refusing the constituted incommensurability of each other's pain, the text constitutes suffering as a ground for communicating and constituting solidarity. Women in the organization call for a collectivization of motherhood which implies the responsibility of caring not only for your own children but caring for all children in Turkey. Caring in that context also gains a meaning of caring for the other. This is similar to what Carol Gilligan argues about care. Care, according to her, is "responsiveness to others, exemplified by concern to provide care, prevent harm, and

maintain relationships with others”.¹³⁴ Women’s construction of care, then, not only implies a protecting relationship between the mother and child, but also a means of relating to the other in terms of sharing the pain of the other. Understanding the pain of the other and appropriating it as your own is central to the women’s call to other mothers and to the Turkish public. This way of constructing motherhood based on care is an attempt to constitute the pain of any mother as the pain of every mother.

According to Sara Ruddick, the testimony of Latin American women who have lost their children presents the knowledge of that cost¹³⁵. And it is exactly that cost, Ruddick suggests, which pushes women to bring their bodies to bear against the institutionalized violence of the state. Similarly, in their narratives, women emphasize that they want Kurds and Turks to live together as they had for decades, arguing that the cost of human lives that are lost should end.

The demand for recognition makes public support an indispensable part of the politics of the women. Public support is significant to push the state to consider the women’s demands. Women appeal to the image of a sorrowful mother in their effort to gain public support. The image of a sorrowful mother is significant in order to understand how the “Kurdish mothers” appeared in the public sphere.

The image of the sorrowful mother is used repeatedly through the pages of the journal *Barış*. Images of a mother looking behind a window pane, as if she is waiting for her child, smoking a cigarette in a depressed manner and anxiously putting her arms around her child are used very frequently in the journal. The image of suffering women emerges as the object of public gaze symbolizing the destruction caused by war. The image of the sorrowful mother is used for the rejection of war in

¹³⁴ Margaret Moore. “The Ethics of Care and Justice,” *Women & Politics*, 20, no. 2. (1999), pp.2

¹³⁵ Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking*, (Boston: Beacon Press) quoted in Lynda Marin, “Speaking out Together: Testimonials of Latin American Women,” *Latin American Perspectives* 18, no.3, (Summer, 1991), pp.65.

a particular sense. War destroyed the world the women created through their mothering, feeding, sheltering by killing their children and destroying their houses, and forcing them to leave their land. The *mater dolorosa* in that sense gains voice through her tears which imply the position of knowing the reality of war.

The pain which was to be transmitted through the image of the sorrowful mother is used as a way to represent women and their children through a universal bond between mother and child. The presentation of the universality of this bond is an appeal for empathizing with the pain of the Kurdish mothers. Women appearing in the public spaces constitute themselves as the icons of this terrible pain. The public is expected to feel sorry for the destruction of this bond by war. Only after that would the Turkish public consider the Kurdish mothers' pain as the legitimate pain of a mother. To be accepted as mothers is absolutely necessary for the sake of the persuasiveness of their exposure of the state's denial of its responsibility in starting the war as presented in its official narrative.

Through this affective and emotional image, painted in order to solicit public support, women attempt to domesticate this radical subjectivity of the poisonous knowledge they convey throughout their narratives. This image is reproduced also by columnists whose sympathy mothers gained. Zeynep Göğüş and Gülay Göktürk are two of those who wrote about the women in their columns. In their texts, the pain of the mothers is emphasized. They are sharply differentiated from their children and the reader is called to identify with the mother's pain. The focus is on the pain of loss.

They merely sit still in front of me. Four grieved mothers... I can't ascertain their ages. It is as if that deep [sense of] suffering that was carved into their faces had erased all the clues of their age. It is as if they start re-living [what they are narrating] when they speak about the primary and high school years or first love affairs of their deceased children. But these "moments of bliss" are very brief. The moment

they return to reality, they are again petrified and become ‘ageless’... Some may separate the grieved mothers into two [groups of] ‘mothers of the martyrs’ and ‘mothers of terrorists’. But mothers are not separated into two. That’s because there is no two different types of suffering for the [deceased] child. One of the mothers in front of me is like the symbol of the inseparableness of these two sufferings... Once she had three sons. One is dead in the mountains, one is missing, one is a soldier... God forbid, what if something also happens to her son in the army? Will her motherly heart feel these two sufferings separately?¹³⁶

Again in the text of Zeynep Göğüş, the reader is called to pay attention to the mother’s pain.

It is their mothers who wait the most for those that leave for the mountains. I met with a group of these mothers. Unfortunately, the view that the last Law of Repentance will not be of much use has prevailed over the mothers of those in the mountains. Consider a mother, one of whose three sons is dead in the mountain, the other is missing and the last is conscripted for military service. Take also this, which is a reality of Turkey.¹³⁷

The discourse of maternal suffering aims to secure ideological support through the empathetic identification with the grieving mother. Yet, significant differences do emerge in the political application of this universalistic vision, when the effects of the politics of emotion are used in each occasion. Women propose motherhood as a universal identity which is beyond politics and geared to peace, assuming that appealing to universals will protect them and help them to raise their voices. This attempt functions as a strategy to overcome the marginalization of the “Kurdish”

¹³⁶ Karşımda öylece oturuyorlar. Dört acılı ana... Yaşlarını kestiremiyorum. Yüzlerine kazınmış o derin acı, yaşlarıyla ilgili bütün ipuçlarını silip yok etmiş sanki. Yitirdikleri evlatlarının ilkokul-lise yıllarını, ilk aşklarını anlatırken, birden canlanıp yeniden yaşamaya başlıyorlar sanki. Ama bu “bu mutluluk anları” kısa sürüyor. Gerçeğe döndükleri anda, yeniden taşlaşıp “yaşsızlaşıyorlar”...Kimileri, acılı anaları “şehit anaları” ve “terörist anaları” diye ikiye ayırabilir. Oysa analar ikiye ayrılmıyor. Çünkü iki türlü evlat acısı yok. Karşımdaki analardan biri, sanki bu iki acının ayrılmazlığını simgesi gibi... Bir zamanlar üç oğlu varmış. Biri dağda ölmüş, biri kayıp, biri ise asker... Maazalallah, ya askerdeki oğluna da bir şey olursa ne olacak? Onun ana yüreği, bu iki acıyı farklı mı algılayacak? *Sabah Gazetesi*, 8 June 1999.

¹³⁷ “Dağa çıkanları en çok anneleri bekliyor. Dün bu annelerden bir grupla görüştim. Ne yazık ki artık son pişmanlık yasasının fayda etmeyeceği görüşü ağır basmış dağdakilerin annelerinde. Bir anne düşünün ki üç oğlundan biri dağda ölü diğeri kayıp, sonuncusu ise askere gitmiş vatani görevini yapmakta. Alın işte bu da bir Türkiye gerçeği.” *Sabah Gazetesi*, 8 June 1999.

mothers by undermining the distinctions between the legitimate objects of emotions and the illegitimate objects of emotions. In that sense, the image of the sorrowful mother helps women to be accepted by different publics to a certain extent.

Universals appear as a possibility enabling them to say that “I am not just different from others, but in some fundamental respects the same as them”. Searching for the conditions of possibility of producing a community on the basis of loss, Judith Butler asks; “Who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives? And finally, what makes for a grievable life?”¹³⁸ These questions are very relevant for understanding the way motherhood becomes a contested space in the context of the Turkish public. We can rephrase the same questions for our specific case of motherhood in the following manner: “Who counts as mother? Whose grief counts as grief? ”

Nancy Scheper-Hughes focuses her attention on the limits of this universal conceptualization of motherhood. Based on her research in the shantytowns of Brazil, Nancy Scheper-Hughes criticizes Ruddick for essentializing the content of motherhood and presenting a certain form of mothering as the norm and the other experiences of motherhood as deviations from the norm. She argues that “...maternal identity has no essential position; instead it may be used as ambiguously to structure very different, even antagonistic, political positions-from promoting peace to advancing war to mobilizing resistance.”¹³⁹

Scheper-Hughes shows in her research how the women in Brazil develop indifference towards premature death which is a frequent experience in the region.¹⁴⁰

Hughes here draws attention to another dimension of maternal thinking which is

¹³⁸ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004), p. 20

¹³⁹ Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. “Maternal Thinking and the Politics of War.” In *The Women and War Reader* edited by Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin, (New York and London: New York University Press, 1998), pp. 231.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. 229.

“one more congenial to military thinking: the notion of inevitable, acceptable, and meaningful death”¹⁴¹ Similarly, in the case of mothers of martyrs, those of fallen soldiers in Turkey, emotions generally worked for the reproduction of nationalist sentiments by legitimizing the sacrifice of life for the well-being of the country, and emphasizing revenge as the Turkish military’s debt to the families of the martyrs. Hughes also states that it is through the notion of inevitable, acceptable and meaningful death that women sacrifice their children in wars or bear their death rather than developing a pacifist stance to all kinds of war:

Just as shantytown mothers in Brazil consoled one another that their hungry babies died because they were “meant” to die or because they “had” to die, Irish mothers and South African township mothers consoled one another during political funerals with the claim that their “martyred” children died purposefully and well.¹⁴²

Deriving from Hughes’ argument on mothering, it is reasonable to argue that the simplistic distinction that men naturally make wars and women make peace is both a totalizing argument and is falsified with the empirical data based on women’s different reactions towards war. Reducing women’s relation to war to such a simplistic dichotomy between men and women carries the risk of misunderstanding the more complex experiences and roles of women during wars. Women can support war or launch campaigns against war using the same moral reasons. “Mother love” in that context will be taken as an effect of a matrix of images, meanings, sentiments, and practices that are everywhere socially and culturally produced. Clearly, then, there are limitations to the usefulness of maternal appeals. Yet recognizing limitations is not the same as handing down general indictments. Even if maternal appeals will not directly effect change in every situation, this does not negate their

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.. pp. 230.

potential to effect positive and progressive change in many arenas. But the question of effectiveness of such politics needs a questioning of the universality itself and the vulnerability of the universal claims to the determination of power. These are just questions to be asked in the face of such a claim: How can power relations be represented through a fixed identification of motherhood with peace? How can Kurdish mothers both speak from an unconditional identification of motherhood with peace and neutrality and still talk about the discrimination, oppression and degradation they faced?

