

LIBERATING NARRATIVES OF YAŞAR KEMAL:
THE OTHER FACE OF THE MOUNTAIN TRILOGY

by

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PREFACE

In this study, I focus on three novels by Yaşar Kemal comprising his first trilogy, *The Other Face of the Mountain* (Dağın Öte Yüzü)—namely, *The Wind from the Plain* (Ortadirek, 1960); *Iron Earth, Copper Sky* (Yer Demir Gök Bakır, 1963); and *The Undying Grass* (Ölmez Otu, 1968), in order to explain their functioning as “liberating narratives.”

For my purposes, the study of experienced fictional reality is central for the understanding of the liberating effects of the novels. In the first chapter of this thesis, “The Realities of Yaşar Kemal,” which is indeed a literature review, a distinction is made between the viewpoints which categorize the works of Yaşar Kemal as examples of realist literature and those that turn to the concepts of “epic” and “myth” to describe the fictional reality he created. Taking cues from their reasoning, I will bring explanations on the liberating effects of these narratives by focusing on the fictional reality created by Yaşar Kemal.

In the second chapter, “From Fear to Myth, From Myth to Reality,” after describing the general social and political characteristics of the community in the plot, I will examine the cases of Meryemce and her son Uzun Ali in *The Wind from the Plain*, Taşbaş Memed in the *Iron Earth, Copper Sky* and Memidik in *The Undying* for the political implications of their stories based on the narrative experience.

In the third chapter, “The Making of the Liberating Narratives: The Politics of Yaşar Kemal,” I will discuss the underlying principles of Yaşar Kemal’s narratives and his particular attitude in rendering these narratives politically relevant, actual and

liberating. I also will discuss his ethical stance underlying the particular political identity he embraces.

The reason for the selection of *The Other Face of the Mountain* trilogy for this study is its special place within the works of Yaşar Kemal and its coincidence with a specific period in the history of Turkey, that is, the 1960s. A short overview of the life of Kemal and the historical developments related to our purposes seem to be beneficial at this point in order to show my motives in this selection and to provide the general historical background for the study.

Yaşar Kemal (Kemal Sadık Gökçeli) was born in 1923, the year of the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, to a Kurdish migrant family in the village of Hemite (now Gökçedam), near Kadirli in Çukurova. The family had been settled in the village, populated by Turcomans, during the First World War after a one-year walk from Van, Ernis, following the fall of the region, behind the Caucasian front, to the Russian army in 1915. Stories about the homeland and the adventurous journey were influential on Kemal. Another major influence on the author was his traumatic childhood; at an early age, he lost an eye in an accident and his father was killed by his adopted brother in the mosque in his presence. He had problems with speech after this event for a few years.

The rich oral literature practiced in the region as well as in his village inspired him and he became a young minstrel telling legends to the peasants in return for their elegies (*ağıt*). When he first went to the school it was to learn how to note down the elegies and songs he heard in order not to forget them. His school career ended after the second class of secondary school. In these years, he worked in many hard jobs which acquainted him with the daily experiences of the agricultural workers and poor peasants.

His first publication was a collection of elegies published in 1943 by the People's House of Adana, which he attended in those years. This activity was inspired by the ethnologist Pertev Naili Boratav, who had given a speech in the People's House. In those years, the People's Houses were involved in activities in both directions: first, to make the local populations familiar with the nationalist ideology of the new regime and modern arts; second, to explore local cultures, and identify those which could be exploited in the process of the creation of authentically national arts. The sponsorship of Kemal's collection is meaningful within this general framework.

It was also the People's House of Adana where Kemal met Arif Dino, the elder brother of the famous Turkish painter Abidin Dino. The socialist Dinos, including the wife of Abidin Dino, Güzin Dino, were at the time in exile in Adana as a result of the increasing political influence of the pro-Nazi Turanists with the Nazi invasion of Eastern Europe. His friendship with the Dinos, who were well educated in the arts and in philosophy, was beneficial for the young Kemal Sadık. On the other hand, more often after he met the Dinos, but even before that, he met with socialist workers and intellectuals in Adana and participated in their activities. One of the jobs he was able to get thanks to the Dinos—as a worker in the city library of Adana (*Ramazanoğlu Kitaplığı*), where he also began to live—provided him with opportunities to cultivate himself.

During his military service in Talas, Kayseri, he met Mehmet Ali Aybar, with whom he would be a life-long friend and share an understanding of socialism and later would work together in the Labour Party of Turkey (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi*, LPT) from 1962 until the early-1970s under Aybar's presidency. In the military service, he was lucky to spend his time in self-cultivation again, and wrote his first short stories.

Following the military service he worked for the gas company in Istanbul, a post he obtained through Aybar before returning to Adana, where he began to work as a petitioner.

In the years of anti-communist rivalry between the newly founded Democrat Party (*Demokrat Parti*, DP) and Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, RPP) he was pursued regularly by the police for communist activities. Finally in 1951, after the election victory of the DP, he was accused of USSR agency and was almost lynched in Kadirli. After he was found innocent by the court, he went to Istanbul. It was when he visited Abidin Dino in Ankara on his way to Istanbul that they decided on his new name: Yaşar Kemal (literally, Kemal the Survivor or Kemal who lives).

The new historical era beginning with the 1950s happened also to be a new period in the life of Yaşar Kemal. He began to work in the daily *Cumhuriyet*, which was close to the RPP, the founder-party of the Republic, now in opposition. In his twelve years of journalism, he traveled throughout the country and wrote interviews in a new style for the Turkish audience. In 1962, he was fired from the daily, probably due to his political activities in the newly found socialist Labour Party of Turkey. In 1952 he met Thilda Serrero, his future wife and English translator for almost all his books, owing to a common friend from *Cumhuriyet*, and their relationship developed in a short time.

Kemal's first novel, *Memed, My Hawk*, was published in *Cumhuriyet* in 1953-54 and as a book in 1955 and become very popular immediately, winning the Best Novel of the Year Award of the publisher *Varlık* by popular vote. In the following half-decade, however, he remained rather unproductive, publishing only *Anatolian Rice* (*Teneke*, 1955). This was, according to Memed Fuat, to a large extent because

of psychological problems he developed due to the attitudes towards him of the elitist literary circles, by whom he was labeled an “uncultured peasant novelist” who was bound to fail in the long run.¹

Nevertheless, he overcame the crisis and published *The Wind from the Plain* in 1960, after one year of work. So, critical dates in his life and Republican history coincided for a third time (1923, 1950, and 1960). The production of the trilogy until the publication of the last volume, *The Undying Grass* in 1968, lasted 15 years. This period coincided roughly with the years of DP rule between 1950 and 1960 and the first decade of the inter-coup period. The first period witnessed the liberal economic policies of the right wing DP with populist inclinations together with cultural policies more favorable to religion with certain limited setbacks in the early Republican reforms. During the decade, the DP succeeded in attracting overwhelming popular support vis-à-vis the RPP and dominated the political scene until—following deteriorating macroeconomic stability and increasing urban popular annoyance—it was removed by the military intervention in 1960. The appeal of religion at the popular level was a concern among the intellectuals. On the political scene, the alienation of the RPP from the state structure and the weakness of the left were seen as a result of the proficient policies of the DP in manipulating these religious sentiments for holding on to power.

With the 1960 coup d'état the Democrat Party was removed from power and a new constitution was prepared allowing the formation of trade unions, which would soon found the Labour Party of Turkey. This was the first and the last socialist party to enter the Turkish parliament in the 1963 elections with 15 representatives. The

¹ Mehmet Fuat, "Sanatı Besleyen Kültür," *YAZKO Edebiyat* 2, no. 9 (1981).

1960s was a decade of active politics for Kemal and saw the completion of his first trilogy, *The Other Face of the Mountain*.

Sociologically, in this period there were important changes in the demographic structure of the country. Right in the year of the election victory of the DP (1950) with liberal claims vis-à-vis the centrist RPP, the founder party of republic ruling for 27 years, almost the first 23 of which were a single-party rule, there was a break in the rural-urban population ratio. The tremendous internal migration transformed almost every aspect of life. Former peasants of Anatolia entered the social scene in this new historical setting with much more complicated roles than in the early Republican period, for example, as electorates from 1946 on.

Yaşar Kemal constructed his first novel, *Memed My Hawk*, around the theme of the resistance of the peasants against the local land owners under the leadership of a popular bandit, an orphan peasant boy, Memed. Two of the characteristics Berna Moran distinguishes in the Anatolian novels are observed in this work: opposition to social order and making use of folk literature.² According to Moran, Yaşar Kemal followed the tradition of the noble-bandit stories exemplified by Sabahattin Ali (*Kuyucaklı Yusuf*); Ömer Seyfettin (*Yalnız Efe*); and Zeynel Besim Sun (*Çakıcı Efe*) besides the popular story of *Köroğlu*, where the hero struggles with the powerful exploiters and protects the rights of the poor peasants. On the other side there have been bandit stories where the bandits were not noble at all. Moran mentions the ways Yaşar Kemal's *Memed, My Hawk* differs from the tradition as by involving the theme of love and by making a utopian revolutionary out of his bandit.

While in *Memed, My Hawk* Kemal aesthetizes resistance and political action, in his trilogy we will focus on how he deals more with the peasant mentality. The

² Berna Moran, *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış-2* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), 102.

political message of the narratives is more indirect and complicated. The occurrence of the single action of resistance—*Memed, My Hawk* serial is full of this—takes three volumes. Moreover, the traditional culture is put as a factor of unstability for the ruling classes, whether it gives way to resistance or not.

In *The Other Face of the Mountain* trilogy, the peasants this time create a saint among themselves—an event that might bring about a popular rebellion in previous centuries, as had been a usual event throughout Anatolia. In this work we can see an unusual approach for a socialist intellectual aiming for revolutionary transformation of society to the durability of cultural forms in the process of modernization, particularly that of the religious character. His focus on the mentality of the peasants is related closely to the political impasses the left was facing at the time. Basing their political strategy on popular mobilization the socialists experienced difficulties with a population readily swayed by the religious discourses employed by hegemonic politics, especially of the DP, but also of the RPP increasingly. Although the RPP softened its official approach towards religion after the transition to the multi-party system, the intellectual heritage of the single-party rule in the inter-war period, when the state mobilized intellectuals in the 1930s for the creation of a national culture in line with the political doctrines of Kemalism, remained influential especially over the urban middle classes.

The socialists, on the other hand, alienated from institutional politics to a great extent, were engaged in literary activities. Literature has been traditionally a sphere relatively immune to political oppression, common in practice, where intellectuals can express their political ideas under the protection of artistic forms. The socialists began to take over this heritage gradually after the Russian Revolution with the powerful figure Nazım Hikmet and dominated the tradition of literary opposition for

decades. His long “prosal poem,” *Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları*, written between 1941 and 1945 in the prison, was influential over the next generations. Güzin Dino mentions the purpose of Hikmet as to create a new style to be able to cover the political issues of the time in Turkey as well as in the world at the same time with the daily lives of the common people. Dino also mentions the influence of Tolstoy, Gogol and William Langland, on the poet referring on a letter he wrote to Kemal Tahir, another socialist author who chose country side as the setting of his works.³ Yaşar Kemal contributed to the making of socialist literary tradition in the 1950s and took his unique place in it.

Kemal Tahir and Orhan Kemal, who were called *Üç Kemal’ler* (Three Kemals) of village literature together with Yaşar Kemal, also had peculiar styles distinguishing them in the literary scene of Turkey. Orhan Kemal met Nazım Hikmet in Bursa prison and was there encouraged by him to write.⁴ Berna Moran points out the relation between the reality and the fictional world the authors create as the main difference between Orhan Kemal and Yaşar Kemal. While he describes Orhan Kemal’s representation as mimetic, he mentions the symbolic, mythic and epic aspects in the works of Yaşar Kemal.⁵

Kemal Tahir, who also met Nazım Hikmet in prison in Çankırı and influenced by him, has written historical novels besides the so-called village novels. He was concerned more with the issue of national identity. As Duygu Köksal mentions, he

³ Güzin Dino, "Türk Köy Romanı Bağlamında Yaşar Kemal," in *Yaşar Kemal'i Okumak*, ed. Altan Gökalp (İstanbul: Adam Yayınları, 1998), 41.

⁴ Ibid., 40.

⁵ Moran, *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış-2*, 101–02, 16.

“locat[ed] the sources of the nation’s collective identity in the historical establishment and development of the Ottoman Empire.”⁶

The main difference between the political attitudes of Yaşar Kemal and Kemal Tahir seems to lie in their approach to the central state. While Yaşar Kemal was categorically sceptical of the state and bureaucracy, Kemal Tahir had a more ambivalent position regarding the issue. While he held a critical stance towards the state’s oppression of the Anatolian people, he simultaneously tried to historically ground the notion of a state apparatus that was a protector of law and justice.⁷

The inter-coup d’état period from 1960 to 1980 was distinct for the relatively democratic constitution (which was modified in 1971, in a way making it less democratic following a military intervention that was short of a coup d’état), and ideological polarization. It was also a time of gaining legitimacy for the socialists, who had remained marginalized until then and a serious increase in the popularity of social democracy, which became the political line of the RPP from the mid-60s on, and socialism. More powerful groups on the left were those with populist discourses. The RPP populism of the 1930s had left the scene to a new one functioning as the backbone of an antagonistic political identity shaped around the class division between the people (*halk*) and the hegemons.

In the sphere of literature, the national literature movement (*Millî Edebiyat*) had already begun in 1911 with the publication of the journal *Genç Kalemler* (The

⁶ Duygu Köksal, "Fine-Tuning Nationalism: Critical Perspectives from Republican Literature in Turkey," *Turkish Studies* 2, no. 2 (2001): 69–70. Duygu Köksal, "The Politics of Cultural Identity in Turkey: Nationalist Perspectives in the Writings of Kemal Tahir, Cemil Meriç and Atilla İlhan" (The University of Texas at Austin, 1996), 123. Köksal groups the works of Kemal Tahir under four categories: those “*dealing with the social and political phenomena of the late Ottoman and Republican history*,” those “*concerning the economic, social and cultural constitution of the Turkish rural people*,” “*those published after Tahir’s death from his almost complete novel notes from the twelve years he spent in prison, and concerned mainly with the prison life, the justice system and individual psychologies*,” and “*finally, his historical novel on the establishment of the Ottoman state in early fourteenth century, Devlet Ana (The State Mother)*.”

⁷ Köksal, "The Politics of Cultural Identity in Turkey", 139.

Young Pens). In the Republican era the 1930s witnessed a nationalist revival symbolized by the publication of *Yaban* by Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu in 1932, with particular emphasis on the countryside and its inhabitants, the “Turkish peasants.” The peasantism of the decade can be seen as a part of the policies to colonize the countryside with social, economic and cultural aspects. While the People’s Houses already mentioned can be given as an example of the cultural policies of the program, the statist policies followed by the First Five-Year Development Plan were the economic side.

The socialist left, politically marginalized, was active in literature, an example of which is the publication of the journal *Resimli Ay* (Illustrated Month). The pre-1960 period witnessed the emergence of the cult figure of the Turkish socialists, the poet Nazım Hikmet, who was influential, both in literary and ideological terms on the following generations. The novelist and story-writer Sabahattin Ali, and Aziz Nesin, from the satirical tradition, can be mentioned as other influential figures among socialist circles, the former writing more about the countryside.

These two literary circles, the populist nationalist and socialist, provided the ground for the emergence of the so-called “village literature” (*köy edebiyatı*) after 1950. The practitioners of the genre were to a large extent the former students of the Village Institutes (*Köy Enstitüleri*) founded in the 1940s throughout the country again as a part of the colonization-of-the-country policies. It was mainly these three streams, the populist-nationalist Republican ideology, the socialist influence of figures like Nazım Hikmet and Sabahattin Ali, and the circles of the Village Institutes which provided the grounds for the emergence of peasant literature after the 1950s.

The translation activities of the Ministry of Education, *Dünya Edebiyatından Tercümeler* (Translations from the World Literature), were a major event in the

cultural life of Turkey, so much so that they were seen by the leftist generations to follow as the beginning of Turkish humanism (*Türk hümanizması*). Hasan Ali Yücel, the Minister of Education at the time, was also the name behind the foundation of the Village Institutes. The *Mavi Anadolu* (Blue Anatolia) movement was the major follower of the notion of Turkish humanism in the following decades in the sphere of cultural production. Sabahattin Eyüboğlu and Azra Erhat, among the leading names of the circle, were close friends of Kemal, too. Rather than following their attitude favoring the ancient Ionian heritage behind the Anatolian culture, Kemal denied priority to any single culture and saw the Turcoman and Kurdish cultural heritages enough to base universal values on them. Their common stances were an emphasis on the premodern cultural heritage in the formulation of a universal identity. Regarding culture they shared a common understanding of a synthetic phenomenon shaped by the contribution of successive civilizations in the historical process.

To come to terms with the issue of cultural identity and the efforts to open political space for socialist politics was the focus of the socialists and Kemal, when in 1960s the new constitution made things easier for the latter and the heritage of the previous decade of right-populist DP rule put new challenges for the former. The increasing employment of culture in the formation of political identities after 1946 with the transition to the multi-party system, when the monopoly of the state over the formation of “national culture” seem to have ended, must have been influential on the socialist interest on culture and the reformulation of the populism of the 1930s on more radical bases to face the challenge of the hegemonic politics of the right.

Yaşar Kemal was one of the leading figures on the scene from the early 1950s onwards in an increasing way as a member of the newly emerging generation of country-originated intellectuals. His first works, *Memed, My Hawk* and *Anatolian Rice*,

can be counted within the wave of “village literature” (*Köy Edebiyatı*) which was led by the Village Institute circles and reflected the political demands for land reform and rural development through state intervention in the sphere of literature. In the 1960s, Kemal participated actively in politics among the leading cadres of the newly founded Labor Party of Turkey. Seen within this framework, I am of the conviction that the analysis of Kemal’s first trilogy, the production of which coincided with this historical moment, will be indicative of the ideological bases of the emerging popular political identity of the inter-coup period that can be roughly described as humanist socialism.

In this study, how the trilogy of Kemal functions as a liberating narrative will be discussed. The reasons for the selection of *The Other Face of the Mountain* trilogy from the sizeable work of Kemal are first, its coincidence with a specific period in the history of the Turkish Republic when the socialist and social democratic discourses were shaped to a large extent, that is, the decade of the 1960s. This was also a period when the author himself was involved actively in socialist politics. Second, this trilogy was the first trilogy completed by the author and seems to have been unique among his works where he focuses on popular religion as an aspect of cultural identity. The political concerns of the author and his following methodology are not outdated today, when the Turkish left is leaving the scene of politics, though the social phenomena problematized by the post-War socialists of Turkey still exist, but this time exploited by right-reactionary politics with increasing efficiency since the beginning of 1990s. Moreover, there is need of a political analysis of the works of Kemal, who was politically active from his secondary school days, and a successful representative of his generation of socialist intellectuals, an author who has found widespread popular interest in Turkey and abroad.

Liberating Narratives

The main argument of this thesis is that the novels of Yaşar Kemal that I focus on function as “liberating narratives,” the term inspired from the conceptualization of “culturalism” by Arif Dirlik as “liberating practice.”⁸ They are liberating in challenging the capitalist hegemony, or to use the terminology employed by Zeynep Gambetti, in re-symbolizing the symbolic order.⁹ According to Dirlik, they achieve this challenge through their “denial of a center to the social process and of a predestined direction to history,”¹⁰ and through decentring the theory and the historian preventing her/him to employ that theory in such a way as to replace the lived experiences of the human subjects and “objectify human agency in history.” These must be recuperated in order to be able to challenge the capitalist hegemony in present time as well. Yaşar Kemal seems to have constructed his narratives with similar political concerns with a critical attitude towards various discourses in circulation in the Turkish political scene, which would be evaluated by Dirlik to be bound to reproduce hegemonic relations independent of their progressive or Marxist intentions. The liberation that is supposed to happen is thus from the “structures of domination that represent alienated social power.” These structures can reproduce themselves owing to the hegemonic relations the ruling groups develop basically through the ideologies which distance their Others, both in time and in space, and render their capacity to change invisible.

⁸ Arif Dirlik, "Culturalism as Hegemonic Ideology and Liberating Practice," in *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism* (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1997).

⁹ Zeynep Gambetti, "The Agent is the Void! From the Subjected Subject to the Subject of Action," *Rethinking Marxism* 17, no. 3 (2005).

¹⁰ Dirlik, "Culturalism as Hegemonic Ideology and Liberating Practice," 49.

Since any notion of liberation requires a normative definition of a state of freedom, and the knowledge of that state is ethical knowledge, it is necessary to think about the ethical stances of Yaşar Kemal and Arif Dirlik, which seem to coincide, as well. “Alienation” is the basic common phenomenon the overcoming of which determines the essence of the ethics of both Kemal and Dirlik. What they understand of alienation is basically an ethical alienation finding its expression in Dirlik’s opposition to the abstractions replacing lived experiences of the human subjects in historical inquiries, which he calls “the alienating discourse that makes the subjects of history into its objects.”¹¹ The conviction history is made by human subjects having developed their traditions in the course of it leads Dirlik (by reference to E. P. Thompson) and Kemal to evaluate the working people as the carriers of basic human values. The tradition according to Dirlik, “does not shape social relations, rather it is produced and reproduces itself in the course of ongoing social activity. Traditions are unique, but not the processes that produce traditions, for they are part and parcel of the structure of social conflict.”¹²

In order to describe the motive behind his historicist approach, Arif Dirlik refers to the Arab historian Abdallah Laroui, who expects from a promising ideology to “[concretize] the frustrated hopes of a community.”¹³ This practice of concretization of hopes, and desires, or the normative knowledge of the ethical, seems to be in line with the methodology of Walter Benjamin outlined in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*. There, Benjamin sees the possibility for the historical materialist to “[blast] out of the continuum of history” (which can be read as the hegemony) with “a tiger’s leap into the past”—“the past carr[y]ing with it a temporal

¹¹ Ibid., 42.

¹² Ibid., 33.

¹³ Ibid., 42.

index by which it is referred to redemption”—by constructing an “abridgment” with the past containing a historical subject that is encountered as a monad, that monad being expressive of “a configuration pregnant with tensions.” I am convinced that these tensions are moral tensions in order to bring about a “Messianic cessation of happening,” the Messiah being the conveyor of the *truth*. What seems to render the present at a certain moment in the history of mankind relevant seems to be the expectation of an effect of empowering provided for the ethical stance taken in the present. This is the moment—“the moment of danger”—where the truth and the historical reality seem to coincide as “the past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again.” In other words, this image of the past owes its reality to the moral truth it expresses in the present. This understanding of Benjamin seems to coincide with that of Yaşar Kemal, who can be defined as a historicist moral realist believing in the objective superiority of certain ethical stances under particular conditions. The ever-present moral tensions in his narratives seem to be a phenomenon resulting from this attitude of the author. And the ethical load in these narratives, which is the longing for a transcendence of the present situation of ethical alienation of the human community, we observe and name in our age as the subjection, objectification, reification of human beings, those making up the exploited classes, for the sake of capital accumulation. The liberating effect of his narratives owe this effect in the symbolic expression of this moral tension and his ethical stance, as the monads of Benjamin do, thus indicating for what the liberation is supposed to happen. His realism, thus, is not a mimetic representation of the external reality, but expression of the universalizable moral reality. The themes of banditry, Mahdi rebellion or nomadism,

among others employed by Kemal, seem to function as the historical method Benjamin calls “tiger’s leap.”

In our effort to find out the dynamics behind the liberating features of Yaşar Kemal’s novels, part of the theoretical support required will be drawn from the 2005 article of Zeynep Gambetti¹⁴—where she turns to Hannah Arendt’s theory of action—developed to a large extent in *The Human Condition*, published in 1958—to overcome the uneasiness the poststructuralist subject theories face in conceptualizing the notions of “freedom” and “human agency” regarding the emancipatory claims they have. Arendt provides a perspective that has—in Gambetti’s words—“the advantage of decentering the will without negating it, attributing change to the actor without exaggerating her power, and situating the self within structures constitutively shared by others without exaggerating their power.”¹⁵

Gambetti finds Arendt’s perspective beneficial for “conceiving freedom and action as nonsovereign while at the same time attributing contingency to the actor and not to some meta-agent such as power, social practices, or the symbolic order.”¹⁶ She points to “the ontological fact of singularity” upon which Arendt bases her understanding of a “radical contingency.” She mentions three existential mechanisms of the subject, conceptualized by Arendt, that undermine the possibility of the endless stability of structures and meaning, namely, the gaze, the story and action. These mechanisms—which are carried by the subjects, and render them as the source of contingency—are related to the “singularity” of the subjects. To explain freedom, Gambetti mentions the Leninist formulation employed by Slavoj Žižek and the parallel one by Arendt, respectively, seeing freedom as “the act of transcending or

¹⁴ Gambetti, “The Agent is the Void!”

¹⁵ Ibid., 435.

¹⁶ Ibid., 427.

changing the coordinates themselves,” “redefining the situation” and “to call something into being which did not exist before, which was not given.”¹⁷ The individual subjects whose actions bring about change—in other words, who are practicing freedom as mentioned above—are seen as the agents of change, being the locus of contingency themselves rather than the forces transcending them. Thus, the actors are the causes of the change they bring about. Yet for Arendt, the effectivity of action and form of the story is dependent on the gaze, others who form the community, the plurality. In other words, these are the ways the singular individuals relate themselves to each other and the world, the “in-between,” in Heideggerian terminology.

This is how Gambetti describes the second mechanism, “the gaze”:

Gazing at others and being gazed at also have two fundamental effects on the self. First, others... fulfill the existential mission of pulling the self away from the slippery ground of subjectivity where nothing is real and nothing can be stabilized because there is no essential attribute of the subject...

Second, if the plurality of gazes is the prerequisite for the fixation of identities or “communities,” it is also the condition of possibility of the contestation of meanings and identities. Unpredictability is an effect of the confrontation of the plurality of perspectives that forms any given community.¹⁸

The third mechanism, the story, is the next step where the gazer produces meaning; in other words, where the action acquires meaning and a form permitting it to be transmitted by the gazer to the others: “The onlooker tells the story of individual action, its meaning, and the world it opened up by tying in the loose ends and providing the story with a consistency that it may not otherwise have.”¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid., 426.

¹⁸ Ibid., 433–34.

¹⁹ Ibid., 434.

Zeynep Gambetti's evaluation of Hannah Arendt's formulations regarding the making of reality by human beings will be used to point out the potentials of human agency as implied by the narratives of Yaşar Kemal.

I argue in this thesis that the novels comprising *The Other Face of the Mountain* trilogy of Yaşar Kemal can be seen as liberating narratives in their recuperation of human agency (even if as mere potential or be it actual) and subjectivity, at least as a potential, and the ethical load they convey on the moral tensions they have constructed.

The Other Face of the Mountain

Yaşar Kemal declared to have completed the trilogy in more or less fifteen years prior to the the publication of the last book, *The Undying*, in 1968. From various speeches of Kemal and from his declaration published on the back cover of these books we can deduce that he started the first novel, *The Wind from the Plain*, in 1947 at the same time as *Memed, My Hawk*, but then put it aside for a long time.

The setting is a village, *Yalak Köyü* (The Village of Yalak), in Central Anatolia, on the outskirts of the Taurus Mountains, where they meet the steppe of Uzunayla. The whole story covers more than a year in the 1950s.

The story is about the creation of a saint by the community following a bad season in Çukurova, where they are unable to earn enough of the money required to pay back their debt to Adil Efendi, the owner of a shop in town, with whom they are used to trading. In the first book, *The Wind from the Plain*, the peasants walk to Çukurova. After the death of Uzun Ali's horse, he and his family—his wife Elif, his mother Meryemce and children, Hasan and Ummuhan—remain back since Ali has to walk the same way twice, once to carry the load and once to carry his aged mother.

Their struggle is at the center of the narrative. On the other hand, the village headman Muhtar Sefer convinces the villagers to work on the farm of Miralay, which is not fertile land, but Muhtar Sefer gets a profit from Miralay for getting the peasants to work there, frustrating the plan of Taşbaş, who has been struggling against Muhtar Sefer's corruption for years.

In the *Iron Earth, Copper Sky* it is winter and the peasants are back in their village. They were unable to pay their debts to Adil Efendi because they could not earn enough money from cotton gathering on the unfruitful farm of Miralay. There is a growing fear of Adil Efendi that he will come along with the military police and take away everything they own. In these days of fear and hopelessness the villagers raise Taşbaş Mehmet, who constantly swears at them for obeying Muhtar Sefer, to the level of saintliness. Taşbaş, after a period of resistance, gives up denying being a saint and fulfills the expectations of the people, and later he even tries and wants to see the evidence that he is really a saint. At the end of the novel he escapes from the hands of the military police who are taking him to the town, where he probably will be jailed for declaring himself to be a saint and fooling the population.

In *The Undying*, Ali, who has had to leave his mother alone in the village, struggles to go back as soon as possible. Memidik—who has been beaten badly by the man of Muhtar Sefer for he has refused to deny the reality of the story he has told to the villagers, which has made Taşbaş into a saint—fights his fear in order to be able to kill Muhtar Sefer and save his honor. On the other hand, Taşbaş is no longer Saint Taşbaş when he joins the community back in Çukurova. His death in misery is followed by the killing of Muhtar Sefer by Memidik.

CHAPTER ONE

THE REALITIES OF YAŞAR KEMAL

In their effort to explain the influence of Yaşar Kemal's novels, many scholars have turned to the concept of "realism," or "social realism," and to the notion of "reality" in the works of the author. In his 1955 review of *Anatolian Rice*—Kemal's second novel (indeed a long story) published that year—Fethi Naci writes that the book "is the product of a well understood realism."²⁰ Twenty-five years later, when the journal *Edebiyât*²¹ (Literature) published a special issue on the author—which seems to be the first collective work on him—several scholars who contributed to the issue tried to define his understanding of reality and his relationship with social realism. For some, the issue to be settled was to a large extent whether he was a social realist or a romantic writer, and in which ways. In recent works, again a special issue of a journal, *Anka*,²² and in an international symposium on the author at Bilkent University,²³ several scholars and critics focused on the myths and other "non-real" factors and their functions in the works of the author.

In this chapter, first, I will provide an overview of the perspectives that aim to explain the notion of reality in the works of Yaşar Kemal. These perspectives will be classified further under two groups, the first group consisting of those developed

²⁰ Fethi Naci, "Ortadirek," in *Yaşar Kemal'in Romancılığı* (Istanbul: Adam Yayıncılık, 1998), 13.

²¹ *Edebiyât. A Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures*. Special Issue on Yaşar Kemal 5, no. 1-2 (1980).

²² *Anka*. Revue d'Art et de Littérature de Turquie, no. 21-22. The journal has been translated into Turkish and published as a book: Altan Gökalp, ed., *Yaşar Kemal'i Okumak*, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: Adam Yayıncılık, 1999).

²³ Süha Oğuzertem, ed., *Geçmişten Geleceğe Yaşar Kemal. Bilkent Üniversitesi Türk Edebiyatı Merkezi Uluslararası Yaşar Kemal Sempozyumu* (Istanbul: Adam Yayıncılık, 2002).

around the concepts of “realism” and “romanticism,” and the second one covering perspectives related to the genre regarding the fictional reality, shaped around the concepts of “epic” and “myth” and the moral concerns of the author. Second, I will focus on the interviews made with him in order to show his declared stances on these issues.