The experience of Mothers of Peace shows that the effect of a claim based on the universality of motherhood deployed as part of a resistance strategy cannot be predicted in advance. It may function as a condition of possibility for further subversion of domination or as a limitation depending on its particular context. Looking at how motherhood becomes a contested space in the context of Turkey is a way of showing that there never will be a pure motherhood that is independent from politics and society. Moreover, it helps us to reveal that strategic claims to universals have significant political effects in mobilizing masses. In that context, although motherhood is a sacred identity for the Turkish public, public compassion and respect for Kurdish mothers is not immediate. I will try to show how the distinction of proper and improper mothers and the incommensurability of their pain conceal the magnitude of Kurdish suffering and the responsibility of the Turkish state. This is a problem for both political activists and political scientists where the task is to analyze motherhood as a discourse. In that sense this task is both a scholarly one and a moral and political one as well.

For the Turkish public incommensurability between different readings of motherhood creates slippages within the discourses. Although women are not totally

excluded from the public sphere as mothers, it is not wrong to claim that they are only welcomed as the mothers of the nation, and mothers whose children have challenged the sovereign authority they are treated as subversives and tools of the “terrorist organization”.

Therefore, questions arise about the possibility of a politics of motherhood. Why might women seek to be recognized as mothers? What happens when claims of victimhood are also deployed by other groups? What are the limits of this assumption of the neutrality of motherhood in the Turkish context? Why didn’t the Kurdish mothers succeed in gaining popular support from the Turkish public that will force the state to start peace negotiations with the PKK militants? What does this reveal about the politics of motherhood based on an identification of women with peace and humanism? What do these limits say about the experience of Mothers of Peace? Motherhood was supposed to propose a safer position from which to speak out, as it is perceived as an identity possessing an ontological primacy. But was that really the case? Did the Kurdish mothers succeed in making their voices heard? Does motherhood as a speaking position render the audience more tolerant to hearing the various forms of oppression and discrimination that played a role in shaping women’s mode of being and acting? Did an identity as mothers protect them from insults, arrests and torture? I will try to trace the answers to these questions through an analysis of the attacks towards the mothers and of their representation in the mainstream media.

As illustrated through this analysis of the Mothers of Peace, this imperfect and partial approach to politics has the potential to promote an alternative political and social order on the public stage. I argue that the concept of “inevitable, acceptable and meaningful death” and the way families are called to admit their loss

are very central to understand the fragility of the discourse of the Mother's of Peace within the context of the Turkish public. I will first analyze the relation between gender and nationalism in Turkey, and then I will discuss the appearance of mothers of martyrs in the Turkish public sphere as the address of the legitimate sentiments.

Turkish Nationalism and Motherhood

The foremost duty of the women is motherhood (...) It is a matter of unassailable truth under the testimony of history and the record of events that our Grand forefathers and their forefathers had indeed demonstrated the most supreme instances of virtue (...) The greatest and the most cardinal of these instances of virtue is the fact that they raised precious descendants. Incontrovertibly, the fact that the Turkish nation has demonstrated such tenacious omnipotence and executed such splendor of movement over the world, i.e. not only in Asia but also in Europe, is all a product of our precious grand forefathers, raising such virtuous sons and inspiring valiance and virtue to their souls even when they were in their cradles (...) Another duty of great importance, benevolence and virtue for our women apart from their shares in the testament of the public good is to be a decent mother.¹⁴³

Feminist writers have shown us how women are interpellated differently from men in nationalist projects. In their conceptualization of the role women take within nationalist/ethnic processes, Floya Anthias and N. Yuval Davis argue that women bear a great burden as they are supposed to be the “biological reproducers of the members of the national collectivities”, as well as being the “boundary-makers of ethnic-national groups”, “transmitters of the national culture” and the “signifiers of

¹⁴³ Kadınların en büyük vazifesi analıktır(...) Büyük atalarımız ve onların anaları, tarihin, vukuatın şahadeti ile sabittir ki, cidden yüksek faziletler göstermişlerdir. (...) o faziletlerin en büyüğü ve en ehemmiyetlisi kıymetli evlatlar yetiştirmeleriydi. Hakikaten Türk milletinin bütün cihanda yalnız Asya’da değil Avrupa’da dahi azim satvetler göstermiş olması, mutantan harekât icra eylemiş bulunması hep öyle kıymetli ataların faziletli evlatlar yetiştirmesi ve daha beşikten çocuklarının ruhuna mertlik ve faziletlik telkin eylemesi sayesinde idi...kadınlarımızı vazife-i umumiyyede uhdelere düşen hisselerden başka kendileri için en ehemmiyetli, en hayırlı, en faziletkâr bir vazifeleri de iyi bir valide olmaktır.¹⁴³ A speech from Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Available [online]: <http://www.uslanmam.com/ulu-onderimiz-m-kemal-ataturk/32985-ataturkun-konulara-gore-ayrilmis-sozleri.html> [1September 2007]

national difference and active participants of national struggles”.¹⁴⁴ Beside their nurturing and caring functions, motherhood as the highest form of national service seems to involve women’s contribution to the reproduction of national culture through transmitting its contents to the younger generations. Similarly, in Turkey, Kemalism as the ideology of a nationalist project has been emphasizing with gratitude the service of women as mothers to the newly established republic. The universality of motherhood is filled with a particular kind of mothering which is focused on rearing the Turkish subject. In that context, Kurdish mothers are constructed as the abject mothers of abject children. Therefore, nationalist discourse applauds a specific form of mothering that not only consists of “nurturing and caring for another” in Glenn’s terms¹⁴⁵, but is most importantly about the social and cultural reproduction which in the end performs a function for the production of a particular historical subject of Turkish nationalism.

The image of the woman as the “mother of the nation” frequently determines the cultural codes of the “appropriate” behavior for women such as defining women as the constitutive actor of the domestic sphere in their division of labor with men. This service of women in the name of motherhood is rationalized through images of the sacrificial, devoted mother. Below is the declaration of the Association of Turkish Mothers for Mothers’ Day.

We celebrate the Mothers’ Day of all our mothers who are the only beings in our lives loving us unconditionally. Motherhood is the most sacred, most supreme feeling in the world. The human values they instilled on us are guiding posts throughout our lives. In that regard, the most fundamental factor determining the place one will have in the society is the education she or he receives in the family. Our responsibility towards our mothers, who raise us in good times and in

¹⁴⁴ F. Anthias and N. Yuval Davis, *Woman-Nation-State*, (Macmillan: London, 1989)

¹⁴⁵ Glenn, Evelyn Nakano. “Social Constructions of Mothering: A Thematic Overview.” In *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, and Agency* edited by Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Grace Chang and Linda Rennie Forcey, (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 3.

bad, bearing all the obstacles life throws upon them and showing us the way in all our troubles is great. Mothers are the most precious assets of Turkish society, since they do not refrain at all from any sacrifice in order to raise our children and youth, who are the hope for tomorrow, in the best possible way. The place and value of our mothers in our social lives, who are most dearly valued in the traditional Turkish family structure, can never be properly acknowledged. The love for the mother is an indefinable and very intense [sort of] love. It is our ultimate mission to comfort our mothers in all periods of their lives and to show our love and the due respect to them. Whatever is done for them, will never be enough.¹⁴⁶

Carol Pateman argues that on the one hand, motherhood symbolizes “the natural capacities that set women apart from politics and citizenship”, and on the other, “it constitutes a channel for incorporating women into the modern political order through defining women’s service and duty to the state”¹⁴⁷. As a result, although motherhood has been idealized as existing somehow beyond or above the political arena, it acts as a political agency between the nation-state and women. So, the privacy of motherhood is indeed political. Nükhet Sirman argues that during the process of nation formation in Turkey, the discourses that construct proper citizenship produced a particular form of citizenship which she calls familial citizenship:

This indicates a gendered discourse in which the ideal citizen is inscribed as a sovereign husband and his dependent wife/mother rather than an individual with the result that position within a familial discourse provides the person with status within the polity. Public identities are made sense of primarily through familial identities that are also peculiar to the discourses that produce them and should not be understood as another universal. The use of categories that are supposed to have universal meanings, such as family and citizen, thus renders the resulting discourse of the nation and its relation to its subject seemingly universal, turning the analysis of citizenship on the

¹⁴⁶ Available [online]: <http://www.geocities.com/turkander/anne.htm> [1 September 2007]. Turkish version of the message is available in APPENDIX E.

¹⁴⁷ Pateman, Carole. “Equality, Difference, Subordination.” In *Beyond Equality and Difference*, edited by Gisela Block and Susan James. (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 17-32.

basis of this universal discourse largely into a list of lacks; of human rights, of individual freedoms, of women's rights and so on.¹⁴⁸

For our discussion, this “list of lacks” that Sirman draws our attention to also involves Kurdish women unrepresented in this universality. Kurdish women are among those who are not represented in these universal categories that constitute the relation between the nation state and its citizens. Since a particular form of motherhood is constructed at the expense of other ways of mothering, one that promotes conformity to the dictates of Turkish nationalism; abject mothers and their equality with other women on the basis of their motherhood are left out of these well-defined universal categories.