A Romantic Social Realist?

Romantic

Among those who point to the romantic aspects of Kemal, Necla Aytür, in her comparative study on William Faulkner and Yaşar Kemal, claims that neither of the authors “can be called realists mainly because dream, vision, myth, legend and folktale are as real as hard facts in their works.”²⁴ On the other hand, Belma Ötüş-Baskett, in her study on *Memed, My Hawk*, defines him as a “committed social realist” who is also “romantic” at the same time.²⁵ His romanticism is explained by the optimistic end of *Memed, My Hawk*, which is seen to be in contradiction with his social realism. In a rather similar way, the following three quotations from her article on *Memed, My Hawk* show the troubles of L. O. Al'kaeva in coming to terms with the issue: that “the romantic factor is an important element in the whole presentation of reality,”²⁶ that “it is easy to see that the romantic scheme of *Ince Memed* triumphs over the realistic qualities of the novel to the extent that in it, good triumphs over

²⁴ Necla Aytür, "Native Sons of the South: William Faulkner and Yaşar Kemal," *Edebiyât. A Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures*. Special Issue on Yaşar Kemal 5, no. 1-2 (1980): 163.

²⁵ Belma Ötüş-Baskett, "Yaşar Kemal's Dream of Social Change: The Fable of the Hawk and the Goat-Beard," *Edebiyât. A Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures*. Special Issue on Yaşar Kemal 5, no. 1-2 (1980): 93.

²⁶ L. O. Al'kaeva, "İnce Memed," *Edebiyât. A Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures*. Special Issue on Yaşar Kemal 5, no. 1-2 (1980): 71.

evil”²⁷ and the following conclusion “and yet, in spite of this unmistakable romanticism, *Ince Memed* is one of the most realistic works on the theme of the peasant life in the Turkish literature of our times. The obviously romantic tone of the novel is really no more than a device of the author to help depict the psychology of the Turkish peasantry.”²⁸ The second and third quotations above are obviously inconsistent since while in the second the romanticism is related to certain outcomes at the eventual basis that is when “good triumphs over evil,” in the third, it is presented as a quality of peasant subjectivity.

These three scholars base their arguments concerning the romanticism of Kemal’s works mainly on two reasons. The first is, as mentioned by Aytür, the existence of non-real forms of knowledge such as “dream, vision, myth, legend and folktale” at the same level of reality as the “hard facts.” Second, the instances when something desired is achieved by the peasants are seen as indicators of optimism and thus of the romanticism of the works. Here, Al’kaeva’s comparison between Fakir Baykurt and Yaşar Kemal is relevant when read together with the quotation made above:

Where Baykurt specializes in representing the suffering peasantry, and depicts realistically the social evils and lawlessness of their situation, Yaşar Kemal directs attention to how these evils are overcome in the course of justifiable peasant resentment and uprisings.²⁹

It is easy to see that the romantic scheme of *Ince Memed* triumphs over the realistic qualities of the novel to the extent that in it, good triumphs over evil.³⁰

²⁷ Ibid., 76.

²⁸ Ibid., 77.

²⁹ Ibid., 71.

³⁰ Ibid., 76.

The attribution of political agency to the peasants and the presentation of their voices in an unmediated way in the works—not classifying them as non-real and thereby not decentering or distancing them—lead these scholars to the evaluation of romanticism. However, they are still in an effort to overcome the uneasiness in implying a synthetic categorization of the author as a “romantic social realist.” Al’kaeva brings a dualistic perspective where a realist framework of “sociological conditionality,” determining characters and events, is integrated with “romantic writing” that is used to explain the “true essence” of the characters and events.³¹ Yet her effort to reconcile these two views remains short of consistency since her prior critique of optimism regarding the positive events does not fit to this dual illustration based on the “true romantic essence of the peasants” and “realistically portrayed social conditions.” Similarly, after denying Kemal’s and Faulkner’s realism on the same grounds, Aytür makes a distinction between the “validity” and the “power” of the non-real element—here a dream giving way to a myth—and puts emphasis on the second one. This power of the vision was “to activate the people to change their reality in a way to make it fit the vision.”³² In her comment on the function of myth in *The Undying Grass*, she shows the role of what is non-real in the making of what is real: “The communal vision born out of some dire psychological need is transferred into myth and the myth passes back into a vision which is forceful enough to mold the reality of everyday experience.”³³ After making this statement, she concludes, quite surprisingly, that “Yaşar Kemal’s intention [is] to show that feudal society is ultimately incapable of coping with its destiny.”³⁴ Although she

³¹ Ibid., 78.

³² Aytür, “Native Sons,” 163.

³³ Ibid., 164.

³⁴ Ibid., 170.

notices Kemal's concern with displaying the influence of the authentic cultural forms in the making of reality, she nevertheless reaches a contrary conclusion such that what he did was a denial of agency to the social group on which he focused. Even this denial attributed to Kemal, however, does not suffice to make the work a realist one according to Aytür.

Realist

Several arguments have been made about the realism of Kemal's works or their sophisticated relations to the reality. They can be summed up under four main categories emphasizing his approaches to the individual and society, his favoring experience vis-à-vis concepts and his attitudes regarding the literary forms.

Experience versus Concepts

A frequently stated reason for the sense of realism in his works is the fact that he obtains his material from his daily experiences, or as it is usually called from "real life," instead of getting underway from ready-made concepts.³⁵ Fethi Naci maintains that as his sources are based on experience, his works are woven with images instead of concepts, and this is what makes him a successful novelist. Naci defines images as the proper tools of a novelist in looking at reality, and leaves the concepts to the social scientists.³⁶

Our novelists approach social reality generally with two different methods: Either like Yaşar Kemal, departing from their own lives, witnessings, namely, people; or like some of our novelists, through studying historical research and such other works... Then you see that the images as the means of expression peculiar to the literature itself are replaced by concepts, which are indeed social scientific means of expression; that the images have abandoned the novel, and men along

³⁵ Naci, "Ortadirek," 8.

³⁶ Ibid., 19.

them... (And the “man-less-ness” in the novel is explained by the social conditions by arguing: “We don’t have individuals as in the West!” rather than the novelist’s inability to overcome his undertaking! Poor social conditions; what they’ve suffered from the hands of our “social”ists!)³⁷

According to Fethi Naci, it is only Yaşar Kemal among Turkish novelists who presents the peasants “as they are,” and explains this by his strong loyalty to his own experiences and observations. This approach, as indicated by Naci, lies behind the existence of peasants in the works of the author as individuals with their own inner worlds, who cannot be categorized schematically for the purpose of explanation. In his words, “[Yaşar Kemal] shows that in the village communities, claimed to be without individuals, unforgettable individual dramas can be lived.”³⁸

Individual

Here, we have another distinctive quality attributed to the novelist, that of creating protagonists who are complex human beings, full-fledged individuals rather than mere representative types. Besides Fethi Naci, Ahmet Ö. Evin maintains that in Yaşar Kemal’s work the individual nomad or share cropper is provided with an identity.³⁹ Another Turkish literary critic, Semih Gümüş, sees the quality of Kemal’s realism related to his endeavor to reach an understanding of society coming from the human experiences as individuals rather than vice versa, that is, from the universal to

³⁷ Ibid. “Romancılarımız, toplumsal gerçekliğe, genellikle, iki yöntemle yaklaşıyorlar: Ya Yaşar Kemal gibi yaşantısından ve tanıklığından, yani insanlardan yola çıkarak, ya da kimi romancılarımız gibi tarihsel araştırmaları, birtakım eserleri inceleyerek... Bakıyorsunuz, edebiyatın kendine özgü ifade aracı olan imajın yerini toplumsal bilimlerin ifade aracı olan kavramlar alıvermiş; imaj alıp başını gitmiş romandan, imajlarla birlikte insanlar da... (Ve romandaki “insansızlık”, romancının işinin üstesinden gelemeyişiyle açıklanmıyor da, “Bizde Batıdaki gibi bireyler yoktur ki!” denerek toplumsal şartlarla açıklanıyor! Zavallı “toplumsal şartlar”; çekmedikleri kalmadı “toplumcu”larımızın ellerinden!)”

³⁸ Ibid., 8.

³⁹ Ahmet Ö. Evin, “Novelists: New Cosmopolitanism versus Social Pluralism,” in *Turkey and the West: Changing Political and Cultural Identities*, ed. Metin Heper, Ayşe Öncü, Heinz Kramer (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 1993), 99–100.

the particular.⁴⁰ L. O. Al'kaeva, whose evaluation of romanticism has already been mentioned, sees the author as a realist owing to "the accuracy of the realistic, psychologically sound motivation of the actions and reactions of characters"⁴¹ in his novels, and his attitude of not omitting focus on the "darker sides of peasant psychology."⁴² Critics reaching different ends nevertheless agree upon the existence of "real individuals" in Kemal's works.

Society

Duygu Köksal relates the realistic aspects of Kemal's novels to the "social realist themes" they cover.⁴³ Beyond the themes, "the social" he represents in his novels is appraised by others to reflect the reality in a proper way. Al'kaeva mentions his "constant effort to project the sociological conditionality, the cause and effect relationship of the events and characters."⁴⁴ Ötüş-Baskett talks of "the vocabulary of scientific determinism" the author employs due to his "anger [at] social injustice" when expressing his protest.⁴⁵

Beyond the existence of social conditions, Fethi Naci praises Yaşar Kemal's understanding of society on the grounds that he presents "the social reality in making." According to Naci, "his work contains a true essence from a historical perspective" which derives from his belief "in the power of human beings" and his

⁴⁰ Semih Gümüş, *Yazının Sarkacı Roman* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2003), 52.

⁴¹ Al'kaeva, "İnce Memed," 70.

⁴² Ibid., 73.

⁴³ Duygu Köksal, "Changing Politics of Turkish Republican Novel: Turkish Voices in a Global Literature, From Yaşar Kemal to Orhan Pamuk and Latife Tekin," (Bogazici University, Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History, 2002), 8.

⁴⁴ Al'kaeva, "İnce Memed," 78.

⁴⁵ Ötüş-Baskett, "Yaşar Kemal's Dream of Social Change: The Fable of the Hawk and the Goat-Beard," 93.

emphasis on their qualities that empower them “to change the lives to better and more beautiful ones.”⁴⁶ What he means by the “true essence from a historical perspective” is the human agency in the making of social reality and thus, history. The true essence in Kemal’s works, according to Naci, is then that society and history are shown as made by human beings.

On the other hand, when pointing to the presentation of social change in the works of Kemal, Naci mentions the causality established between socio-economic changes and cultural transformation. He says that the village society in Kemal’s novels is not a durable society, but a society whose “people, the beliefs of these people and their customs” are in transformation owing to “the changing economic and social conditions.”⁴⁷

Raymond Williams calls attention to the novel’s multi-formal quality as a genre by calling it “a community of forms,” and mentions the appropriateness of this formal aspect to express social change within the literary framework.⁴⁸ He gives the works of Yaşar Kemal as an example of the definition he made in *The Long Revolution* regarding the novel, that “society is seen in fundamentally personal terms, and persons, through relationships, in fundamentally social terms.” According to Williams, once society is seen in personal terms, the protagonists are (in D. H. Lawrence’s terms) “man alive,” but this must be done without falling into subjectivism that excludes the social dimension and diminishes the quality of the personal. Neither should the people be limited to “the points within [the] discourses”

⁴⁶ Naci, "Ortadirek," 15. “Yaşar Kemal, gerçeklere bakmasını, nüfuz etmesini, toplum gerçeğini oluş halinde görmesini bilen bir yazar. Eserinin, tarihsel bakımdan doğru bir özü var. İnsanın gücüne inanmış, onun hayatı daha iyiye, daha güzele doğru değiştirecek yanlarını, güçlü yanlarını belirtiyor.”

⁴⁷ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁸ Raymond Williams, "Yaşar Kemal's Novels," *Edebiyât. A Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures*. Special Issue on Yaşar Kemal 5, no. 1-2 (1980): 83.

of their creators. “It is always where the most general and the most personal interpenetrate” says Williams “that...the whole process, properly come through.” It is when the changing modes of life are focused on the personal basis “that the novel gains incomparable reach and closeness, its intensely local and general power.”⁴⁹

Form

For Naci, the basic formal attitude of the author is to create fictional reality through images rather than concepts. And the bases for these images are the daily human experiences of ordinary men rather than social scientific studies on the themes with which he is dealing. Similarly, Svetlana Uturgauri, in an article about the relationship between the works of Kemal and folklore, talks about the “imagistic perception of reality” of the author.⁵⁰ Timour Muhidine, in his evaluation of Kemal’s “interviews,” employs the concept of “hyperrealism” due to the rich imagination in and the peculiar rhythm of the interviews, which are seen to be extraordinary for the genre.⁵¹ Uturgauri explains the connection between the use of the literary techniques of the author and the effects he aims to create and by which he succeeds: “This free handling of time and plot structure allows the author to penetrate deeper into reality, to isolate the crucial moments in the action, and to give more credibility to the state of mind and the actions of the protagonists.”⁵²

Sam S. Baskett refers to Hemingway’s interpretation of good literature, that the events in good books are more genuine than the events that really happen and as the

⁴⁹ Ibid., 83–84.

⁵⁰ Svetlana Uturgauri, "Folklore and the Prose of Yaşar Kemal," *Edebiyât. A Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures*. Special Issue on Yaşar Kemal 5, no. 1-2 (1980): 136.

⁵¹ Timour Muhidine, "Yaşar Kemal'in Röportajları: Bir Üstkurmaca," in *Yaşar Kemal'i Okumak*, ed. Altan Gökalp (Istanbul: Adam Yayıncılık, 1999), 102.

⁵² Uturgauri, "Folklore and the Prose of Yaşar Kemal," 144.

reader feels to have lived them, they become his own experience. According to Baskett, such are the works of Kemal in that they create a world allowing the reader to enter and to experience it.⁵³

This issue of reader experience obviously is related to the construction of subjectivities in novels. Once the rooms of protagonists' inner worlds are opened to the reader, so are the windows of these rooms, constructed for him, opened to the world in the fiction, which is also constructed. The reader shares the subject position of the characters seeing the world through the same windows with them, in addition to the other windows of other characters, and the objective framework of the novel, presented by the voice of the narrator. The reader gains mobility through the constellation of subjects and the objectivity, the universal in which they exist as the particulars.

The presentation of the objective, or what is universal, in the novel can be in various ways and is not without wide ranging implications. Naci points to the success of Yaşar Kemal to leave a considerable amount of detailed knowledge of the socio-economic structure of the context—in which he sets his narrative—outside.⁵⁴ Jean-Pierre Deleage delineates the author's stance as a rejection,

to recount the world, to arrange it, to explain it according to the laws of a rationality which leaves the symbolic power of the verbal in darkness. Because such a thing would be a big lie behind which an uncontrolled ambition for authority is hiding. In a more humble way, he reflects his own search in the steps of his protagonists; he places it at those steps.⁵⁵

⁵³ Sam S. Baskett, "'Öteki" İle Yüz Yüze: Benim Bakışımla Yaşar Kemal'in Romanları," in *Geçmişten Geleceğe Yaşar Kemal. Bilkent Üniversitesi Türk Edebiyatı Merkezi Uluslararası Yaşar Kemal Sempozyumu*, ed. Süha Oğuzertem (İstanbul: Adam Yayıncılık, 2002), 57.

⁵⁴ Naci, "Ortadirek," 8.

⁵⁵ Jean-Pierre Deleage, "Güzellikler ve Dostluk: Yaşar Kemal'in Dört Armağanı," in *Geçmişten Geleceğe Yaşar Kemal. Bilkent Üniversitesi Türk Edebiyatı Merkezi Uluslararası Yaşar Kemal Sempozyumu*, ed. Süha Oğuzertem (İstanbul: Adam Yayıncılık, 2002), 68.

Similarly, Semih Gümüş evaluates Kemal's work as an example of the superior kind of socialist literature because he focuses on the particular components that make society rather than taking society as an entity which is suffering on its own.⁵⁶ In other words, the critics point to the fact that the fictional reality in Kemal's novels does not transcend the subject, nor does it leave it in isolation.

In short, the sense of reality in the works of Yaşar Kemal is attributed to the experience-based and individual-focused construction of the narratives, where the subjectivities are transcended through the ultimately social characteristic of the individual experience, enabling the author to reflect the social realities of the time.

The Genre and the Sense of Reality

Ahmet Ö. Evin, the editor of the special issue of *Edebiyât* on Yaşar Kemal, brought a comprehensive explanation to the attitude of the author towards reality. According to him, Yaşar Kemal's novels had a "deeper sense of reality" because of the incorporation of a "cultural context" and a "natural environment" to the setting where the "social situations" occurred.⁵⁷ In this view, the reality provided by the description of the communities' situation, depicted "in a specific period of the contemporary era against a geographical setting," was deepened by the inclusion of "their historical background as well as myth and legend as a part of their culture." According to Evin, the author therefore provided a totality including "the perception of the world as experienced by the protagonists" in addition to the perspective of the narrator.⁵⁸ In other words, what Evin implies is a complementary coexistence of

⁵⁶ Gümüş, *Yazının Sarkacı Roman*, 52.

⁵⁷ Ahmet Ö. Evin, "Introduction," *Edebiyât. A Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures*. Special Issue on Yaşar Kemal 5, no. 1-2 (1980): 13.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

objectivity, from the perspective of the narrator, and subjectivities, from the perspectives of the protagonists. The inclusion of the inner worlds of the protagonists by formal means such as inner monologues—or “inner dialogues,” as would fit better in this case, —portrayal of the characters with authentic identities and cultures and in psychological depth—in short, the constitution of complex individuals, as already shown—are related closely to the constitution of subjectivities within the totality described by Evin.

In the portrayal of this totality including subjectivities two concepts have been employed by the students of Yaşar Kemal: “epic” and “myth.” Some also have mentioned the moral stance of the author as a determining factor in constructing his fictive reality.

The Epic Sense

In the literary debates on the works of Yaşar Kemal, the concept of “epic” occupies a central place, as the concept of “realism” did concerning the author’s approach to reality. While “realism” refers more to the relationship of the author with the world, “epic” refers more to his relationship with his readers; the term is employed with a prior concern to explain the effects of his works on the reader. Such an effort requires more totalistic approaches to the works. The ways the epic qualities of the works are handled can be classified under three main subjects (corresponding to the components forming the totality pointed by Evin), namely, the subjectivities, the context, and the formal literary aspects as the tools with which that totality is performed.

One major component of this totality is the totality of what was created by human beings⁵⁹ including the myths. Altan Gökalp points to the integration of two rather different types of discourses within the framework of the novel in the works of Yaşar Kemal, the epic and the mythic. For Gökalp, the epic genre is a fiction, an epos that is functional in the creation of an identity for a particular community, and usually is produced more often by communities living with an intensive historical consciousness.⁶⁰

Subjectivity

Gökalp reveals the strong association of “the *epic nature* of Yaşar Kemal’s discourse” with its “*mythic dimension*” and “the specific role vested in the *psychological configuration* of the characters.”⁶¹ The mythic dimension in the author’s discourse is related with the particular cultural backgrounds of his protagonists—their subjectivity as a community—and with the psychological configuration we understand the subjectivities of individual protagonists. We will focus on these two aspects, culture as the subjectivity of the community and the individual subject, in the framework of the epic discourse mentioned, the first as a part of the context upon which the second, the individual subjectivities, exist in constant relation.

In his article on *Seagull*, Evin points out “the fact that [Kemal] ignored the issue of the change of scenery in his novels” and sees this attitude as an indicator of the priority of the human over the physical environment and to the latter’s

⁵⁹ Yaşar Kemal and Doğan Hızlan, “Kimsecik’le Yeni Roman Anlayışına Vardım,” in *Söyleşiler*), 15.

⁶⁰ Feridun Andaç, *Yaşar Kemal’in Sözlerinde Yaşamak* (İstanbul: Dünya Kitapları, 2003), 291–93.

⁶¹ Altan Gökalp, “Yaşar Kemal: From the Imaginary World Of a People to an Epic of Reality,” *Edebiyât. A Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures. Special Issue on Yaşar Kemal* 5, no. 1-2 (1980): 152.

subservience to the first.⁶² Evin points out thereby the central position the individual subjects occupy in the construction of Kemal's narratives.

Gökalp observes a general type of "Anatolian peasant" who is able to think about the aspects of being human. These peasants are rational actors with psychological depth and strategies, in the full sense of the word, individuals rather than humans who carry on the traditions and structures that are established outside their own will in a mechanical way. He finds this type comparable with the type of common man created by Thomas Hardy.⁶³ Gökalp refuses the view that there is no psychological depth in the epics.⁶⁴ What Kemal aims to succeed, according to Gökalp, is to create novel characters that bear the quality of subjectness in a Foucauldian sense, that is "[the individual as a subject of an ethical behavior.]"⁶⁵

Güner Öztuna differentiates between the tools to create the epic effect and what is indeed epic; language and setting are the means and the epic hero is the product of the process.⁶⁶ As opposed to the views for the absence of a psychological dimension of the epic characters, Al'kaeva sees the focus on "the hero's innermost thoughts" as a means to create a "romantic coloration into the picture of his personality," and thus, is the underlying factor in the epic shift within the genre of novel.⁶⁷ Gökalp sees the "heroic model" as what is epic in Kemal's novels, where the heroes show the

⁶² Ahmet Ö. Evin, "Seagull and the Fiction of Yaşar Kemal," *Edebiyât. A Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures*. Special Issue on Yaşar Kemal 5, no. 1-2 (1980): 190.

⁶³ Altan Gökalp, "Yaşar Kemal'i Okumak," in *Yaşar Kemal'i Okumak*, ed. Altan Gökalp (İstanbul: Adam Yayınları, 1999), 14.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 19.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 22., refers to Michel Foucault, *Usage de plaisirs*, p. 275.

⁶⁶ Güner Öztuna, "Yaşar Kemal's Memed, My Hawk: A Modern Epic," *Batı Dil ve Edebiyatları Araştırmaları Dergisi* 2, no. 4 (1980): 141.

⁶⁷ Al'kaeva, "İnce Memed," 80.

characteristics of “total engagement.”⁶⁸ Öztuna explains the epic quality of *Memed, My Hawk* with its “theme of action,” where the actions are “treat[ed] in heroic proportions” by the use of “poetic descriptions” of hero’s adventures that are of “legendary importance.”⁶⁹ According to Öztuna, in the epic, thereby, the hero’s life acquires “symbolic meanings.” “His deeds and actions represent the desires and wishfulfillments [*sic*] of his people...the peasant Turkish people are willing to identify with his heroic acts and achievements... [he becomes the] embodiment of their aspirations.”⁷⁰ Jean-Pierre Deleage, similarly, mentions the referentiality of the epic hero’s existence, representing certain universal values for which the protagonists are engaged in struggle.⁷¹

İlhan Başgöz makes a differentiation between the “epic hero” and the “bandit-hero.” While the latter, as the “defender of the social and the economic rights of the have-nots,” “is the product of an aristocratic society divided into social classes where division of labor and cultural differentiation exist,” the “epic hero,” as “a symbol of unity” rather than “social division,” “is the embodiment of the heroic, religious, and cultural ideals of a tribal society as a whole and undivided unit.”⁷² Azra Erhat, in her study on *The Legend of Ararat*, thinks that the protagonist in this epic novel is the

⁶⁸ Gökalp, “From the Imaginary World,” 152.

⁶⁹ Öztuna, “Yaşar Kemal’s Memed, My Hawk: A Modern Epic,” 133.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 144.

⁷¹ Jean-Pierre Deleage, “Yaşar Kemal’in Sözleri: Yapıtın İzini Sürerken,” in *Yaşar Kemal’i Okumak*, ed. Altan Gökalp (İstanbul: Adam Yayıncılık, 1999), 64.

⁷² İlhan Başgöz, “Yaşar Kemal and Turkish Folk Literature,” *Edebiyât. A Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures*. Special Issue on Yaşar Kemal 5, no. 1-2 (1980): 40.

people.⁷³ According to her, Kemal created in his novels a “realist people’s epic of the twentieth century Anatolia” by a synthesis of the genres of novel and epic.⁷⁴

Jean-Pierre Deleage with quite contemporary concerns emphasizes the possibilities of epic discourse in the formation of identities. According to him, what the epic writer does is to reestablish the links to past generations broken by modernity by bringing the disidentified voices of the ancestors—and thereby proving the existence and reality of what language, tradition and ancestors have succeeded in the past—in order to reconstruct the lost identities and overcome their present day fragmentation.⁷⁵ Gökarp, too, mentions the relationship between the epic and the formation of identities. He observes in Kemal an effort to reconcile the “strict framework” of the epic genre, which is appropriate to express collective identities, common values and virtues with the “complexity and singularity of the subconscious.” Gökarp gives the theme of fear as an example to this effort where the author reaches through action emerging from a rather subjective situation symbolic universality.⁷⁶ The case of Memidik in *The Undying* can be seen as an example to such an action, the boy overcomes the fear with which he struggles throughout the novel and kills Muhtar Sefer, the torturer and exploiter. In his article in *Edebiyât*, Gökarp shows the centrality of the epic genre in incorporating the myths to the novel that permit the author to integrate the real and the imaginary in a story where myth and epic are linked indissolubly.⁷⁷

⁷³ Azra Erhat, "Homerosoğlu Yaşar Kemal," in *Sevgi Yönetimi* (İstanbul: 1976), 306.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 308.

⁷⁵ Jean-Pierre Deleage, "Söz ve Destan," *Hürriyet Gösteri*, June 1993, 14.

⁷⁶ Gökarp, "Yaşar Kemal'i Okumak," 21.

⁷⁷ Gökarp, "From the Imaginary World," 153.

İlhan Başgöz sees the moral certainty provided by the clear division between the “good” and “the bad” in Kemal’s novels (although, this is not the case in all of them) as a crucial factor in bringing about the epic dimension to the works.⁷⁸ Moreover, the “humanistic idealism” of Yaşar Kemal—represented by “the traditional characteristics” of İnce Memed, the “unselfish devotion to a social cause, excellence in human behavior and belovedness by society as a whole”—also contributes to the epic dimension, according to Başgöz.⁷⁹

Context

Constant references to the context—the general frame in which the story flows, a space shared by the readers—is counted as a factor providing the perception of a totality and thereby contributing to the sense of epic. “I suppose the writer’s aspiration is to describe the making of mankind.”⁸⁰ Svetlana Uturgauri associates the epic qualities of Yaşar Kemal, as the author himself does in the previous citation, with his “writing on a large scale about the life of the people.”⁸¹ Once the scale is so enlarged as to cover mankind as an entity, the forces making the fates of its members also get involved in the framework of the narrative. So, Azra Erhat defines epic as “the literary genre deifying some powers or principles that might be natural or social, by exalting them and presenting the flow of certain events as to happen under the impact of those deified powers.”⁸² Moreover, once these powers are deified as the

⁷⁸ Başgöz, “Yaşar Kemal and Turkish Folk Literature,” 43.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 45.

⁸⁰ Referred by Onur Bilge Kula and Cemal Sakallı, “Bir Felsefe Sorunsalı Olarak Bıçem ve Yaşar Kemal,” in *Geçmişten Geleceğe Yaşar Kemal. Bilkent Üniversitesi Türk Edebiyatı Merkezi Uluslararası Yaşar Kemal Sempozyumu*, ed. Süha Oğuzertem (İstanbul: Adam Yayıncılık, 2002), 223.

⁸¹ Uturgauri, “Folklore and the Prose of Yaşar Kemal,” 139.

⁸² Erhat, “Homerosoğlu Yaşar Kemal,” 305.

embracing power for every single member of that entity—which can be indicated to others so that they will identify those deified actors relying on their own experiences—any sequence of events in any corner of that universe will certainly invoke curiosity among the listeners who were not witnesses. Gökalp's concluding remarks are quite indicative on the issue:

Epic in spirit, mythic in structure, its themes drawn from the daily routine of an agrarian culture itself in the process of destruction, Yaşar Kemal's text carries the reader in a sort of daydream through the implacable laws of ancient tragedy to deposit him in the heart of the everyday reality of the poor peasants on the plain of Adana. And yet, the tale of their lives is really nothing more nor less than that of the universal human condition.⁸³

The locality of the setting contributes to the perception of the “universal human condition,” as implied by Gökalp, through enabling a view of everyday life.

Öztuna thinks that folklore has to come along when there is a debate on the epic qualities of a literary piece. He therefore focuses on the folkloric factors in *Memed, My Hawk*, namely, “the colorful vernacular of the common man,” and “traditional customs, proverbs, and sayings” that provide a setting “which reflects the spirit of a peasant people.” These folkloric factors, according to Öztuna, and the “homespun” folk philosophy, in addition, “poetically flavored, help to create an epic tone.”⁸⁴ The common people, the peasants among whom the work is set, are seen as “the bearers of the culture.”⁸⁵ Öztuna interprets the epic literature of Kemal as an example of “literary expressionism,” which he compares to the art of Picasso, who showed that “deep meaning was expressed well in primitive art,” in order to

⁸³ Gökalp, "From the Imaginary World," 159.

⁸⁴ Öztuna, "Yaşar Kemal's Memed, My Hawk: A Modern Epic," 134.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 138.

“artistically expressing the abstract.”⁸⁶ In the following paragraphs Öztuna brings an understanding of how epic style can connect the particulars to the universal:

It is a means of communication whereby the specific, although “peculiar,” symbolizes deeper, more abstract meaning. The artist and author utilize, yet depart from a pure folk style to bring out the universals contained in the specific.⁸⁷

...an epic which transcends particular people and customs. Though the setting is specific, the story is universal.⁸⁸

Nature is a component of the context in which the subjects exist. As indicated by Başgöz, Nature, also, is not exempt from the epic qualities of the protagonists: “Yaşar’s language transforms Çukurova into an epic landscape, inseparable from both the hero and the narrative style of the novel.”⁸⁹ The reasons for the inclusion of Nature in the epic framework go beyond the author’s “love for the beauty of the physical world,” which is mentioned by Uturgauri.⁹⁰ Öztuna and Gökalp bring further explanations on the existence of Nature in Kemal’s novels. According to Öztuna,⁹¹ “with an epic aim in mind he gives environment deeper meanings.” Öztuna sees, “the author’s manipulation and symbolic treatment of the setting” crucial “in elevat[ing] the novel to epic form.” The clues of this practice Öztuna finds in the immediate “feeling of overwhelming vastness” and the reader’s feeling “that something is bound to interrupt.” Significant events are generated on a setting and by actions that are concentrated by the “flowing language” and “strange manner of epic story telling.” In short, “Nature takes on the moods of the main character-action and

⁸⁶ Ibid., 140.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 141.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 149.

⁸⁹ Başgöz, “Yaşar Kemal and Turkish Folk Literature,” 45.

⁹⁰ Uturgauri, “Folklore and the Prose of Yaşar Kemal,” 139.

⁹¹ Öztuna, “Yaşar Kemal’s Memed, My Hawk: A Modern Epic,” 138.

environment controlled to bring an ordinary historical happening into the perspective of legend.”