For Butler, the normative position of the subject is defined by and dependent on what is excluded, that is its constitutive outside. She explains that the formation of subjects requires the simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings. She says “The abject designates here precisely those “unlivable” and “uninhabitable” zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the “unlivable” requires to circumscribe the domain of the subject.”¹⁴⁹ Following this argument, Kurdish mothers as the mothers of a counter culture and the mothers of militants appear as the constitutive outside of the Turkish motherhood in Turkey. They are mothers who do not matter, who are not valued, and not protected:

A group of 50 people willing to protest without permission are under custody.

50 persons from the group called “the Initiative for the Mothers of Peace” are taken into custody in Beyoğlu.

¹⁴⁸ Nükhet Sirman, “The Making of Familial Citizenship in Turkey.” In *Citizenship in Global World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), pp.147.

¹⁴⁹ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”*, (New York: Routledge, 1993), p.3.

The group, who gathered in front of the Turkcell building in Odakule at noon and attempted to pass a press statement on the occasion of “September 1, The World Peace Day”, was surrounded by the law enforcement officers. 50 persons were taken into custody from the group who attempted to shout Kurdish slogans.¹⁵⁰

The above statements are from *Milliyet*, a prominent newspaper in Turkey. Here, instead of defining the women from the Mothers of Peace as mothers, the news says that “they call themselves Mothers of Peace”. Therefore, it defines them as a group and narrates their arrest without giving any reference to their being mothers which is the basis of their gathering.

Thus, excluding the existence of Kurdish mothers from the narratives of mothers of the nation makes it possible to imagine a unified Turkish motherhood. The repressed identity of Kurdish motherhood is central to the very formation of the subjectivity of Turkish motherhood. In that sense through the constitution of two types of motherhood as mutually exclusive, Turkish nationalism produces improper ways of mothering-a wrong-doing in the very act of mothering- as the constitutive outside, the abject.

It is a fact that terror has aggravated with this government. The smallest example would be the last speech of the prime minister in Diyarbakır. It has aggravated the pawns. Some of the traitorous people from that region, who see themselves as right, are making us attend new funeral ceremonies for the martyrs. They are again shooting our soldiers. They are publicizing the mothers of the terrorists in the newspapers. Let them teach their children first not to become terrorists. We are not the addressee of the call for continence.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Beyoğlu'nda izinsiz yürüyüş yapmak isteyen 50 kişi gözaltındaBeyoğlu'nda "Barış Anneleri İnisiyatifi" adlı gruptan 50 kişi, gözaltına alındı.Odakule'deki Turkcell binasının önünde öğle saatlerinde toplanan ve "1 Eylül Dünya Barış Günü" dolayısıyla basın açıklaması yapmaya çalışan grubun etrafı, güvenlik güçleri tarafından çevrildi.Kürtçe slogan atmaya çalışan gruptan 50 kişi gözlem altına alınırken, gruptaki diğer kişiler ise olaysız dağıldılar. Available [online]: <http://www.milliyet.com/2001/08/26/son/sontur18.html>. [1 September 2007]

¹⁵¹ Bu hükümetle birlikte terörün azdığı bir gerçek. En küçük örnek başbakanın Diyarbakır'daki son konuşmasıdır. Maşaları azdırmıştır. Kendini haklı gören o bölgenin bazı hain insanları bunu fırsat bilip yine şehit cenazesi kaldırıyorlar bize. Yine bizim askerlerimizi vuruyorlar. Teröristlerin annelerini gazetelere çıkarıyorlar. Önce çocuklarına katil olmamayı öğretsinler. İtidal çağrısının mercii biz değiliz. Savaşa taraftar olan onlar. Available. [online]: <http://www.turksolu.org/91/soylesi91.htm> [1 September 2007]

The above statement belongs to Gönül Apaydın who is the mother of a martyr. She is defining the Kurdish issue as a problem of terror, defining the PKK as the perpetrator and the soldiers as the victims. Her statement defines the mothers of the guerillas as abject mothers who failed to raise their children in conformity with the ideal notion of a Turkish subject. Telling them to teach their children not to be killers signifies the point where the Kurdish mothers' error in their carework is targeted. The category of mother is grasped through its opposite, the non-mother. In that sense, the production of a subversive subject is caused by errors committed. This error produces the abject mother who can no longer be perceived as a proper mother. In that sense, mothers are here divided into two. Women who fail to conform to the dominant motherhood model are in a position of the abject within the Turkish public sphere. Although women in the Mothers of Peace have continued to insist on motherhood as a means to legitimate their political demands, their appropriation of symbols and images associated with motherhood such as care and life giving does not create the desired response in the Turkish public sphere. "Tears have no colors" was one of the most popular slogans of the Mothers of Peace, illustrates their aim to subvert boundaries between mothers and their pain by employing the symbol of a sorrowful mother. Kurdish mothers' claim to motherhood is a moment of both construction and deconstruction. "In the case of the essentialist and anti-essentialist moments, these two moments should be seen not as separate phases, not as incorrect/correct alternatives, but as supplements, in a manner analogous to the relation between metaphysics of presence and of de-construction".¹⁵²

¹⁵² Debra Bergoffen, "February 22, 2001: Toward a Politics of the Vulnerable Body," *Hypatia* 18, no. 1 (Winter 2003), pp. 166-134.

This moment of simultaneous construction and deconstruction renders their appearance in the public sphere as a challenge and counter attack to the way motherhood is defined by the Turkish national project. In that sense, it is not what motherhood is, but what is done in its name that determines the functions of motherhood. Motherhood appears as a field of discursive contest, as an empty signifier rather than a fixed relationship between children and mothers. As argued by Laclau, the universal does not embody a content of its own, “but is an absent fullness or rather, the signifier of fullness as such, of the very idea of fullness”¹⁵³. Moreover, the success of a particular content to fill the universal in a particular moment is a matter of politics and power struggle. That is why, Butler emphasizes undecidability in the performance of the universal: “What is permitted within the term universal is understood to be dependent on a consensus (and) ... presumes that what will and will not be included in the language of universal entitlement is not settled once and for all, that its future shape cannot be anticipated at this time”¹⁵⁴

Therefore, the very idea that motherhood is beyond politics is also appropriated by official discourse and in the discourse of the Mothers of Peace as a matter of power struggle. However, this constituted incommensurability between motherhood and politics is used to differentiate mothers and the abject mothers, and to constitute the moment of politics as the moment when women cease to be mothers. Turkish motherhood in this discourse signified true motherhood that is beyond politics and is sacred. This differentiation derives from how what is beyond politics and what is not is constructed by the official discourse. The political is attributed to

¹⁵³ Laclau, Ernesto. *Emancipation(s)*. London: Verso, 1996.

¹⁵⁴ Butler, Judith. “The End of Sexual Difference?.” In *Feminist consequences: Theory for the New Century*, edited by Elisabeth Bronfen and Misha Kavka. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp. 430 quoted in Debra Bergoffen, “February 22, 2001: Toward a Politics of the Vulnerable Body,” *Hypatia* 18, no. 1 (Winter 2003), pp. 125.

the practices that contest the norm and the natural. Although, as it is stated above, motherhood is never beyond politics in the Turkish public sphere, it is labeled as a political tool only when motherhood is underlined to say something outside of the dominant ideology. Since motherhood is intertwined with nation-state in the official discourse, the way Kurdish mothers hold a claim to motherhood becomes problematic in the Turkish public. Here, Turkish nationalism limits the universality of motherhood to the particular identity of the Turkish mother, such that Kurdish mothers' appeal to motherhood as a life preserving, peaceful identity is rejected by the Turkish public, and thus Kurdish mothers are accused of doing politics in the name of "the terrorist organization. This shows that invoking traditional sensibilities and engendering emotional responses may not always manage to change perceptions of the masses easily as these sensibilities are always vulnerable to their discursive construction.

Mothers of the abject are blamed for the error in their work of caring, as they did not succeed in rearing children in a way that is concordant with republican values. The burden of parental guilt is one of the statements that are used in the discourses of the government officials and members of the Turkish public sphere. They are derided as failed mothers. One of the ministers of internal affairs, Abdulkadir Aksu's speeches emphasize the responsibility of being a mother and father.

Attend to your children and youngsters; don't give others the opportunity to lead them in wrong directions. Don't accept their being dragged away in such wrong ways and don't blacken their future by leaving them forlorn. Don't let the divisive terror organization drag your children to the morass they are stuck in. Fulfill the responsibility of being mothers and fathers.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵Çocuklarınıza ve gençlere sahip çıkınız, birilerinin onları yanlış istikametlere yönlendirmelerine fırsat vermeyiniz. Onların bu şekilde yanlış yollara sürüklenmelerine göz yummayın ve sahipsiz bırakarak geleceklerini karartmayın. Bölücü terör örgütünün içinde bulunduğu bataklığa, çocuklarınızı

Aksu addresses the parental responsibility in the political choices of the children. Here, being a responsible parent is identified with raising a child who conforms to the existing system. Otherwise, parents are blamed for failing to rear proper children and they are not regarded as proper parents. Within the bounds of this discourse, the representation of suffering due to the loss of abject children has no value since it is the anguish of irresponsible parents who fail in child-rearing and who do not deserve empathy. In the statement below, a unionist warns the public about the responsibility of parents in preventing their children to engaging in “terrorist activities”.

Mothers and fathers should not stop communicating with the youngsters, should not push them into the streets. Those young people who can't find the intimacy and care they expect from their families throw themselves out to the streets. Therefore, they fall prey to the treacherous plots of gangs and terrorist organizations. We should raise our youngsters with the due sensibility of attending properly to the national and moral values. We see what those people who are devoid of moral values and of the love for country will commit. The government should claim these deserted young people.¹⁵⁶

The above statement draws attention to the notion of parental responsibility in rearing proper citizens for the country. Failure in the realization of this responsibility is a parental guilt which is used to explain children's subversive acts. In such cases, it is generally mothers who are blamed for failing to take care of their children, as they are the persons in charge of this task in the private sphere.

da çekmelerine izin vermeyin .Anne ve baba olmanın sorumluluğunu yerine getirin. Available [online]:<http://www.tumgazeteler.com/?a=1430709>, [1 September 2007]

¹⁵⁶ Anne ve babalar gençlerle iletişim kurmayı kesmemeli, onları sokağa itmemeli. Aileden istediği ve beklediği sıcaklığı, ilgiyi bulamayan gençler kendilerini sokağa atıyor. Böylece çetelerin ve terör örgütlerinin ağlarına düşüyorlar. Gençleri milli, manevi değerlerine sahip çıkacak duyarlılıkta yetiştirmeliyiz. Manevi değerlerden, ülke sevgisinden yoksun kişilerin neler yapacağını görüyoruz. Hükümet kimsesiz gençlere sahip çıkmalı` dedi. A speech of a union leader-union of state officials . *Yeni Asya*, 2 July 2005

Below is the speech of Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan after the Diyarbakır events on March 28, 2006. Those events emerged out of the tension between the people *of* the region, who wanted to hold a funeral for the guerillas killed in the armed conflict, and the military and police forces *in* the region. According to the report of the Human Rights Association in Diyarbakır, ten citizens five of whom were children died, and a number of citizens and activists were injured in the events. The report claims that the security forces opened fire on the masses.¹⁵⁷ Tayyip Erdoğan evaluates the events in Diyarbakır with these words:

Those who leave their children in the streets or let them be manipulated by the terrorist organizations, your cries tomorrow will be in vain. Our law enforcement officers will conduct the necessary form of intervention [for everyone] anyhow, even for the children, the women, [I mean] whoever is involved, if they became a pawn of terror. You cannot find an understanding of rights and liberties anywhere in the world that extenuates violence and terror. Violence is not a legitimate way of seeking remedy.¹⁵⁸

Referring to Judith Butler, Begona Aretxaga argues that power works to differentiate between the legitimate objects of emotions (in this case love and grief) from the illegitimate objects of emotions. Similarly, Erdoğan here reproduces this distinction. He claims that it is a parental guilt to let “children be used by the terrorist organization” and he strictly deems those who committed this sin as the illegitimate objects of emotion whose tears will not mean anything anymore. From there onwards, their children would be nothing but bare lives who can be killed as a result of the law preserving acts of the sovereign.

¹⁵⁷Çocuklarını sokaklara dökenler veya çocuklarının terör örgütleri tarafından kullanılmasına fırsat verenler, yarın ağlamanız boş yere olacaktır. Güvenlik güçlerimiz çocuk da olsa, kadın da olsa, kim olursa olsun, terörün maşası haline gelmişse gerekli müdahale ne ise bunu yapacaktır. Dünyanın hiçbir yerinde şiddet ve terörü mazur gösterecek hak ve özgürlükler anlayışı bulamazsınız. Şiddet meşru bir hak arama yolu değildir. Available [online]:

<http://www.bianet.org/bianet/kategori/insanhaklari/77356/diyarbakirda-10-olum-var-h%C3%A2%C3%A2-islem-yok> [1 September 2007]

¹⁵⁸ 2006-03-31 23:06:01 Zaman<http://www.tumgazeteler.com/?a=1424382>

Agamben also argues that this distinction between the legitimate and illegitimate lives lies in the very foundation of sovereignty. At the heart of the sovereignty of the state, Agamben argues, lies its capacity to kill with impunity a liminal category of victims that he refers to as *homo sacer* (bare life).¹⁵⁹ The state of exception allows the definition of a social category which exists outside political life and whose humanity is denied thereby. Achille Mbembe also draws attention to the significance of decision making about life and death in terms of the constitution of sovereignty:

This essay assumes that the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die. Hence, to kill or to allow to live constitute the limits of sovereignty, it's the ways of killing that do not themselves vary much. In the case of massacres in particular, lifeless bodies are quickly reduced to the status of simple skeletons. Their morphology henceforth inscribes them in the register of undifferentiated generality: simple relics of an unburied pain, empty, meaningless corporealities, strange deposits plunged into cruel stupor. In the case of the Rwandan genocide—in which a number of skeletons were at least preserved in a visible state, if not exhumed—what is striking is the tension between the petrification of the bones and their strange coolness on the one hand, and on the other, their stubborn will to mean, to signify something.¹⁶⁰

It is not wrong to claim that Kurdish militants live their lives in a state of exception. While their deaths are not taken as sacrifice, any sign of identification with them is also sufficient to unleash the violence of the state of exception. Through the mothers' appearance in the public sphere, the loss of Kurdish militants as bare lives become visible to the public gaze with a demand not only to mourn for the loss but also to act against the possibility of further losses. Associating the loss of the lives of guerillas with those losses which are found heroic in Turkey (mainly, the loss of Turkish

¹⁵⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer : Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen, (Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 1998)

¹⁶⁰ Mbembe, pp.11-12.

soldiers' lives) is in contradiction to the discourse on terrorism which renders Kurdish militants as abject and defines them as "bare lives". However, as it is stated above, by being the mothers of bare lives rather than ordinary citizens, women are already positioned in the margin. By virtue of being women who do not negate the struggle waged by their children against the sovereign, they immediately become the target of the law-preserving violence of the sovereign. By saying that no one, neither women nor children will be spared, Erdoğan also reminds the audience about the fact that in this condition women can also become the targets of the law-preserving violence of the sovereign. In that sense, here, the speeches of different subjects in the Turkish public reveal that mothers of the militants are not mothers who should be respected and who are the nation's most valuable ones.

This is the point where "the politics of exclusive motherhood" emerges. Pamela Ballinger¹⁶¹ uses this term in order to picture the "divided memory" of the Second World War in the city of Trieste in Italy. She uses the term "exclusive victimhood" where people and their memories are divided and where people are unable to recognize the atrocities perpetrated by members of their own group or the victimhood suffered by the other group. Each group identifies itself as having been the victim of the other group. Similarly, motherhood appears as a contested site in the context of Turkey. The state only recognizes the mothers of the nation while stamping the other mothers living in the country as abject. They are labeled as improper mothers of the subversives and are excluded from the type of motherhood that should be respected and valued.

In that sense, the activities of the mothers who support their children in their struggles against the state, are not favored by the public as a whole. When mothers

¹⁶¹ Ballinger, P. (2004), "Exhumed Histories: Trieste and the Politics of (exclusive), Victimhood", *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 145–59.

speak and act from this position with the intention of being good mothers, they are criticized for their activities and the way they are politicized. As deviant mothers who raised subversive children acting against state control and state ideologies, these mothers are generally viewed as a component of the problem. What is not tolerated in their position is their insistence on holding the Turkish state responsible for this violence, their unwillingness to call the PKK a terrorist organization and to viewing their children as the victims of the organization. Ahmet Taşgetiren, a columnist in *Yeni Şafak* writes about the Mothers of Peace in these words:

If this question is not posed here, then there always is the possibility of coming up with a situation where motherhood is being manipulated. That is the question: do the mothers of peace act with their initiative of motherhood, or, are they putting their relations to their children into the service of a mission? Such two attitudes: “My son, my daughter, go on with your struggle on the mountain. We will also continue in the city for the same cause. Now that the EU is also on our side...” [or] “My son, my daughter, this way is not a good way at all, we have been telling you from the very start. But we couldn’t make you listen. You left and betook to the mountains, yet you were defeated. Now the EU and the rest are trying to drag us into new ways. This way is also a dead end. Let’s fare forth to the roads, reach people’s hearts, but also turn back from this evil way immediately.” So which of these attitudes are displayed by the mothers of peace? They don’t say “Come down” to those in the mountain. For me, this is another type of motherhood. They ask for amnesty for Abdullah Öcalan. For me, this is also another type of motherhood. It is impossible for other mothers in the country to fail to read this image. And after diagnosing this strangeness, it is not possible at all for this mass that defines themselves as “Mothers of Peace” to receive an understanding approach, to draw support from the more general motherhood communities, let alone the Mothers of Martyrs. The initiative of the mothers of peace aims to give message to three targets: for the EU, “We are here, we undertake our cause with a civil interface, don’t hesitate to support us, if you support us you will not be wronged in our minority calculations”; for the women in the East and the Southeast, “See, we are on the road, we are merely women, we do not collapse, do not be afraid, if you join us we will be even stronger”; for those in the mountain, “We may not have understood your cause as your mothers and have tried to prevent you, but now we understand your cause and we are together with you in the street”. All these messages are far from motherhood... As for me, it is a very twisted terrain [of action]... Deception by the provocations of the EU... The worst is the exploitation of motherhood... It is obvious that

there will not come any form of peace from this line [of action]. Even if played out by the mothers, these are all parts of a game which obviously is not led by the mothers [of peace]... In that case, we will move towards not the meeting of the motherhood sensibilities, but the conflict of political stances. I believe the Kurdish problem is not being conducted under the initiative of right people. Neither the mothers are true mothers, nor the politicians [are true politicians]¹⁶²

The state only recognizes the pain of the guerilla mothers on the condition that they admit to being victims of the “terrorist organization” rather than of the state. In the above accounts, empathy is predicated upon exclusion: the exclusion of the experience of the women, the rejection of women and their children as political agents and the exclusion of injustice and inequality from the women’s accounts.