Gökalp is in line with Öztuna in admitting Nature as a “principal character and the major invariable in all of Yaşar Kemal’s novels,” and adds, moreover, that the epic character of it is attributed through the mythic discourse. In the same way as Öztuna, he points out the parallelity between Nature and the hero drawn by the author, which, according to him, implicates the “veritable communion between Man and Nature.”⁹² He sees both qualities of the narrative, the “tone of arresting authenticity” and “epic spirit” as products of this conjunction between Man and Nature—which he describes with the concepts “synchronism” and “compatibility”—in a mythical environment. More than a mere stylistic trick, Nature “serves as both a tangible account book in an agrarian cosmogony and as a privileged source for the emergence of the supernatural” more than the institutional religion does.⁹³

Language and Narrative

Among the formal aspects, the language of Yaşar Kemal is shown to be influential in bringing about the epic character of his novels. Başgöz and Öztuna mention the poetic character of his language, while Öztuna explains the function of this poetic language to give “majesty to [the] events.”⁹⁴ Moreover, he points to the use of the figurative devices of “simile” and “synecdoche” by the author in creating this language.⁹⁵

⁹² Gökalp, “From the Imaginary World,” 153.

⁹³ Ibid., 158.

⁹⁴ Başgöz, “Yaşar Kemal and Turkish Folk Literature,” 46, Öztuna, “Yaşar Kemal's Memed, My Hawk: A Modern Epic,” 136.

⁹⁵ Simile: A figure of speech comparing two unlike things that is often introduced by like or as. Synecdoche: A figure of speech by which a part is put for the whole, the species for the genus, the

Gökalp talks about an “epic cycle,” regarding the works of Yaşar Kemal, “in which the unity of place is assured by the Anavarza locale.”⁹⁶ Adnan Binyazar contributes to this notion of unilocality with stress on the endlessness of Kemal’s novels, which, according to him, provide them with an “epic continuity.”⁹⁷ Öztuna, moreover, argues that the function of the “epical tone” is to concentrate “action and setting on one central and majestic theme.”⁹⁸ These views point out a general notion of unity, in place and in time, that is within a more general never ending narrative containing the single narratives and the thematic unity within the single works, and thereby providing a sense of actuality, through the unresolved moral tensions in the context.

In his study on *Seagull*, Evin points out certain formal characteristics of the novel that contribute to the epic atmosphere. One of them is “the superimposition of the stories upon one another and the unrestrained shifts from one to another,” which according to him has the function of surprising the reader and keeping his attention, though “not all of the stories, tales, sequences and sub-plots can be reconciled with an equal degree of facility even within the broad framework of the novel.”⁹⁹ The effect is seen to be the creation of multiple worlds in the novel. Evin mentions the “abundance of language paralleling abundance of stories,” which brings about “the

genus for the species, or the name of the material for the thing made. *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, (Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster Inc., Publishers, 1991).

⁹⁶ Gökalp, "From the Imaginary World," 154.

⁹⁷ Adnan Binyazar, "The Yaşar Kemal Phenomenon," *Edebiyât. A Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures*. Special Issue on Yaşar Kemal 5, no. 1-2 (1980): 217.

⁹⁸ Öztuna, "Yaşar Kemal's Memed, My Hawk: A Modern Epic," 139.

⁹⁹ Evin, "Seagull," 199.

undulating mode in which the narrative is continued” and enables “the spaciousness of the narrative.”¹⁰⁰

He points out the novelties of the “satirical vision” and the stream-of-consciousness technique in the works of the author and sees there a contrast with the practice of socialist realism in Turkish literature. He expects a socialist realist author to “choose to parlay their themes and concerns.” The stream-of-consciousness technique, according to Evin, “in allowing the fancy to move with greater ease, adds to the buoyancy of the discourse through which the effect of the cadenzas is obtained.”¹⁰¹ As a result,

Seagull diffuses a sense of infinite permeability as compared with the concreteness and topicality one anticipates in realism. As the stories are unfolded in an undulating fashion, each reaching a climax somewhere and each returning to a previous point somehow, the reader as audience is drawn into the performance itself, one of madness perhaps of creating interpenetrating worlds of reality of legend, but not without a method.¹⁰²

The boundaries between the reality and the legend are not the only blurring ones as “all the norms of distancing between the author, reader, narrator and reflector collapse.” Finally, “the effect of *Seagull* is that of a single, protracted experience.”¹⁰³

Yaşar Tuncer explains these methodic deviations from the story to be “only in order to catch a theme, infuse into the story and to write a novel within the novel,” and calls attention to the historical tendency of the novel as genre to try to get rid of the unilinearity and to open gaps in the continuous narration of a story, by referring to the statement of Milan Kundera.¹⁰⁴ He observes a transformation of novelistic

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 201.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 202.

¹⁰² Ibid., 202–03.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 203.

¹⁰⁴ Yaşar Tuncer, “Bir Homeros ve Cervantes Mirasçısı,” in *Yaşar Kemal'i Okumak*, ed. Altan Gökalp (Istanbul: Adam Yayıncılık, 1999), 126.

form by Kemal to a “dialectical form of epic, a form of solitude within the community, a literary form of a world where the human is neither in his homeland in a full sense nor in foreign lands, and he is both free and constrained.” The outcome is, in the view of Tuncer, “the transcendence of the opposition between the epic and the novel.”¹⁰⁵ Öztuna in a rather similar way defines *Memed, My Hawk* as “a modern epic in novel form.”¹⁰⁶ Jean-Pierre Deleage, on the other hand, by describing epic as being “collective, distanced from the sentimentalism peculiar to the novel and symbolic to express the reality in its most profound form” was actually presenting his reasons in appraising the novels of Yaşar Kemal as epic.¹⁰⁷

About the relation of the narrator to the narrated, Gökalp indicates the omnipresence and omniscience of the narrator in the works of Yaşar Kemal, and justifies this “element of *presence*” in conveying “so forcefully a feeling of direct rapport with reality,” being “the same as that which underpins epic inspiration of popular storytellers.”¹⁰⁸ Tuncer sees an influence of epic genre in “the relationship between the consciousness and identity of the novelist and those of his protagonists” relying on the following statements of the author himself: that “the actual power of epic comes from the ability [of its narrator] to identify [him]self with others and to utter the word of an other [person]” and that “the duty of the epic writer is to know how to identify.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 127.

¹⁰⁶ Öztuna, “Yaşar Kemal's Memed, My Hawk: A Modern Epic,” 133.

¹⁰⁷ Deleage, “Söz ve Destan,” 15.

¹⁰⁸ Gökalp, “From the Imaginary World,” 152.

¹⁰⁹ Referred by Tuncer, “Bir Homeros ve Cervantes Mirasçısı,” 124.

The Myths in the Novels

In his study on the *Seagull*, again, Evin explains the function of the legends as “the realistic vehicles whereby goodness can be expressed.”¹¹⁰ He thereby explains the existence of non-realistic factors in Kemal’s work without denying the realism of the author. In Evin’s interpretation the legends were carrying “basic human values” and provided “a picture of a human community untainted by vice.” Evin evaluates the myths as the instruments of the author for the realization of goodness, to be more precise, the formal mediators of an ethical realism.

Hilmi Yavuz focuses on the seeming uneasiness with which Kemal—as a socialist writer—takes a critical stance towards the capitalist transformation and employs for this purpose the values of the past feudal society. He tests the works of Kemal in the light of a Marxist understanding of history, a history made of successive stages, each stage corresponding to a specific mode of production that has transcended previous ones. Based on the concept of “objective historical time,” he questions Kemal’s interest in pre-capitalist social formations in the making of his anti-capitalist discourse. The seemingly moral superiority of the past time to the present time poses a problem for the Marxist understanding of history, according to which historical periodization is made on the grounds of modes of production rather than moral categories. Yet Hilmi Yavuz appreciates the historicity of the works of Kemal and admits the existence of more humane values of the past in them as a factor of “ideological authenticity.”¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Evin, "Seagull," 196.

¹¹¹ Hilmi Yavuz, "Romanda Nesnel Tarihsel Zaman," in *Edebiyat ve Sanat Üzerine Yazılar* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2005), 59–63.

Berna Moran, in a similar way, focuses on the author's admiration of past times.¹¹² He figures out a main theme in the works of Kemal, what he calls "the myth of degeneration," which is associated with a sense of the "lost golden age" and fallen present time. Moran explains this attitude with the affiliation of Kemal, as an artist, to the past time when moral and aesthetic values had not yet disappeared. According to Moran, the problem of Kemal is "to make the longing for feudal society conform to progressivism." He points to the presentation of past and future times as good and the present capitalist time as bad. He finds Kemal's attitude towards modernism reactionary in response to latter's ignorance of the authentic cultural forms, and the popular values they used to carry. Moran sees his work as "an elegy to lost values."

In her presentation at the International Yaşar Kemal Symposium, Çimen Günay pointed out the common interests of Yaşar Kemal and Carl G. Jung in myths. By focusing on *The Legend of Ararat* she brought a psychoanalytical explanation to the use of myths in the novels of Kemal and provides a new perspective on his creation of characters by relating the myths to the subconscious and its role in the making of selfhood. Thereby, she shows the reality of myths:

Yaşar Kemal handles in his works dream and reality evenly, calling to mind Jung's attitude of envisaging the consciousness and outside of it in the same way. The narratives of Yaşar Kemal, where dream and reality can replace each other easily, are in a way reconstructing the relationship between these two concepts and trying to overcome the insignificance attributed to the outside of the consciousness in modern times... What distinguishes the oral literature as a source is the fantastic world that can dominate the narrative in a moment rather than the hero motives or the descriptions of Nature.¹¹³

¹¹² Berna Moran, "Yaşar Kemal'de Yozlaşma Mitosu," *Hürriyet Gösteri*, February 1990, 5–11.

¹¹³ Çimen Günay, "Ağrıdaki Efsanesi'nde Arketipsel Benlik," in *Geçmişten Geleceğe Yaşar Kemal. Bilkent Üniversitesi Türk Edebiyatı Merkezi Uluslararası Yaşar Kemal Sempozyumu*, ed. Süha Oğuzertem (İstanbul: Adam Yayıncılık, 2002), 91. "Yaşar Kemal, yapıtlarında, Jung'un bilinç ve bilinçdışı eşdeğerde gören tutumunu andıran bir şekilde, düş ve gerçeği bir eşdeğerlik ilişkisi içinde ele almaktadır. Düş ve gerçeğin birbiriyle çok kolay yer değiştirebildiği Yaşar Kemal anlatıları, bir bakıma bu iki kavram arasındaki ilişkiyi yeniden kurgulamakta ve modern zamanlarda bilinçdışı yetilere atfedilen değersizliği silmeye çalışmaktadır... sözlü edebiyatı bir kaynak olarak

Moreover, Jung's definition of the purpose of mythical creation as "to cover the insufficiency and one-sidedness of the present time" overlaps, according to Günay, with the interest of Kemal in the past "Golden Age," as shown by Moran. She analyzes *The Legend of Ararat* from the perspective of personal development explained by the Jungian terminology of "archetypes" and "archetypical selfhood."

Dino, in her study on *The Lords of Akchasaz*, points to the centrality of myths in the connections of the protagonists with reality. According to her, "reality is only perceptible to the aghas of Akchasaz through myth."¹¹⁴ What Dino implies is (in the more recent terminology) that myths as cultural forms are basic in the making of subjectivities or identities of the subjects under focus. As cultural forms valid in their context they provide them with "the ways of seeing the world." A good example is the happiness of Meryemce in *The Wind from the Plain* when she sees the ladybird on the road to Çukurova, evaluating it to be a sign from Spellbound Ahmet calling her back to the village.

Altan Gökalp in line with the perspective of Levi-Strauss on the myths explains their functions as follows:

myths constitute neither a simple reflection of reality nor an inverted image of the concrete society which produced them, but rather a "bridge of logic" between the real and the imaginary, leading to the possible resolution of the contradictions of daily life in a symbolic manner.¹¹⁵

Semih Gümüş mentions a basic characteristic in the presentation of myths in the works of Yaşar Kemal that is their deficiency of holiness. Gümüş describes these

belirginleştiren, kahraman motifleri ya da doğa betimlemelerinden çok, bir anda tüm anlatıya egemen olabilen düşsel dünyadır."

¹¹⁴ Güzin Dino, "The Lords of Akchasaz: Part I Murder in the Ironsmiths Market," *Edebiyât. A Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures*. Special Issue on Yaşar Kemal 5, no. 1-2 (1980): 95.

¹¹⁵ Gökalp, "From the Imaginary World," 153.

myths as “transgressing the reality without distancing it.”¹¹⁶ Carole Gündoğar shows the formal tools constituting this particular coexistence. In her analysis, it is the gradual diffusion of narrative components of tales to the “real” narrative and the reuse of the same images, already presented within the “real” context, this time alongside these components, what connects “the mythical” to “the real.”¹¹⁷ So, what we gain from these perspectives is that the mythical factors entering the fictional world of Kemal are not immune to the situatedness within a cultural and social context. When the villagers create a saint among themselves in the *Iron Earth*, *Copper Sky* it is due to their need of a saviour as a last hope. Kemal opens the doors of a big world of myths to the reader, while the social context is another part of the reality he represents in the story.

Ethical Concerns

The myths as we have seen are evaluated by Evin as the narrative tools of an ethical realist stance to relay the objective values. The epic style also carries ethical implications due to the notion of totality it implies. Through the totalistic approach the community is emphasized as the locus of creation of these objective values since that totality makes the social relations visible on the context of which these myths and the objective values they carry come about.

Moreover, Seza Yılcıoğlu makes a connection between the issues of human agency or resistance and the function of the tales in the novels of Kemal by the following statement: “relying on the tales, and getting underway from the

¹¹⁶ Gümüş, *Yazının Sarkacı Roman*, 54, 56.

¹¹⁷ Carole Gündoğar, “Demirciler Çarşısı Cinayeti’nin Başlangıcı,” in *Yaşar Kemal’i Okumak*, ed. Altan Gökalp (İstanbul: Adam Yayıncılık, 1999), 114.

imagination of the protagonist, the author shows that man can find the power to overcome daily restraints through imagination.”¹¹⁸

Turkish literary critic Naci—a close friend of Kemal from the first years of his career as a writer and his colleague from their politically active years in the Turkish Workers’ Party—wrote about *Anatolian Rice*, as mentioned above, that the book “is the product of a well-understood realism.”¹¹⁹ The reasoning behind this statement seems to be more important than itself:

Yaşar Kemal...believes in the possibility to struggle for a better world... The people [he portrays] are not the captive ones we are used to meeting in stories telling about villages or peasants, those who suffer under oppression and misery, who have left things going, who are the captives of certain social powers on the one hand, and of the powers of Nature on the other, but they are the ones who [resist] in face of these powers, who [react] and walk for the same purpose.¹²⁰

What Naci has in mind with the “well-understood realism” is a belief in the possibility of a better world that can be attained by human agency and the portrayal of resisting people instead of subjected subjects. In Naci’s writings on the issue, the presentation of human agency is associated with a belief in human potentials, what the human beings can achieve. The Mount Ararat people coming together for the mercy of the lovers from the Ottoman ruler in *The Legend of Ararat* are a good example in Kemal’s belief in the power of human agency and collective action. Though articulated to be “well understood,” the realism of Yaşar Kemal, according to Naci, nevertheless is based on an ethical stance that there can be “a better world.” Naci’s “belief” in human agency also is embedded in this very stance. That is to say,

¹¹⁸ Seza Yılcıoğlu, “Halk Masallarından Alınan Bazı Ögeler Üzerine,” in *Yaşar Kemal’i Okumak*, ed. Altan Gökalp (Istanbul: Adam Yayıncılık, 1999), 130.

¹¹⁹ Naci, “Ortadirek,” 13.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

the notion of human agency and the activist epistemology proposed go hand in hand with the ethical aspirations.

Yaşar Kemal Talking

On Realism and Epic

Various critics have interpreted Yaşar Kemal's novels within a socialist realist paradigm. This widespread misleading categorization seems to be related partly to the political engagement of the author as a socialist intellectual and activist. Being a socialist, never hesitating to reflect his ideological stance in his works, and his declared commitment to reach man's reality strengthened this misunderstanding. The Turkish translation of the term "social realism" is "*toplumcu gerçekçilik*," which corresponds indeed to "socialist realism." At the first moment, this term seems to fit well the author who is a socialist and a realist in a particular way. Yet to base a literary study on this concept seems misleading.

Kemal talks about social realism as a school of literature, which had brought important possibilities to literature but remained weak due to its inability in creating big masters.¹²¹ In his talks with Alain Bosquet, he mentions the danger of the contamination of an author's worldview by the policies followed. His example is that "several social realist authors" had lied, and falsified realities in order to support a

¹²¹ Yaşar Kemal, "İşçi Gazetesi Arbetet'in Sorularına Yanıtlar," in *Zulmün Artsın* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2004), 200.

case.¹²² On the other hand, he criticizes nineteenth century realism in its ignorance of “the human reality to create worlds of myth and imagination.”¹²³

By answering a question on modernism and realism he reveals his understanding of realism more clearly. He rejects an understanding of the relationship between these trends based on opposition and makes the statement that “every new movement and thought has a contribution to the realism we understand.”¹²⁴ He goes on by mentioning a modernist author, James Joyce, arguing on the difficulty to keep writing as Zola, Gorky or Sholokhov after the possibilities Joyce brought to the genre of the novel. In another interview, he mentions another modernist novelist, William Faulkner, saying that he associates himself with “Faulkner’s realism.”¹²⁵ It is obvious that Yaşar Kemal uses the term “realism” not to refer to the literary style but to the understanding of reality.

His affiliation with modernism also was observed by the Turkish literary critic Berna Moran. Moran, in his study on *The Other Face of the Mountain* trilogy, describes Kemal as an author who kept distant from the realist methodology though he was a socialist. He describes Kemal’s effort to reconcile the traditions of epic, myth and the folk tale with modernist literary techniques.¹²⁶ The scenes of lonely Meryemce on the road to Çukurova are good examples of the use of the modernist technique of stream-of-consciousness and myths together, mainly to focus on the subjectivity of the protagonist.

¹²² Yaşar Kemal and Alain Bosquet, *Yaşar Kemal Kendini Anlatıyor. Alain Bosquet İle Görüşmeler* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2004), 147.

¹²³ Yaşar Kemal and Raşit Gökçeli, "Dünya Kabuk Değiştirirken," in *Zulmün Artsın* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2004), 227.

¹²⁴ Kemal, "İşçi Gazetesi Arbetet'in Sorularına Yanıtlar," 200.

¹²⁵ Yaşar Kemal and Nicholas Canonoy, "Edebiyat ve Teknoloji Üstüne," in *Ağacın Çürüğü* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2004), 217.

¹²⁶ Moran, *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış-2*, 150–51.

However, we cannot overlook the importance of the notion of “reality” in Kemal’s discourse. By answering Bosquet, he said that even his political life relied on a literary interest in grasping the reality in order to tell it.¹²⁷ Furthermore, he emphasized the lack of any supernatural characters in his novels.¹²⁸

Regarding the attribution of “epic-ness” Kemal is more sympathetic. Yet his position needs articulation and the issue is not lacking complications. He admitted this attribution and saw himself as a follower of both Homer and Stendhal.¹²⁹ In an interview with Azra Erhat—one of the Turkish translators of *The Iliad*, who published an article titled “*Homerosoğlu Yaşar Kemal*” (Yaşar Kemal, The Son of Homer)—being rather sympathetic with the idea, Kemal equates epic with good literature. He mentions the detailed existence of Nature in a Homeric way in the works of Sholokhov and Faulkner,¹³⁰ the latter being the epic of the age for him.¹³¹ In another interview he rejects the attribution of epic writer, epic being a collective creation, but says that he wrote on the relation between Man and Nature as in the epic genre.¹³² The optimism in epic was one of the features that attracted Yaşar Kemal.

Think about the epopees each one of which is a cry of joy of life, a hope, a song of gratitude for the life, an optimism. There is no pessimism among people and in Nature. People and Nature create continuously, they create light from darkness, hope from hopelessness... The illness of both the society and the individual begin with pessimism and darkness.¹³³

¹²⁷ Kemal and Bosquet, *Alain Bosquet İle*, 104.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹³⁰ Erhat, “Homerosoğlu Yaşar Kemal,” 316.

¹³¹ Kemal and Canonoy, “Edebiyat ve Teknoloji Üstüne,” 217.

¹³² Yaşar Kemal and Alpay Kabacalı, “Roman ve İnsan Gerçeği Üzerine,” in *Ustadır Arı* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2004), 259.

¹³³ Kemal, “İşçi Gazetesi Arbetet’in Sorularına Yanıtlar,” 204. “*Epopeleri düşünelim, her epope bir yaşama sevinci çılgıdır. Bir umuttur, yaşama bir minnet türküsüdür, bir nikbinliktir. Halkta ve*

By differentiating the epic novel from the modern novel in the existence of the author's subjectivity in the latter, Kemal emphasizes the function of the epic writer, as himself, as a "creative conveyor" of the world outside.¹³⁴ We can sum up certain characteristics he mentions in a positive way, its universality, the totality or wholeness in representing society and events and its actuality.¹³⁵ To emphasize the actuality of epic, he uses the term "the newspaper of the age."¹³⁶ In spite of his emphasis on the social totality, and responding to the criticisms of critiques on the absence of the individual in epics, he states the existence of the individual psychology in epics, giving examples from *Iliad*, but develops a certain understanding of individualization that enriched personality rather than impoverishing it.¹³⁷ This, according to Kemal, happened by the provision of the whole in which the individual exists and is in relation with its components.

On the Language and the Making of the Reality

According to Yaşar Kemal, reality is made by human beings by language, language being continuously created by people.¹³⁸ "I discovered that the word flows in man's blood and it seemed as though the world had been created by the word and could be destroyed by the word, too."¹³⁹ This belief in the power of language, which

doğada karamsarlık yoktur. Halk ve doğa durmadan yaratır, karanlıktan aydınlık, umutsuzluktan umut... Toplumun da, kişinin de hastalığı karamsarlıkla, karanlıkla başlar."

¹³⁴ Andaç, Yaşar Kemal'in Sözlerinde Yaşamak, 292.

¹³⁵ Erhat, "Homerosoğlu Yaşar Kemal."; Yaşar Kemal and Tekin Sönmez, "Tekin Sönmez'in Yaşar Kemal'le Uzun Bir Söyleşi," in *Ağacın Çürüğü* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2004), 282.

¹³⁶ Kemal and Sönmez, "Tekin Sönmez'in Yaşar Kemal'le Uzun Bir Söyleşi," 282.

¹³⁷ Kemal and Bosquet, *Alain Bosquet İle*, 154.

¹³⁸ Yaşar Kemal and Erdal Öz, "Yaşar Kemal'le Yaratıcılığının Kaynakları Üzerine Söyleşi," in *Ağacın Çürüğü* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2004), 237.

¹³⁹ Yaşar Kemal and Ahmet Ö. Evin, "Interview with Yaşar Kemal," *Edebiyât. A Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures*. Special Issue on Yaşar Kemal 1-2, no. 5 (1980): 18.

is assumed to transcend the power of life itself,¹⁴⁰ brings the author to its use in fighting alienation and in the search for the reality of myths and imagination in the reality of the fiction he creates with language.¹⁴¹

Reality according to Kemal can only be known by creating it.¹⁴² So, the man created by an epic is more real than its creator, according to him.¹⁴³ In other words, the real for Kemal is not a sum of knowledge or senses yet the meaning human beings give to phenomena. Therefore, he says that he avoided imitating Nature, Man and the events of Man.¹⁴⁴ Yet in order to be able to reach reality by creation one has to live it first,¹⁴⁵ “to live” being to enrich himself with Man and Nature.¹⁴⁶ By attributing the characteristic of “artificialty” to the novelist, the critic Adnan Benk contributes to the explanation of this understanding of reality: “as far as I see, you have nothing to do with the people. I haven’t seen any relation of you with populism, folklore and things like that. You are an ultimately artificial novelist.”¹⁴⁷

Kemal does not see himself distinguished in this activity of creating reality. According to him, people create and recreate reality continuously by narrating;

¹⁴⁰ Yaşar Kemal and Doğan Hızlan, “Çukurova, Düşlerimin Ülkesi,” in *Söyleşiler*), 24.

¹⁴¹ Kemal, “İşçi Gazetesi Arbetet’in Sorularına Yanıtlar,” 204, Kemal and Bosquet, *Alain Bosquet İle*, 90, Yaşar Kemal and Albay Kabacalı, “Anlatım Sanatı Üzerine,” in *Zulmün Artsın* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2004), 214.

¹⁴² Yaşar Kemal, Adnan Benk, and Tahsin Yücel, “Yaşar Kemalle Kapalı Oturum,” in *Ustadır Arı* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2004), 233, Kemal and Bosquet, *Alain Bosquet İle*, 188.

¹⁴³ Kemal and Öz, “Yaşar Kemal’le Yaratıcılığının Kaynakları Üzerine Söyleşi,” 235.

¹⁴⁴ Kemal and Bosquet, *Alain Bosquet İle*, 156.

¹⁴⁵ Yaşar Kemal and Kemal Özer, “Neden “Çocuklar İnsandır”?” in *Zulmün Artsın* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2004), 177.

¹⁴⁶ Kemal and Kabacalı, “Roman ve İnsan Gerçeği Üzerine,” 259.

¹⁴⁷ Kemal, Benk, and Yücel, “Yaşar Kemalle Kapalı Oturum,” 235. “...benim gördüğüm kadarıyla senin halkla hiçbir ilişkin yok. Senin halkçılıkla, folklorla falan, böyle şeylerle ilgini görmedim. Son derece yapay bir romancısın.”

“narration is creation.”¹⁴⁸ The epic narrative he admires is such a narrative recreating the reality of everyday. He refers to Stendhal who says that he was writing like a petitioner, and gave the example of Homer, “narrating as if he sat at the coffeehouse;” this was for Kemal the epic narrative.¹⁴⁹

On Man-Centered Totality

In his novels Kemal provides the reader with the knowledge of a whole, a totality in which the narrative is set. One reason for the totality, according to him, is the fact that “without creating the world in its totality the [individual] Man remains incomplete.”¹⁵⁰ He opposes the presentation of Man as a lonely being and mentioned its existence in “a mass of objects, a crowd of details.”¹⁵¹

The details, the particularities, are important for the author. He bases his interest in particularities on his observations in Nature, whereby he reaches the conclusion that every creator in the Nature had an identity and adventure peculiar to itself.¹⁵² To emphasize the importance of the particularities for him he refers to an article by the astrophysicist Hubert Reeves:

Although the same laws of physics are valid for the five billion humans living on earth today, each one differs from the others. The peculiar personalities, histories, and manners of them all indicate the fact that however the laws of Nature may be determining, they leave a certain sphere of freedom.

Nature is doing two things at the same time. On the one hand, it provides the order through organizing things and issuing laws; on the other hand,

¹⁴⁸ Kemal and Öz, "Yaşar Kemal'le Yaratıcılığının Kaynakları Üzerine Söyleşi," 237.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 246.

¹⁵⁰ Kemal and Sönmez, "Tekin Sönmez'in Yaşar Kemal'le Uzun Bir Söyleşi," 286.

¹⁵¹ Kemal, Benk, and Yücel, "Yaşar Kemalle Kapalı Oturum," 231.

¹⁵² Kemal and Bosquet, *Alain Bosquet İle*, 123–24, Yaşar Kemal and Fethi Naci, "Yaşar Kemalle Edebiyat ve Politika," in *Ustadır Arı* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2004), 283.

through breaking the boring monotony of the order, it allows uncertainty, facts that are not deterministic and new deviations.¹⁵³

According to Kemal, his experience with the Nature helped him to “realize the secret dissimilarities.”¹⁵⁴

In the following sentence, by describing the village in which he had grown up as an answer to Bosquet, he revealed his understanding of social totality: “As is the case in all societies, while people were living their own adventures, they were also melting in a common fate.”¹⁵⁵

In Kemal, the center of the totality is Man as the author defines his purpose as to tell the psychological adventure of Man.¹⁵⁶ He describes his peculiar approach¹⁵⁷ in doing this as to reflect that psychology through “concrete events,” coming from outside—from human behaviors and relations—to inside, in a hidden way and usually as “momentarily psychologies.” Kemal sees human psychology as a value and claimed to find new psychological possibilities in Man.¹⁵⁸ Yet human psychology is not constant, and the author says that “everyday there is a new psychology in human-beings.”¹⁵⁹ Under this search lay his conviction that the

¹⁵³ Kemal and Naci, "Yaşar Kemalle Edebiyat ve Politika," 283–84. “*Bugün yeryüzünde beş milyar insan yaşamakta ve bunların hepsi için de aynı fizik yasaları geçerli olmasına karşın, her biri birbirinden farklılıklar gösterir. Tümünün özgün kişilik, tarih ve çizgilerinin farklılığı doğa yasalarının ne kadar sınırlayıcı olursa olsun, belirli ölçülerde ‘oyun’ alanı, kısaca özgürlük bıraktığını açıkça gösterir. Doğa iki işle aynı anda uğraşmaktadır. Bir yanda işleri organize edip yasalar koyarak düzeni sağlar, öte yanda düzenin sıkıcı tekdüzeliğini kırarak, belirsizliğe ve deterministik olmayan olgulara, yeni sapmalara olanak tanır.*”

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 285.

¹⁵⁵ Kemal and Bosquet, *Alain Bosquet İle*, 81. “*Bütün toplumlarda olduğu gibi kişiler hem serüvenlerini yaşıyorlar, hem de ortak bir yazgı içinde eriyorlardı.*”

¹⁵⁶ Andaç, *Yaşar Kemal'in Sözlerinde Yaşamak*, 259.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, Kemal, Benk, and Yücel, "Yaşar Kemalle Kapalı Oturum," 239–40; Kemal and Bosquet, *Alain Bosquet İle*, 152.

¹⁵⁸ Kemal and Kabacalı, "Roman ve İnsan Gerçeği Üzerine," 248.

¹⁵⁹ Andaç, *Yaşar Kemal'in Sözlerinde Yaşamak*, 221.

essential realities and definite values of humanity lies in the depths of this psychology.¹⁶⁰ He reveals that he identifies himself with his protagonist only at that depth.¹⁶¹

The importance of the conditions and environment, for Yaşar Kemal, depends on his belief that the reality of Man could be attained only when he was seen within these conditions.¹⁶² Kemal explains the centrality of Man within his narrative by giving the example of Homer, who gave the Nature, Natural events and the motion of Nature as they appeared to Man.¹⁶³ So, conditions exist as far as they exist for the protagonists, and they are set limits vis-à-vis Man. Kemal's rejection of a resemblance with Brecht, on a comparison, is indicative of his approach: "I cannot think of Men as puppets, nowhere and for no purpose."¹⁶⁴

Relying on Marxism, Yaşar Kemal claims that Man could not be abstracted from the community of conditions in which he existed.¹⁶⁵ Since the emergence of capitalist mechanization these conditions had changed in a peculiar way. According to the author, such a change is probably unique in the history of humanity.¹⁶⁶ What had changed was the "peasant situation" for Kemal, which was the situation of humanity vis-à-vis Nature developed over thousands of years composed of deep-rooted psychological and sociological factors.¹⁶⁷ In other words, the authentic cultures had been eroded by capitalism. The human struggle for independence from

¹⁶⁰ Kemal and Bosquet, *Alain Bosquet İle*, 167.