The state’s call to families to persuade their children to accept the conditions proposed by the Repentance Law was a significant example illustrating on what conditions families of the guerillas would be accepted as proper mothers and fathers. Zerrin Özlem Biner, in her analysis of the discourses of the state and of pro-Kurdish organizations on the Repentance Law, states that the law was perceived by the pro-Kurdish organizations as a tactic of the state that aims to undermine the whole struggle for freedom which has been developed by the Kurdish movement.

To promote the law, the Directory of the Security Forces prepared booklets and delivered them to the families of militants involved with “terror activities”. Extracts from a letter to both the families and the militants were published by one of the mainstream newspapers, *Hürriyet*. An article of 9 August 2003 reads: “To the parents, we are sure that you do not want to see your dearest, valued children involved with the terrorist organizations. We also do not want that because he/she is also our child. This is the right time to save our children from unpleasant and unwanted conditions in order to reduce the suffering of the past and make sure it never happens again. We do not want our young people to suffer at the hands of the terror organizations. With your support, let’s prepare our children for a new life. Let’s save our children.”¹⁶³

¹⁶² <http://www.yenisafak.com.tr/arsiv/2005/OCAK/01/atasgetiren.html>. Turkish version of Ahmet Taşgetiren’s article is available in APPENDIX F.

¹⁶³ Quoted in Zerrin Özlem Biner, “From Terrorist to Repentant: Who Is the Victim?”, *History and Anthropology* 17 no. 4, pp. 343.

Martrydom

The Mothers of Peace sought to include Turkish mothers in a wider “community of suffering”. However, rather than being a union of suffering, the loss of children became a significant site where the Turkish nationalist stance against the PKK seized upon the discourse of martyrdom. Funerals of martyrs became sites where the positions of victim and perpetrator were reversed. Zerrin Özlem Biner refers to Ann Stoler who states: “States make consent possible not through abstract processes of internalization, but by shaping appropriate and reasoned affect, by directing affective judgements, by severing some affective bonds and establishing others.”¹⁶⁴

The Kurdish issue for the Turkish state has always been one of “terrorism”, rather than a war between two camps. This way of labeling the issue constitutes the armed conflict between the state and the Kurdish militants as a matter of legitimate and illegitimate violence. Proliferating everyday, in the media, and in political rhetoric, discourses of “terror and victimhood” have long gained currency in the conflict. In Turkey, soldiers as “victims of terror” are also called martyrs. Public discourse gives meaning to the martyr with reference to the discourse of national unity and sacrifice. A common martyr’s parents’ statement -“if I had one more son, I would give him, too”¹⁶⁵ - is a good example of the discourse that glorifies the sacrifices in the name of national unity. These discourses of national unity, terrorism, victimhood and sacrifice work simultaneously in giving meaning to death. Here, motherhood is also produced as a sign of victimhood and empathy; subversion and ignorance and as a battle field between the polarized categories of the victims and the

¹⁶⁴ Biner , pp. 349.

¹⁶⁵ Bir oğlum olsa onu da veririm.

perpetrators. Different versions of boundaries drawn between aggressors and sufferers are also reflected in the conceptualizations of motherhood as proper and improper. This shows how motherhood and mother's love are context-bound rather than universal. Fatih Çekirge in his column writes about the discontent rising among the mothers of martyrs and reminds the Turkish public of the necessary practices of the proper mothers and blames the mothers who do not act like that as helping the causes of the PKK:

The question [to be posed] is this: There is “an insidious plan” or “a scenario” in front of the prime minister that PKK is trying to act out. Here are the details of this “insidious plan” which we all should inspect with great care. According to the information recently obtained, PKK was developing a new strategy. The name of this strategy was this: “Creating the illusion of common felings with the relatives of the martyrs”. Which means: When a mother of a martyr does not say ‘Let the country live on [instead of my child]’, supporting her; increasing such voices; systematically spreading such negative attitudes that bear the name ‘anti-war movements’. The mothers of peace should come together with anti-war relatives of the martyrs with the pretense that ‘Only the suffering mothers understand each other’. In that way, the connections of morale between people and the forces of law enforcement may be torn apart. To put this anguish into the heads of mothers who send their sons to military service, and then intensifying these reactions at their most sentimental moment, which is the funeral ceremony thereby to disconnect all ‘ties of citizenship’ between the state, the government, the *TSK* [Turkish Armed Forces] and the people. The idea that ‘Our sons are dying in vain’ should be fomented... To get in touch with the mothers of the martyrs through the mothers of peace by saying ‘Only we would understand each other’. Creating the illusion of common feelings, spreading and sustaining the idea that poor people are falling martyrs instead of the children of the rich, the ministers was the aim. The connections of morale between the citizen and the state, the army, should be collapsed. The feeling that ‘Our sons are dying in vain’ should be spread and sustained. Organizational events should be held in cities with great tension in order to inflame the Turk-Kurd conflict. Appointment of the families of the organization for these aims is necessary.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Turkish version of Fatih Çekirge's article is available in APPENDIX G.

Elleke Boehmer argues that the role of men and women in the nationalist processes differ in the sense that while men's role in the nationalist projects is 'metonymic' as if they were the real actors of the nation, women are imagined in a 'metaphoric or symbolic role' which prevents them from being national citizens.¹⁶⁷ Malathi de Alwis calls this process the feminization of the nation-state. According to that, the nation-state is identified as the motherland which nurtures its citizens yet demands protection in return. This particular positioning of women in relation to the nation-state becomes obvious in times of crises. Alwis adds "in times of crises such as war or uprising, such symbiotic relationships are especially highlighted: the heroism required of her male citizens foregrounded against the sacrifices of her female citizens."¹⁶⁸ According to this, mothers carry not only the responsibility of their families but also the responsibility of the nation.

Malathi de Alwis draws attention to the relationship between war and gender looking at the ways wars "socialize women as mothers and men as heroic sons". She continues that "it is the production of such subject positions that orient us towards a chronology of activity that naturalizes the assumption that these are our primary roles as patriotic citizens of the nation state."¹⁶⁹ Cynthia Enloe argues that the idealization of feminized sacrifice is an internal part of the mobilization of women during the times of war.¹⁷⁰ Drawing on her personal experience of being the mother of an Israeli soldier, Rela Mazali points out how "the phenomenon of sons-turned-troops"

¹⁶⁷ Boehmer, Elleke. "Stories of Women and Mothers: Gender and Nationalism in the Early Fiction of Flora Nwapa." In *Motherlands: Black Women's Writing From Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia* edited by Sushella Nasta, (London: Women's Press, 1992)

¹⁶⁸ de Alwis, Malathi. "Moral Mothers and Stalwart Sons: Reading Binaries in a Time of War." In *The Women And War Reader*, edited by Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer E. Turpin (New York University Press, 1998), pp. 255.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

transforms the parents of sons and daughters to the subjects of “parents of troops” which implies a “support for the social institutions of army, collective and the state”. Rela Mazali states: “This, I believe is the central insight that I am offering; along with their military duty, soldier sons in Israel are also performing the task of resocializing their parents”.¹⁷¹

Similarly, it can be argued that the moment one becomes the mother of a soldier; one is immediately called to enter into a different relationship with the state and the society. This relationship is based on the idea of sacrifice in the sense that despite the investment in care taking and parenting, mothers are expected to sacrifice their sons for the survival of the unity of nation and territory.

The families of martyrs appeared in the Turkish public sphere in two manners. The Association of Mothers of Martyrs was an organization of the patriotic mothers that gained visibility particularly during the trials of Abdullah Öcalan from 1999 and onwards. The women’s appearance in the public space, during the trials, was used by the state to proclaim its support to the families (of the martyrs) .

The heart-bled mothers of our soldiers who have fallen prey to the felonious bullets of PKK, asked for the extradition of the bloody handed Abdullah Öcalan to Turkey. Member mothers of the Istanbul Association for the Solidarity and Social Beneficence of the Mothers of Martyrs gathered in their association building in Küçükyaşı, yesterday. The mothers, who started to gather signatures in order to resort to the Italian authorities, said “Let the terror end. Let no one’s child become a martyr. Let Europe hear our voice. We will first go to the Italian Embassy in Ankara and lay a black wreath. If the head of PKK is not extradited, we will apply to the European Court of Human Rights”.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Mazali, Rela “Parenting Troops: The Summons to Acquiescence,” *The Women and War Reader*, edited by Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer E. Turpin (New York University Press, 1998), pp. 272.