¹⁶¹ Andaç, *Yaşar Kemal'in Sözlerinde Yaşamak*, 221.

¹⁶² Kemal and Bosquet, *Alain Bosquet İle*, 167.

¹⁶³ Erhat, "Homerosoğlu Yaşar Kemal," 316.

¹⁶⁴ Kemal, "İşçi Gazetesi Arbetet'in Sorularına Yanıtlar," 210.

¹⁶⁵ Kemal and Öz, "Yaşar Kemal'le Yaratıcılığının Kaynakları Üzerine Söyleşi," 239.

¹⁶⁶ Kemal and Canonoy, "Edebiyat ve Teknoloji Üstüne," 208.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

the Nature is an acknowledged fact for the author, even though the happiness of Man was seen in its subjection to the Nature.¹⁶⁸ The problem was then caused not by the mechanization itself but by the control of that mechanization and Nature by a particular class that tended to use them in an irresponsible way.¹⁶⁹ According to Kemal, “the bourgeois class in its emergence, development and survival has turned his back on the humanist past of mankind, and thereby, become sick and become half-crazy.”¹⁷⁰ He mentions the exploitation of Nature as well as Man, and in the capitalist transformation, the degeneration of them both.¹⁷¹ The resulting present-day consumption society was one of dissatisfactions for the author, the dissatisfactions created artificially and turning people into obese monsters.¹⁷² He describes his engagement with feudality and the dissolution of it in Çukurova in *The Lords of Akchasaz* with the necessity of showing the past in order to show the actual, the capitalist relations which dominated the present.¹⁷³

Capitalist culture, the culture of consumption, according to Kemal, is an artificial culture which could not replace real cultures. It is not seen as a result of the natural development of humanity, but as a distortion, an illness. Moreover, art and high culture had themselves become commodities.¹⁷⁴ In his view, it is with the

¹⁶⁸ Kemal, Benk, and Yücel, "Yaşar Kemalle Kapalı Oturum" 217.

¹⁶⁹ Kemal and Canonoy, "Edebiyat ve Teknoloji Üstüne," 210.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 211.

¹⁷¹ Kemal and Öz, "Yaşar Kemal'le Yaratıcılığının Kaynakları Üzerine Söyleşi," 256.

¹⁷² Kemal and Gökçeli, "Dünya Kabuk Değiştirirken," 229.

¹⁷³ Andaç, *Yaşar Kemal'in Sözlerinde Yaşamak*, 63.

¹⁷⁴ Kemal and Gökçeli, "Dünya Kabuk Değiştirirken," 231–33.

imperialism that cultures had begun to destroy other cultures, and national cultures to dissolve.¹⁷⁵

For Kemal, the existence and importance of national culture was only recognized in the time of Mustafa Kemal.¹⁷⁶ He uses for this process the expression “the turn to self” (kendine dönüş). In this period, says Yaşar Kemal, the imitation of the West, which prohibited creativity, was ended in favor of the turn to a national culture and to the self. Yet things had changed. The responsibility of the intellectuals, even of the socialist intellectuals, is mentioned by the author for the cultural alienation and the imitation of the West.¹⁷⁷

Based on the national culture, argues Kemal, it was necessary to get in touch with the cultures of the world.¹⁷⁸ For him, the national culture can not be detached from the common cultural heritage of humanity; the accumulation in sciences, arts and philosophy should not be alienated.¹⁷⁹ Yet he thinks that it would be impossible to benefit from this culture of humanity by turning back to the local cultural values.¹⁸⁰ Culture, according to Kemal, should not be classified according to class divisions.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁵ Yaşar Kemal and M. Sabri Koz, "Ağıtlar Üzerine Söyleşi," in *Ustadır Arı* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2004), 270.

¹⁷⁶ Kemal and Bosquet, *Alain Bosquet İle*, 142; Yaşar Kemal and Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, "Demokrasi, Roman, Dil, Eğitim, Sanat, Politika Üzerine," in *Zulmün Artsın* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2004), 220.

¹⁷⁷ Yaşar Kemal and Yavuz Baydar, "Edebiyat ve Kürt Sorunu Üstüne Yaşar Kemalle Konuşmalar," in *Zulmün Artsın* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2004), 250, Yaşar Kemal and Abdi İpekçi, "Edebiyat ve Politika," in *Baldaki Tuz* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2004), 419–20.

¹⁷⁸ Kemal and İpekçi, "Edebiyat ve Politika," 421.

¹⁷⁹ Kemal and Koz, "Ağıtlar Üzerine Söyleşi," 273.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Kemal and Öz, "Yaşar Kemal'le Yaratıcılığının Kaynakları Üzerine Söyleşi," 251.

According to Kemal, folklore—as an essential component of the national culture—should not be evaluated as a dead thing. It was a living creation made by Man who would continue to make it.¹⁸² He gives the example of popular storytellers who recreated folktales at every telling, for the making of cultures.¹⁸³ The outcome, a folktale, was as perfect, according to him, as a piece of stone that remained for forty thousand years under water, washed and polished.¹⁸⁴ And cultures made were not made for the purpose of “decoration,” in his words “no fantasy created by humanity has been [created for the sake of] fantasy. Every creation has been of a use.”¹⁸⁵ Regarding the making of cultures, Kemal stated his belief in “the infinite power, creativity and change of Man and Nature.”¹⁸⁶ He remarked on the easy change of traditions during the process of proletarianisation, under which lay probably also this infinite capacity to change. Nevertheless, he also mentioned the durability of certain traditions in this process¹⁸⁷.

Myths are another component of culture which occupies a central position in almost all the works of Yaşar Kemal, as well as in the totality in which he aimed to picture the reality of Man.¹⁸⁸ In his view, the boundaries between the reality and

¹⁸² Ibid., 236.

¹⁸³ Kemal and Bosquet, *Alain Bosquet İle*, 87.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 253.

¹⁸⁵ Kemal, “İşçi Gazetesi Arbetet’in Sorularına Yanıtlar,” 205.

¹⁸⁶ Kemal and İpekçi, “Edebiyat ve Politika,” 409.

¹⁸⁷ Kemal and Bosquet, *Alain Bosquet İle*, 181–82.

¹⁸⁸ He has voiced the meaning of the myths for him various times: Andaç, *Yaşar Kemal’in Sözlerinde Yaşamak*, 269; Yaşar Kemal, “Fransadaki *Accueillir* Dergisiyle Söyleşi,” in *Zulmün Artsın* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2004), 196; Kemal and Bosquet, *Alain Bosquet İle*, 84–86; Kemal and Canonoy, “Edebiyat ve Teknoloji Üstüne,” 215; Kemal and Evin, “Interview with Yaşar Kemal,” 19; Kemal and Kabacalı, “Roman ve İnsan Gerçeği Üzerine,” 257; Yaşar Kemal and Onat Kutlar, “Bir Sanatçının 24 Saati,” in *Zulmün Artsın* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2004), 190; Kemal and Naci, “Yaşar Kemal’le Edebiyat ve Politika,” 281; Kemal and Öz, “Yaşar Kemal’le Yaratıcılığının Kaynakları Üzerine Söyleşi,” 254; Kemal and Özer, “Neden ‘Çocuklar İnsandır’?” 177–78.

myth were blurred. Man experienced both at the same time and both were the creations of Man, produced at both the individual and social levels. Myths were essential for Man, they had always been and they too always would be. Heroism, fear, love, and revenge were examples of the myths given by the author. Myths serve basic functions in human societies and for individuals. Referring to Homer, stating the uniqueness of Man among creatures in having sorrow because he is the only one aware of his own death, Kemal argued for the inevitability of myths to cope with that sorrow, which was also inevitable. The burdens of life, besides death, and dissatisfactions are other motives behind the creation of myths providing a refuge for their creators. On the other hand, myths are formula to keep the joy that Man feels vis-à-vis the world he experiences. According to Kemal, Man created myths also to feel immortality and existence in this enchanting world. The creation of myths was for him a tradition embedded in cultures. Hence, the detachment of Man from the roots, the authentic cultures, inhibited creativity and caused alienation. Emancipation, as indicated by Kemal, also was to happen via the creation of new myths.

On Politics and the Ethical

Regarding the existence of the author in the narrative, Kemal pointed out the difference of his epic novel from modern novels, in which, according to him, the author made himself a subject. “The epic novel,” he said, “is the novel of the relationships around,” rather than that of the author himself. He defined the epic novelist as a mere conveyor, though a creative one.¹⁸⁹ In his 1977 interview with Erdal Öz, he criticized Gustave Flaubert, who said, “I am Madame Bovary,” and

¹⁸⁹ Andaç, *Yaşar Kemal'in Sözlerinde Yaşamak*; 292, Kemal and Öz, “Yaşar Kemal’le Yaratıcılığının Kaynakları Üzerine Söyleşi,” 233.

modern novelists, most of whom, according to Kemal, shared the same tendency to write about themselves.¹⁹⁰ He evaluated the attitude of Stendhal to be a superior one, which he saw as an epic attitude. For Kemal, the author, who is a sum of numerous perceptions, did not need to be someone or something else in order to tell about the world. The situatedness of the author within an environment should be reflected in his novels as well, as there cannot be an abstract artist. Kemal's stance regarding the position of the author within the narrative can be summed up as "don't be someone else, don't describe yourself." On the other hand, he was not against any kind of identification of the author with the protagonists he created. In order to put the individual properly in the depths of his psychology, Kemal thought that the author identified with the protagonist.¹⁹¹

In his response to the question of Alain Bosquet on the reflection of his political engagement on his works, Kemal pointed out that it was inevitable for the works of an author to reflect his political convictions.¹⁹² While he held the author politically and ethically responsible, the success of the literary work, nevertheless, depended on his ability to cover the human reality. So, he criticized the social realist, as well as, the politically detached authors, on the grounds of, respectively, misrepresenting reality and ignoring political and ethical responsibility.

"I like storytelling and assume authorship as a tradition."¹⁹³ The traditional epics—of whom the author saw himself to be a follower—even, according to Kemal, reflected themselves, and thereby the society in which they lived, to the "thousand-

¹⁹⁰ Kemal and Öz, "Yaşar Kemal'le Yaratıcılığının Kaynakları Üzerine Söyleşi," 240.

¹⁹¹ Andaç, *Yaşar Kemal'in Sözlerinde Yaşamak*, 211.

¹⁹² Kemal and Bosquet, *Alain Bosquet İle*, 135–36.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 154.

year-old legends,” and in every retelling.¹⁹⁴ The limits and the way of this reflection were given by him with the example of “many social realist authors” who had based their works on “a wrong worldview that was mystified by policies.”¹⁹⁵ In his 1971 interview with Abdi İpekçi in the Turkish newspaper *Milliyet*, Yaşar Kemal said that he did not believe “in an art detached from people in this age.” On the contrary, he declared that his art—he wanted it to be enlightening—served the class he had emerged from, namely, the proletariat.¹⁹⁶

The political motive of Kemal was in favor of the formation of a democratic socialism that would be created by people according to their own conditions and through popular resistance, in order to overcome the degeneration of existing human values that were not replaced by new ones and the intensification of Man’s alienation from Nature, both caused by capitalism. The political urge for him is rooted in the “degeneration and disappearance of values the humanity have created throughout history.” “As everything in the universe,” says Yaşar Kemal, “also the values created by Man will change... But their destruction... Without being replaced... That’s the biggest danger...”¹⁹⁷ The lost values embedded in the traditional cultures were near perfect, in the author’s view:

That Turcoman feudalism has been really complete and perfect. It possessed certain values developed by humanity. The value of friendship, the value of love, the value of not to lie, the value of honesty, the value of beauty, the value of being loyal to ones roots, the value of pity, the value of laughing, brilliantly healthy human values they possessed. They possessed their customs. And I was, of course, fascinated by these perfect human relations... This understanding of mine is that of Marx... In 1844

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 135.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 147.

¹⁹⁶ Kemal and İpekçi, "Edebiyat ve Politika," 410, 19. From Yaşar Kemal and Abdi İpekçi, "Edebiyat ve Politika," *Milliyet*, 19.04. 1971.

¹⁹⁷ Kemal and Bosquet, Alain Bosquet İle, 183. Also in Kemal and Gökçeli, "Dünya Kabuk Değiştirirken," 230.

Manuscripts, Marx says that the human relations are terribly degenerated and deteriorated by capitalism.¹⁹⁸

Yet there are still values that the human beings cannot abandon, which Kemal referred to as “general values,” and the reason behind their survival was the endurance of the conditions under which they were created, the problematic conditions in the face of which they provided power and hope.¹⁹⁹ According to him, the losing values caused sorrow to people from all social strata.²⁰⁰

Human beings can, according to Kemal, begin to recreate themselves, relying on their socio-cultural heritage. The following words indicate his interest in history and cultures very well: “By looking to where the human race has come from, we can more or less find out where it may reach.”²⁰¹ Seeing the regaining of human values as a purpose, he gave an important role to the literary arts for the attainment of that purpose: “Art, indeed verbal arts, wash all the dirt, clean, render bright as the sky, like fire where they arrive.”²⁰²

Alienation had for Yaşar Kemal various aspects. One of them was alienation from the Nature, which was seen to be normal for Man struggling against Nature for his independence.²⁰³ For him, alienation, which began much before mechanization,

¹⁹⁸ Kemal and Öz, "Yaşar Kemal'le Yaratıcılığının Kaynakları Üzerine Söyleşi," 257–58. “*O Türkmen feodalizmi gerçekten eksiksiz, kusursuzdu. İnsanlığın getirdiği bir takım değerlere sahipti. Dostluk değerine, sevgi değerine, yalan söylememek değerine, doğruluk değerine, güzellik değerine, kökenine sadık olma değerine, acıma değerine, gülme değerine, müthiş sağlıklı insan değerlerine sahiptiler. Törelerine sahiptiler. Ve ben bu mükemmel insan ilişkilerine elbette hayrandım... Benim bu anlayışım Marx'ın anlayışındır... 1844 Elyazmaları'nda Marx, insan ilişkilerinin kapitalizm tarafından korkunç yozlaştırıldığını ve bozulduğunu söyler.*”

¹⁹⁹ Kemal and Bosquet, *Alain Bosquet İle*, 138.

²⁰⁰ Kemal and Gökçeli, "Dünya Kabuk Değiştirirken," 233.

²⁰¹ Kemal and Bosquet, *Alain Bosquet İle*, 163. “*İnsan soyunun geldiği yere bakacak olursak, varabileceği yeri de az da olsa bulabiliriz.*”

²⁰² Kemal, "İşçi Gazetesi Arbetet'in Sorularına Yanıtlar," 208. “*Sanat, daha doğrusu söz sanatları bir ateş gibi, ulaştığı yerdeki bütün kirleri yıkar, temizler, gökyüzü gibi pırıl pırıl eyler.*”

²⁰³ Kemal, Benk, and Yücel, "Yaşar Kemalle Kapalı Oturum," 217.

was also inevitable,²⁰⁴ and today the problem relied more on its intensification.²⁰⁵

What he meant by the word “intensification” is not clear, but it must have had a social root since Kemal saw an end of the control of technology by the bourgeoisie as an emancipatory event. This expectation was related to a second use of the term, as the alienation of values:

A class may get alienated, degenerated, turn back to the values of humanity, yet the whole humanity neither alienates, nor gets ill and turns back to the values developed by himself. Because it is he who has created, developed and carried to us all these values.²⁰⁶

The human drive against both kinds of alienation is explained by the author in relation to the human interest in narratives:

The adventures of Man is maybe what at most attracts the interest of mankind... The Man and Nature are the search of men... The Man is very curious of himself and his cospecies... He wants to know himself and the other people at the utmost level. Maybe he will be happier more he knows himself and the others.²⁰⁷

The socialist agenda for Kemal was to emancipate the world, labor and the humanitarian values of humanity, and to emancipate Nature on which Man lives.²⁰⁸ His definition of socialism was to emancipate Man from alienation and degeneration and recuperate his essence, his creativity that was lost, because, according to Kemal, “the first and the main job of the exploiters have been to withdraw people from their personalities [/identities].”²⁰⁹ Defining himself as a militant Marxist, he specified his

²⁰⁴ Kemal and Bosquet, *Alain Bosquet İle*, 124, 82.