¹⁷² PKK’nın kahpe kurşunlarına hedef olarak şehit düşen askerlerimizin bağı yanık anneleri, eli kanlı Abdullah Öcalan’ın biran önce Türkiye’ye iade edilmesini istediler. Çetebaşının Türkiye’ye iadesi için imza kampanyası başlatan İstanbul Şehit Anaları Dayanışma ve Sosyal Yardımlaşma Derneği üyesi anneler, dün Küçükyaşı’daki dernek binalarında toplandılar. İtalyan makamlarına iletmek üzere imza kampanyası başlatan anneler, “Terör artık bitsin. Kimsenin yavrusu şehit olmasın. Avrupa sesimize kulak versin. Bunun için önce Ankara’daki İtalyan Büyükelçiliği’ne gidip siyah çelenk bırakacağız. Eğer PKK’nın başı iade edilmesse, Avrupa İnsan Hakları Mahkemesi’ne başvuracağız” dediler. Available [online]: <http://webarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/1998/11/18/78604.asp>

The second manner in which the mothers of martyrs gained public visibility was through the funerals. Borrowing from Mazali, funerals construct the “emotionally and politically loaded subject of” the Turkish mother. The “good mother” does not resist her son’s entry into war but instead supports his ideals through a variety of volunteer activities. As a third way, some of the mothers of martyrs’ appearance in the public sphere takes a highly militarized form. According to Micheal Humphrey, the manipulation of the public spectacles of victimhood and suffering is internal to the constitution of sovereignty. Through these public displays, only one way of mothering is admitted as the proper motherhood and only one way of loss as the sacrifice to be grateful for.¹⁷³ For Foucault, “we are obliged to produce the truth by the power that demands truth and needs it in order to function”.¹⁷⁴ Following Foucault, it becomes apparent that the public representations of the mothers of martyrs as well as of the mothers of abjects become the sites where the truth effect of “terrorism” is produced and where victim and perpetrator are (re)defined. Losses, in the Turkish context, exclude the recognition of other losses and their victimization while concealing the responsibility of martyrs in their victimhood. This exclusion and concealment render the Turkish and Kurdish victimization incommensurate in the Turkish public sphere.

These public representations reveal that war against terrorism is fought on a variety of fronts other than the battlefield. Mothers are targeted by the war

[1 September 2007].

¹⁷³ Michael Humphrey, “From Victim to Victimhood: Truth Commissions and Trials as Rituals of Political Transition and Individual Healing,” *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 14, no.2. (2003), pp. 176.

¹⁷⁴ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. trans. by Colin Gordon. (New York: Pantheon, 1980.)

propaganda during the process of consolidating the legitimacy of the on-going war. This shows how the universal portrayal of motherhood as nurturing, peacemaking and life-giving is not something universal after all and requires other functions to take its most valued form in the national discourse. Instead, maternal imagery, with its powerful symbolic and emotional resources becomes a function of garnering support for war. At that point, De Volo's argument is appealing as he underlines how wars are collectivized as wars of nations through the exclusion of different voices that are against the war for any reason: "In mobilizing a nation to war, differences are squelched as the individual voices of the citizens must appear to speak as one. Since a nation's way of life is to be protected, voices outside the mainstream appear as a threat"¹⁷⁵

In his analysis of production of victimhood in the context of Corsica, Matei Candea refers to Žižek to explain how victimhood becomes a site for ideological battle: "As, Žižek puts it, it is in this grounding of the general in the particular that ideological battles are lost and won."¹⁷⁶ Similarly, in Turkey the creation and delegitimation of mothers as suffering communities became one of those enduring battles. Ironically, while motherhood is proposed as a space to unite the women against the war, it also appears as the source of division between them. State violence in the Southeast in these funerals appears as a "spectre" which defines the limits of motherhood. Slavoj Žižek defines spectre as something primordially repressed and foreclosed from reality.¹⁷⁷ In other words, it is the irrepresentable X and its repression on which the truth itself is founded. Here, in the representations of motherhood in the

¹⁷⁵ de Volo, Lorraine Bayard. "Drafting Motherhood: Maternal Imagery and Organizations in the United States and Nicaragua." In *The Women and War Reader* edited by Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer E. Turpin Publisher. (New York University Press: 1998), pp.241.

¹⁷⁶ Žižek, Slavoj. "The Spectre of Ideology." In *Mapping Ideology*, edited by Slavoj Žižek, London: Verso, 1995), pp.21.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

Turkish public, the irrepresentable X appears as the violence used by the state. This division of bad and good mothers for different publics is a challenge to the idea of a uniform conception of women's goals, interests and moral visions which refers to an essentially womanly ethic and ethos of maternal responsiveness, attentiveness and caring labor. Thus the existence of an irrepresentable X, in this case public discourse on the use violence, reveals that women are not simply a preexisting category of political subjects in need of representation but they are the product of political representations. This is how the official ideology in Turkey produces only one kind of woman as the real woman.

Although women propose motherhood as something "beyond" politics, it does not negate politics and even launches a particular kind of politics. On the one hand, the de-politicization of maternal love becomes a means to achieve speech and authority. On the other hand, the discourse undermines itself as it limits the representation of oppression, discrimination and violence. Their attempt to legitimize their losses in front of the public gaze with the help of the universality of maternal love does not render their position free from political and social loads.

I argue that approaching politics and motherhood as mutually exclusive entities renders the relation between the two performances as a struggle through which one will eventually win the game. To put motherhood as something beyond politics immediately makes the performances of women vulnerable to the attacks which claim that politics is what lies beneath their performance of motherhood. These claims will question not only whether they are really mothers or not, but also whether they are really innocent mothers or not. So, women's insistence on the ontological primacy of motherhood intersects with the Turkish state's approach to mothers in the sense that both of them operate in a common terrain of the

authenticity and efficacy of a mother's tears and curses. This situation reinforces the state's authority and power to retaliate that these women were not "good" mothers or that they were the pawns of a political party/ organization. By drawing attention to the good mothers who sacrificed their children for the sake of the unity of the country and by the use of counter images of mothers of martyrs and funerals as counter rituals, the state undermines the unifying power of the image of sorrowful mothers. Thus, in the wake of the attacks on the police and soldiers, their funerals become the occasion for noisy demonstrations by ultra-nationalists who demand tougher action against the PKK by the government.

The Mothers of Peace does not seem to have realized its initial aim which was to present mothers as potential peacemakers who can leave their differences aside and talk to each other. They claimed that mothers could talk to each other where men had failed, and that if they stood together they could step beyond the violence. Motherhood appears as a tactic appropriated by a marginalized group to make their oppression heard. But motherhood as a tactic is not wielded by Kurdish mothers only, but also by the state itself which reinforces the continuation of the established order. In that context motherhood does not enable them to survive and challenge their oppression.

This section concentrated on the analysis of the interplay between the official discourse on mothering and the counterdiscourse of Kurdish mothers as a site for political struggle. It is argued that in a context where the act of mothering is defined solely within the limits of rearing Turkish national subjects and where Kurdish mothers -mothers of the guerillas-are rendered abject in the sense that they are no longer considered as proper mothers, and thus appealing to motherhood as an identity that will gain empathy runs into difficulties in gaining popular support. Analyzing

the limits of appealing to motherhood, I tried to decipher the points where the women's claims to the universality of motherhood have failed and maternal love ceased to generate political empathy and solidarity for the Kurdish mothers, where it is used as a means of marginalizing them. The second aim of this chapter was to put forward an account of the politics of motherhood as it is intertwined with issues of sovereignty, power and nationalism. Although the objective here is not to refuse doing politics through universals, the case of Mothers of Peace is a prominent example to reveal the limits of such politics. George Yudice argues that different groups can produce diverse performances of certain practices giving them new meanings and causing them to take on different values.¹⁷⁸ It is this antagonistic relationship between these differences that start a struggle of hegemony at the sites of these practices and takes their specific meanings. This discussion is significant in understanding how members of the Mothers of Peace are recognized and marginalized within the Turkish public.

¹⁷⁸ George Yúdice, "Marginality and the Ethics of Survival," *Social Text*, no. 21, (1989), pp. 214-236.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis, focusing on the official discourse on mothering and Kurdish issue and the counterdiscourse of Kurdish mothers, I have explained how motherhood became a contested space rather than a universal identity in Turkey. This shows how concepts which are taken as given like motherhood are not only socially but also politically constructed. In that sense, I have given an account of motherhood revealing its relation to sovereignty, power and nationalism.

I have demonstrated that the Kurdish women's attempt to appropriate the discourse of motherhood as a tool for creating a common space between Turkish and Kurdish mothers has failed. In other words, the notion of motherhood has been insufficient in generating a way of doing politics for peace concerning the Kurdish issue within the context of Turkey. Understanding this insufficiency is significant for both practical and theoretical concerns. In the Mothers of Peace, Kurdish women proposed the identity of motherhood as a possible tool to put an end to the distinction between sacrifice and bare life regarding the Kurdish militants and the Turkish soldiers in the Turkish public. Through defining motherhood as a neutral identity the women in the Mothers of Peace attempted to position themselves in a mediating role between the Turkish state, Turkish public and the PKK. However, this discourse of universality is broken up by both sides regarding the Kurdish women in the Mothers of Peace and the Turkish public.

For the Mothers of Peace, the discourse of motherhood as a universal and neutral identity which promotes life does not work since their call to Turkish mothers as “we

as mothers” is immediately fractured by the narratives of the women in the Mothers of Peace. In the narratives, this call to “we” is fractured at the very moment that the women in the Mothers of Peace attempt to voice the inequalities between Kurds as “us” and Turks as “them.” In that sense, the universality and neutrality of motherhood is in a flux through the narratives of women in the Mothers of Peace. In other words, the women’s combining their story as mothers with the story of oppression of Kurdish identity creates a rupture in the constitution of motherhood as a homogenous identity, this time constructing Kurdishness as a homogenous entity. State oppression and social discrimination constructs the difference between the experiencing of motherhood by Turkish women and Kurdish women. This continuous re(constitution) of the discourses of universality/particularity displays how the motherhood is constructed as relational, unstable and hybrid in the narratives of women in the Mothers of Peace rather than a universal identity that is capable of accounting for the entire experience of a Kurdish mother.

On the other hand, in the Turkish public motherhood is identified with the practice of rearing proper Turkish subjects who are willing to sacrifice their lives for the sake of their country and the nation. Furthermore, the official discourse on the Kurdish issue depicts the Turkish state and its -proper- citizens as victims in a continuum of terrorism. By defining the issue as a problem of terrorism, it detracts the attention away from the Turkish state and its violation regarding the Kurds. In that context, the moment the women in the Mothers of Peace defined the perpetrator as the Turkish state and the victim as the Kurdish people, they failed to be accepted as proper mothers in the Turkish public. In that context, the universality and the neutrality of the motherhood in the Turkish public is preserved by the exclusion of the other practices of mothering from the category of the motherhood. Again the way

motherhood is constructed in the Turkish public breaks the discourse of motherhood as a commonality between the Turkish mothers and Kurdish mothers.

In that context, the aim of this thesis is not to say that the women's appearance in the public sphere through the identity of the motherhood is meaningless but to reveal limits of such politics within the Turkish context. Considering the politics of the Mothers of Peace sharing the narratives of the women in the organization with wider publics can really be influential in transmitting the pain lived by the Kurdish mothers to their audience. However, to get interested in these narratives is not a common behavior within the Turkish public. The dynamics of disinterestedness in politics or fear to contact with the people who are politically active accompanied with the invisibility of the Kurdish mothers in the media undermine the aim of the organization which is to create a change in the perspective of the Turkish public on the Kurdish issue.

In the Mothers of Peace, the failure of the organization in creating public support for a peaceful solution of the Kurdish issue is mainly explained by state oppression. Constructing "state" as a homogenous entity carrying out oppression, women create a "state effect" in Timothy Mitchell's terms, which is "an inert structure that somehow stands apart from individuals, precedes them, and contains and gives a framework to their lives."¹⁷⁹ The "state effect" helps women externalize the responsibility of their ineffectiveness and transfer it to the state. Reflecting the problems to the oppressive policies of the state and the ignorance of the media, the women in the Mothers of Peace do not question the impossible sides of the way they do politics. My point here does not aim to ignore the really oppressive policies of the state and the ignorance of the mainstream media. But I argue that this way of

¹⁷⁹ T. Mitchell, 'Society, Economy and the State Effect.' In *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn* edited by G. Steinmetz, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 89.

approaching problem obscures the impasses within the organization. This problem is not something peculiar to the Mothers of Peace but a characteristic of the way politics is done in Turkey¹⁸⁰. I observed this problem during my participation in the meetings of Istanbul women's platform. It was as if the ineffectiveness of the activism regarding the general public was something accepted in that platform. The members almost got used to this situation. What was significant in the discussions within these platforms was the act itself rather than its effect. In that sense, it may be argued that in Turkey oppositional movements also reproduce the Turkish state's attitude of externalizing the guilt. Just like the Turkish state which suspends individual and collective rights due to its concerns of survival and inside and outside threats concerning the Kurdish, Cypriot and Armenian issues instead of questioning its responsibility in these issues, the oppositional organizations blame the state as an entity for their failure in creating public support. To conclude, I argue that the case of Mothers of Peace shows how appropriating universal discourses like motherhood does not function in gaining public support by itself. Such strategies need a suitable context to achieve its goal, and this is the point where this thesis relates to practice, in other words, politics. This thesis outlined some of the significant points regarding the politics of motherhood in Turkey aiming to add new questions to the existing ones.

¹⁸⁰ This argument is a product of our discussions with Nükhet Sirman.

APPENDIX A – TURKISH VERSION OF THE N’S ACCOUNT ABOUT HOSPITALS

Ben artık bir ara hastalandım doktora gittim. Gittim mesela hemşireler doktorlar, bunu yapmamaları lazım, yani demokrasinin hiç o zaman ismi geçmiyordu Türkiye’de. Doktorlar bile ırkçılık yapıyorlardı. Yani Kürt diye köle gibi sömürüyorlardı. Hastaneye gittim mesela kimliğimi sordu. Evde unuttum dedim. “Nerelisin?” “Samsunluyum” dedim. Ben ama dilimi şey ediyordum yani. Tabi anlaşılır ne kadar olsa. Sen dilinden şey. Benim orada kalmışız. Bu sefer yalan konuşuyorduk biz. Sade bana kötü muamele yapmasınlar, bana bakılsın diye. Kimliğimi bundan alıp size şey yaparım. İnsan yalan konuşarak diyordum ki ben Samsunluyum, kendi memleketimi korkudan inkar ediyordum. Çünkü komşumdan, resmi yerde, her yerde görüyorum. Hastanede dahi yattığım zaman tabi dilim ne kadar olsa, benzetemiyorum, ama giysilerimi kültürümünlara gayet benzetiyordum. Gençtim o zaman yani onları geçiyordum belki. Bu sefer de dilimle konuştuklarım zaman dilimi anlıyorlardı. Herkes bana böyle bakıyordu. Yani çelişki. Yani giyimi böyle yani Kürttür. “Sen Kürt müsün?” diyor. “Aman Kürtse boşver, ölsün gitsin.” Böyle muameleler görüyordum Artık benim beyim bu memlekette bu şekilde yapamıyordu. Hayır yapıyorlar, üstümüze geçiriyorlar. O kadar insanız yardım sever insanız ne bileyim.

APPENDIX B – TURKISH VERSION OF THE P’S ACCOUNT

Ben ıřık yakarken saat drtt gece. Nisan ayıdır. 23 Nisan’da ocuęum doędu 25 falan yani iki  gnlktr. O ana dřer kalır lambayı yaktım.Lamba yle aık olunca dedim ocuęumu emzireyim.Yani sen kırlısın, ocuęunu emzireceksin. ocuk yani doęmuřkktr. Lambayı sndrceksin.Ya da sen gerillaya ekmek vermiřsin. ocuęumu emziriyorum, baktım bir sr kpek asker.Geldi kapıya vuruyor. Kapı da demir kapı. Cama tař atıyor...Ben de nasıl titriyorum.Cahilik var ne kadar da olsa kyde ben yle asker falan grmedim. řimdi olsa sen ne istiyorsun benden yani. Dilim yok farklı bir dildir. Onlar Trke konuřuyor. Ben Krte.ocuk baktım aęlayacak.Aęlarken elini aęzına koydum korkudan. Baktım ocuk mosmor oldu. Dedim ocuk ld. On dakika sonra baktım kımıldadı. Ama korkudan yani dedim gelirse ieriye asker ne bileyim napacak. Kaynanam yok kimsem yok saat drtte.Korkudan ocuęumu gze aldım yani.

APPENDIX C – TURKISH VERSION OF N’S ACCOUNT

Ondan sonra botlarla kapılarımızı kırıyorlardı. Çırılçıplak yataktan kaldırıyodular. Namus diye bir şey onlarda yoktu. Yani öyle diyor bize böyle bir emir gelmiştir. Arıyorlar bir şey bulamıyorlar. İnsan nereye yaşayacak? ...Biz o zaman bilmiyorduk. Şimdi nasıl ki kızımın üstünde baskı vardı. O zamanlar güneydoğuda din koymuş. Mesela diyor ki müftü kalkıyor televizyonu açıyorsun radyoyu açıyorsun, müftü diyor ki bakın diyor nevrüza giden insanın imanı yoktur. İmansızdır diyor. 40 gün imanı yoktur Newroz'un önünden geçerse. Biz akrabalarından da korkuyoruz. Yani akrabalarımız da dini şey bakıyor. Yani geçek biz nereye gidelim. Bu kadar baskıya. İnsanlar diyor ki ses etmeyin. Sizi dövseler de tutsalar da kesseler de. Yani onun için bizim kız iki sene bize herhangi bir şey yansıtmadı. Biliyordu biz gözaltına gireceğiz. O şiddeti sen yaşamadın. Siz o zaman küçüktünüz. Yani o şiddeti yaşamadınız. Biz o şiddeti gördük. Şimdi ne ki? O şiddet her gün beş kişi Batman’da.

APPENDIX D – TURKISH VERSION OF M’S ACCOUNT

Şimdi ben bu her iki oğlumu da evlat hepsinin acısı ayrı ama, ben bu her iki oğlumda gerekten seçmeli çocuklarımdı gitti. En değerli en sevdiğim çocuklarımdı gitti. Ve ben ve eşim tek başımıza gittik çocuğumuzu yeniden topraktan çıkardık, getirdik. Diyarbakır’dan tespit ettik, parasını tespit ettik, teşhis ettik, oradan fotokopisini bize verdiler bize resmi olarak yol gösterdiler ve biz gittik yedisuya da gittik oradan cenazemizi çıkardık ve Fuat’ı çamurun içinden çıkardım ve ben dedim ben bir suyla yıkıyacağım (ağlıyor) izin de verilmedi oğlumun yüzünü yıkayayım tanıyayım, o izin de verilmedi, o şansım da yoktu. Fuat’ı oradan çamurlu bir şekilde tabuta koyduk geri getirdik çünkü ilk oğlumun cenazesi yoktu mezarı yoktu ben bunun bari mezarı olsun bazen gideyim onunla konuşayım onun toprağı ile konuşayım gibi bir anne duygusu ile düşünerek getirdim. Ve ben geldim tabut elimde valizi orada dediler nereye götüreceksin en dedim aile kabristanım var oraya götüreceğim ben getirdim Ahlat’ ın altından zaten ben ahlat altında, evimde hala oradadır, kabristanımız da oradadır. Getirdim. Ahlat’ ın karakolu önümüzü kesti. Bırakmadılar. Benim eşimi de yoldan aldılar cezaevine aldılar, gözaltına aldılar. Ve böyle ısrar ettim artık ısrar ettim dört saat, beş saat altı saat bu askerlerle mücadele ettim tek başıma cenazemle beraber, meclisten imdat istedim, bitlisin valisinden imdat istedim, insan hakları genel başkanından istedim, dünya af örgütünü çağırdım bana yardım edin dedim ben oğlumun cenazesini götüreyim nenesinin yanına defnedeyim diye söyledim. Bunların hepsi devreye girdiler, bu karakolun sözü geçerli olmadı karakol dedi ki siz eğer ki benim dediğimi yapmazsanız, ben burada Ahlat’ taysam iskeleti benim elimdedir, siz böyle yaptınız ben bunu bırakırım. Bu valinin, kaymakamın, meclisin sözü geçersiz

kaldı, devre dışı kaldılar ve çocuğumu da elimden aldılar, kaçırdılar ve bir korucu köyüne götürdüler, defnettiler. Ve böylece artık onların isteği ile olmuş gittiğim zaman hemen ihbar ediyorlar beni cenazenin üzerinden kaldırıyorlar. Ben oraya da ulaşamayacağım o şans da elimden gitti. Buna rağmen, bu acılarıma rağmen ben barış istedim. Hiç kin istemedim, hiç nefret istemedim, çünkü annelere kin nefret yakışmaz. Anneler evlatlarını doğururken, dünyaya getirirken evlatlarını büyütüp de onlarla yaşamak istiyor. Eğer bunu da kaybederse daha neyi kalıyor ki? Ben bu acıyı çektim başka annelerin acısının bir daha olmaması için acı acıyı getirir, acı yani hem fiziksel hem doğa hem ekonomik hem sosyal hem siyasal her taraftan insanlık açısından her taraftan harap haline getirir, yıkımdır yani. Bunu hiç istemedim ben hep barış istedim ben çünkü artık diğer evlatlarımı geri getiremem, çünkü geriye kalan torunlarım vardır. Türklerle Kürtler bin yıldır, ben şimdi yarı kürdüm yarı türküm, yarı Çerkez' im yarı da lazım. Her insandan bizim içimizde var. Biz evlenmişiz akrabalık oluşturmuşuz, biz bunlarla, yani tırnağı götür etten çek olmaz. Biz bunu hiçbir zaman dile getirmedik yaşamadık bu acıyı öfkeyi söylemedik biz bunu hiç söylemedik çünkü iz anayız benim çağrım odur ki türk annelerine, şehit annelerine onlar da kendi evlatları için biz ortak çalışma yürütelim.

APPENDIX E – TURKISH VERSION OF THE MESSAGE OF TRKAN AKSU,
THE PRESIDENT OF TURKISH MOTHERS' ASSOCIATION

Yasamda bizi belki de karsiliksiz seven tek varlik olan tm annelerimizin Anneler Gn'n kutluyoruz. Annelik; dnyadaki en kutsal grev, en yce duygudur. Onların bizlere asiladigi insani degerler, bir mr boyu yol gsterici olmaktadır. Bu bakımdan, kisinin birey olarak toplum iindeki yerini belirleyen en nemli faktr, aile ierisinde aldigi egitimdir. yi ve kt gnde, hayatın tm mesakketlerine katlanarak bizleri yetistiren ve her trl sorununuzda yol gsteren annelerimize karsi sorumlulugumuz byktr. Yarınlarımızın midi olan ocuk ve genlerimizin en iyi sekilde yetismeleri iin hibir fedakarliktan kaınmayan anneler, Trk toplumunun en degerli varliklaridir. Geleneksel Trk aile yapisi ierisinde her zaman bastaci yapılan annelerin, sosyal hayatimizdaki varligi ve degeri hibir zenginlikle ifade edilemez. Anne sevgisi, tarifi zor, ok byk bir sevgidir. Annelerimizi hayatlarının her dneminde rahat ettirmek ve hak ettikleri sevgi ve saygiyi gstermek, onlara karsi en nemli grevimizdir. Onlar iin ne yapilsa azdir.

APPENDIX F – TURKISH VERSION OF THE EXCERPT FROM AHMET TAŞGETİREN’S ARTICLE ON THE MOTHERS OF PEACE

Burada şu soru sorulmazsa, anneliğin sömürülmesi gibi bir durumla karşılaşma ihtimali de her zaman mevcuttur. Soru şu: -Acaba barış anneleri annelik inisiyatifi ile mi hareket ediyorlar, yoksa çocuklarıyla ilişkilerini, bir misyonun hizmetine mi sunuyorlar? Şöyle iki tavır: -Oğlum - kızım, dağdaki mücadeleye devam et. Biz de şehirde aynı dava için mücadele edeceğiz. Şimdi AB de bizim yanımızda... -Oğlum - kızım, bu yol yol değil, başından beri söyledik. Ama size dinletemedik. Dağlara çıktınız ama yenildiniz. Şimdi AB falan, yeni ümitler vererek bizi yeni yollara sürüklemek istiyor. Bu yol da çıkmaz. Biz anneler olarak yollara düşelim, insanların kalblerine ulaşalım, ama sizler de bu yanlış yoldan bir an önce dönün. Acaba barış anneleri hangi tavrı sergiliyor? Dağdakilere "inin" demiyorlar. Bana göre bu başka bir annelik. Abdullah Öcalan'a af istiyorlar. Bana göre bu da garip bir annelik. Bu görüntünün, Türkiye'deki başka anneler tarafından okunmaması mümkün değil. Ve bu garipliğe teşhis konulduktan sonra, kendilerini "Barış Anneleri" diye tanımlayan kütleye, diyelim "Şehit anneleri"nden bir anlayış gelmesi, daha geniş anne topluluklarından destek verilmesi söz konusu olamaz. "Barış anneleri"nin girişimi ise 3 hedefe mesaj vermeyi amaçlamış olur: -Avrupa Birliğine... "Biz buradayız, sivil bir görünümle davamıza sahibiz, desteğinizi eksik etmeyin, desteklerseniz azınlık hesabınızda yanılmayacaksınız." mesajı. -Doğu / Güneydoğu'da kadınlara... "Bakın yollardayız, sade kadınlarız, yılmıyoruz, sizler de korkmayın, bize katılırsanız daha da güçleniriz." mesajı... -Dağdakilere... "Önceleri anneler olarak davanızı anlamış, size mani olmak istemiş olabiliriz, ama şimdi davanızı anlıyoruz ve sokakta sizinle birlikteyiz" mesajı... Tüm bu mesajlar, "annelik"ten uzak mesajlar... Bana göre de

çok çarpık bir macera... AB'nin kışkırtmasına aldanış... En kötüsü anneliğin istismarı... Bu çizgiden barış çıkmayacağı da açık. Anneler oynasa bile onlar tarafından yönetilmediği açık bir oyunun parçası bunlar... Bu durumda, annelik duyarlılığının buluşması değil, siyasi duruşların çatışmasına varılır. Bence Kürt meselesi doğru adamların inisiyatifinde yürümüyor. Anneler de doğru anneler değil, siyasetçiler de...

APPENDIX G – TURKISH VERSION OF THE EXCERPT FROM
FATİH ÇEKİRGE'S ARTICLE

Soru řu: Bařbakan'ın önünde PKK'nın sahneye koymaya çalıştığı "sinsi bir plan" ya da "bir senaryo" var. İşte hepimizin büyük bir dikkatle okumamız gereken o "sinsi plan"ın detayları. Bir süre önce gelen bilgilere göre PKK yeni bir strateji geliřtiriyordu. Bu stratejinin adı řuydu:"Şehit yakınlarıyla ortak duygu illüzyonu sağlanması." Yani:"Bir şehit annesi 'Vatan sağ olsun demiyorum' diyorsa bunu desteklemek. Bu sesleri artırmak. Savaş karřıtlığı adı altındaki bu tür çıkışları sistemli olarak yükseltmek. Barış anneleri savaş karřıtı olan şehit yakınlarıyla 'Ancak acılı anneler birbirlerini anlar' yaklaşımıyla bir araya gelmeli. Böylece halkla güvenlik güçleri arasındaki moral bağ çökertilebilir. Evladını askere gönderen annenin kafasına bu endişeyi koymak. Sonra da en duygulu anı olan cenaze sırasında bu tepkileri yükseltmek. Böylece devletle, hükümetle, TSK ile vatandaşlar arasındaki 'vatanseverlik bağ'ı'nı kopartmak. Oğullarımız boşuna ölüyor fikri yerleřtirilmeli. Askere göndermeme ve savaş karřıtlığı duygusu körüklenmeli."... Barış anneleri aracılığıyla, "Ancak biz birbirimizi anlarız" diyerek şehit analarıyla ilişkiye girmek. Ortak duygu illüzyonu sağlamak. Torpilliler, bakanların, zenginlerin çocukları deęil, garibanlar şehit oluyor fikrini yerleřtirmek.Vatandaşla devlet, ordu arasındaki moral bağ çökertilmeli. "Oğullarımız boşuna ölüyor" duygusu yerleřtirilmeli. Tansiyonu yüksek illerde Türk-Kürt çatışmasını körüklemek için organizasyonlar yapılmalı. Bunun için örgütün ailelerinin görevlendirilmesi.

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