²⁰⁵ Kemal and Canonoy, "Edebiyat ve Teknoloji Üstüne," 210.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 210–11. “Bir sınıf yabancılaşıyor, yozlaşıyor, bütün insanlık değerlerine sırt çevirebilir ama, bütün insanlık ne yabancılaşıyor, ne hastalanıyor, ne de kendi getirdiği bütün değerlere sırt çevirir. Çünkü bütün değerleri yüz binyıllarca o yaratmış, o geliştirmiş, bize kadar o getirmiştir.”

²⁰⁷ Andaç, Yaşar Kemal'in Sözlerinde Yaşamak, 169. “İnsanoğlunun en çok ilgilendiği belki de insanın maceralarıdır... İnsan ve doğa insanın arayışıdır... İnsan, kendini ve hemcinslerini çok merak ediyor. Kendini ve öteki insanları sonuna kadar tanımak istiyor. Kendini ve ötekileri tanıdıkça daha çok mutlu olacak belki de.”

²⁰⁸ Kemal and Sönmez, "Tekin Sönmez'in Yaşar Kemal'le Uzun Bir Söyleşi," 289.

²⁰⁹ Kemal and İpekçi, "Edebiyat ve Politika," 419.

understanding of Marxism as the full independence of the individual, which was the most important value for Marx since it could not be brought back once extinguished.²¹⁰ The freedom of the individual, of the cultures and of countries was essential for him to maintain the creativity of Man, his essence.

For his initial interest in socialism he counted the situation of his people, who were “suffering from poverty and malaria though living on the most fertile lands of the world” and could not get the dues of their labor. This injustice and resulting economic unevenness was, in his mind, also what was behind the oppression.²¹¹

In his interview with İpekçi, Kemal explained his political vision regarding socialist politics.²¹² He refused the Leninist model of socialist organization and stated that he was “against those who claim power in the name of laborers so much” as he was “to those who exploit them.” The only desired socialism, according to Kemal, could be one made by the laborers themselves, especially in face of the bourgeois establishments of modern capitalism.

Regarding the debates on the models of socialism, Yaşar Kemal refused the adaptation of foreign models on the grounds that the people of a country should bring about their own model based on their own realities. He mentioned the importance of the peasant class in Turkey in this framework.²¹³ In his 1991 interview with Fethi Naci, he described “the collapse of the Soviet Union” as “a victory of world socialism” rather than “the collapse of socialism.”²¹⁴

²¹⁰ Kemal and Bosquet, Alain Bosquet İle, 129.

²¹¹ Ibid., 83, 108, Kemal and İpekçi, "Edebiyat ve Politika," 414.

²¹² Kemal and İpekçi, "Edebiyat ve Politika," 410–12.

²¹³ Ibid., 417–21.

²¹⁴ Kemal and Naci, "Yaşar Kemalle Edebiyat ve Politika," 285.

Resistance and rebellion, which were seen by Kemal as the way to reach the socialism he liked, was in his view an inherent trait of all human beings, as was creativity. This was because they could not hold on to being insulted.²¹⁵ The type he called “has-to-man” (*mecbur adam*), to which İnce Memed, Che Guevara and Nazım Hikmet are examples, are the carriers of this trait.²¹⁶ Rebellion and to found states are, according to him, the most honorable and traditional desires of Man.²¹⁷ He points out the traditional character of rebellion in Anatolia and describes the historical bonds between the traditions of literature and rebellion.²¹⁸ In his view, rebellion is a responsibility of the arts as well.²¹⁹ For Kemal, the “has-to-men,” who rebels, are the agents of history:

Our world were and had been created by those men who had to rebel. These men who had to rebel were the essence of humanity. And they had changed the world to the present situation. From now on, it was they, also, who will change and develop our world by opposing the evils into a more humane one to be lived in.²²⁰

Yet the agency is not a direct one. The author, who hates heroes and heroism, points out the manipulations of the peasants, as a factor replacing the lack of political consciousness, in İnce Memed in his rebellion.²²¹

Kemal sees political engagement as an ethical necessity today and blames the authors who remain passive in that sense.²²²

²¹⁵ Kemal and Kabacalı, "Roman ve İnsan Gerçeği Üzerine," 260.

²¹⁶ Kemal and Bosquet, *Alain Bosquet İle*, 171.

²¹⁷ Kemal and Öz, "Yaşar Kemal'le Yaratıcılığının Kaynakları Üzerine Söyleşi," 249.

²¹⁸ Kemal, "İşçi Gazetesi Arbetet'in Sorularına Yanıtlar," 206.

²¹⁹ Kemal and Gökçeli, "Dünya Kabuk Değiştirirken," 230.

²²⁰ Kemal and Bosquet, *Alain Bosquet İle*, 170. “Dünyamızı bu başkaldırmaya mecbur kişiler yapmış, yapıyordu. Bu başkaldıran kişiler insanlığın özüydü. Ve dünyayı onlar değiştirerek bu duruma getirmişlerdi. Bundan sonra da onlar dünyamızı değiştirerek, geliştirerek, kötülüklere karşı koya koya ileriye, daha insanca yaşanacak bir dünyaya götüreceklerdi.”

²²¹ Ibid., 171.

²²² Ibid., 142, 46.

CHAPTER TWO

FROM FEAR TO MYTH, FROM MYTH TO REALITY

In this chapter, I describe the characteristics of the community that is narrated by Kemal and its position vis-à-vis other social groups. I then focus on the flow of narratives and resulting narrative experience upon which the political analysis will be built upon in the next chapter.

The story of the emergence of a saint, setting up the main axis of the narrative, is founded upon a collective fear of the community under conditions of isolation, fear being the prominent motive of the subjects throughout the narrative. The saint was a hope and a belief created in face of this collective fear. This belief was not created out of nothing, nor arbitrarily, but within the cultural heritage and in a particular setting, both of which provided the grounds of freedom and determination. It was the stories of ancient origin that were creatively retold in the process of saint making. In addition to the experience of this collective fear, further exploration of the route from fear to belief, from hopelessness to hope is necessary in order to talk about the quality of collective agency which fashioned a saint out of a neighbor in the village.

Three dimensions can be distinguished within the narrative regarding the general theme of myth making. First, by focusing Meryemce on a special setting of solitude and emergency, in *The Wind from the Plain* and in *The Undying Grass*, the author portrays the individual subject left alone with her fears. The case of Uzun Ali provides another example of individual anxiety, this time a modern one, caused by the difficult position of being stuck between moral values and economic necessity. Second, in the *Iron Earth*, the creative circle of “fear/formulation of myth/hope” is

repeated on the communal level, resulting in the turning of Taşbaş Memed into a Saint. Third, in *The Undying*, the individual dimension is re-focused, this time on the basis of the struggle with power, driven by fear again, but also by the desires of young Memidik, whose killing of Muhtar Sefer stands for the liberating political action.

The story in the three novels of *The Other Face of the Mountain* serial, written between 1947 and 1968, begins in the 1950s and lasts more than a year.²²³ The scene is set in the village of Yalak on the northern outskirts of the Taurus Mountains, on the *Çukurova* Plain (to the south of the Taurus Mountains; ancient Cilicia) and the road between. The village is located between these mountains and the steppes of Central Anatolia. The climate of the region is harsh in the winter and the soil is exhausted. In summer it is cool as opposed to the hot *Çukurova* region.

Besides the cultivation of the land, which does not even suffice for subsistence, some villagers own a few animals, which live under the same roof with them and serve mainly for heat during the cold winters. It is a usual event that the villagers run out of wheat in spring and substitute it with herbs gathered from the surrounding area or with the flour they make out of the fruit of a certain pine tree. Two activities of the peasants that connect them to the national economy are work in the cotton fields on the fertile *Çukurova* Plain, where they work in the Fall for a month, or one and an half months, and the drawing of rations from the shop of Adil Efendi in the nearest town. Most of them wear patched clothes and have to walk bare foot even in the cold winter out of poverty.

²²³ We know this owing to the connections of Muhtar Sefer (*Muhtar*: Village headman, elected by the residents during every parliamentary election.) with the governing Democrat Party, which ruled between 1950-1960 and was removed from power by the military coup d'état in 1960, the year of the publication of *The Wind from the Plain*, conveyed in this novel. In the following novels there are no open attributions to the concrete political situation, so we are not able to guess the exact years.

There is no school in the village and there are only two people who can read and write, Uzun Ali and Taşbaş, who learned how during their military service. There is neither a mosque nor an *imam*; *Kel Aşık* (Bald Minstrel) leads the prayers, when required. The villagers have contacts with neighboring villages, from which there are some brides also, and with “the town.”

Characteristics of the Community

One of the most obvious characteristics of the village community is its weak connections with the outside world. Actually, as a common feature of Yaşar Kemal’s novels, we can talk at the focus on communities which are more or less isolated from the rest of the world. A typical example describing such a case is from *İnce Memed*, the first volume of which was published in 1953:

Dikenli, the Plateau of Thistles, is one of those highland plains, with five small villages clustered on it. The inhabitants of all five are tenant farmers, the land belonging only to Abdi Agha. Dikenli is a world by itself, with its own laws and customs. The people of Dikenli know next to nothing of any part of the world beyond their own villages. Very few have ever ventured beyond the limits of the plateau. Elsewhere nobody seems to know of the existence of the villages of Dikenli or of its people and their way of life. Even the tax-collector goes there only every two or three years and has no contact with the villagers, only with Abdi Agha.²²⁴

The specific description of *Dikenli düzü* above is often valid for the other settings projected by the author, whether explicitly mentioned as this one or not, and also for the trilogy under focus. His attitude by forming such settings in his novels is related to his understanding of the fundamental condition of the individual and the communities formed by human-beings, that of isolation. His narratives thereby can

²²⁴ Yaşar Kemal, *Memed, My Hawk*, trans. Edouard Roditi (London: Collins and Harvill Press, 1961), 6. “*Dikenli düzü, dünyanın dışında, kendine göre apayrı kanunları, töresi olan bir dünyadır. Dikenli düzünün insanları, köylerinden gayrı bir yer bilmezler hemen hemen. Düzlükten dışarı çıktıkları pek az olur. Dikenli düzünün köylerinden, insanların, insanların da ne türlü yaşadıklarından da kimsenin haberi yoktur. Tahsildar bile iki üç yılda bir kere uğrar. O da köylülerle hiç görüşmez ilgilenmez. Abdi Ağayı görür gider.*”

attain wider meanings through the use of representative types and symbolism and the allegories he constructs even if at the level of a local village community.

In the *Iron Earth*, which is the only volume of the trilogy set in winter, this notion of isolation is strengthened by the metaphor of snow. The winter of the steppe is harsh with frequent snow storms rendering the roads dangerous. The young lovers Hüsneh and Rejep have frozen to death while running away from the village, and their corpses are discovered in spring when the snow melts away. Taşbaş have survived frostbite twice and Koca Halil (Old Halil) once.

Their connections with the world outside consist of the town, Çukurova and the places they are sent for their military service. Their relationships with the people they are in contact with in Çukurova and in the town, namely, the military police, Adil Efendi and the land owners, are mediated by Muhtar Sefer to a large extent.

The isolatedness of the community serves following purposes of the author. First, it enables him to present the social whole in which the protagonists act, which would be impossible for a narrative set in a city. The community thereby becomes an allegoric expression of the society at large—the social setting of the individual—as the narrative stands for the common fate of each social group and type represented within its framework. Second, the author can indicate the dynamics of collective action by presenting the community as a single protagonist acting in concert. As will be covered later, these narrative facilities play a crucial role in the dynamics of identity formation in line with the humanist-socialist political stance of the author.

Regarding the economic activities of the protagonists, there is no division of labor since they are all engaged in small scale agriculture and husbandry in addition to cotton gathering as seasonal workers. On the other hand, there is a clear division of labor regarding the social roles of the members of the community. The continuity

and durability of the society and the quality of the division of social roles is evident in the following passages:

When the whirling thistle is blown over across the wide steppe, Old Halil knows that the cotton is bursting ripe in the Chukurova plain. Each year at this time, perhaps even earlier, Old Halil picks up one of the thistles that have come drifting from the steppe, examines its twigs and thorns and then heads for the Muhtar's house.

"Hail, the son of the old Headman Hidir, the whirling thistles come. I've seen a mass of them soaring like a flock of cranes in the direction of Mount Tekech. Tell the villagers to get ready within three days." And each year at this signal the villagers pack off for the Chukurova cotton plain.²²⁵

Winding up the column was Lone Duran. He would always be the last one to leave the village as they set off for the Chukurova and the first to enter it as they returned...

"Hey," he shouted. "The village is out of sight!" It was his habit to give the news every year.²²⁶

As the thistle was the job of Old Halil, the news of Lone Duran and the post of Muhtar belonged to the son of Headman Hidir, playing the pipe was the habit of Long Ali.²²⁷

Some of these social roles are acquired through inheritance. For instance, all the known ancestors of Bald Minstrel have been minstrels in the community and his sons are also *saz* (a string instrument) players. All the minstrels from this family have been called Bald Minstrel. Similarly, Meryemce, the "physician" of the community,

²²⁵ Yashar Kemal, *The Wind from the Plain* (London: The Harvill Press, 1996), 8–9. "Döngeler uçsuz bucaksız bozkırda savruluyor. Bu, çukurda pamuk açtı açacak demektir Koca Halile göre. Her yıl bu zamanlar, belki de bundan daha önce, Koca Halil bozkırdan kopup gelmiş bir döngelleyi eline alır, dallarına, yapraklarına, dikenlerine bakar, doğru Muhtara koşar:

"Hıdır Kahyanın oğlu," derdi, "döngeler geldi. Turna katarı gibi ardardına tirkenmiş bir katar döngelleyi de Tekeç dağına doğru göğre ağarken gördüm. Köylü üç gün içinde pamuğa inmeğe hazırlansın."

Ve köylü üç gün içinde Chukurovaya inmeğe hazırlanırdı."

²²⁶ Ibid., 31. "Öksüz Duranın göçü her yıl köyü çıkarken en arkada olurdu. Gene en arkadaydı. Duran, her yıl en arkadan gelir, Çukura en arkadan iner, geri dönerken de köye ilk o girerdi... Her yıl, köyün gözükmezde kaldığı haberini böylece Öksüz Duran verirdi."

²²⁷ Yaşar Kemal, Ortadirek (Istanbul: Toros Yayınları, 1989), 39. (Omitted in the English translation; translation belongs to me.) "Döngeler nasıl Koca Halilin geride kalan köy nasıl Öksüz Duranın, muhtarlık nasıl Hıdır Kahyanın oğlunun işiyse düdüğü çalmak da Uzun Alinin işiydi."

claims the legacy of “the great House of Yellow Tanishman”²²⁸ (*Sarı Tanışmanın Yakı Ocağı*).

The cultural formation of the villagers is (re)presented in the novels as the basis of daily life. Various elements of their material and non-material culture are put in detail, such as the cooking and dressing habits, how they build their houses, and their rituals. The elements of material culture indicate the peculiar rationality of the culture in regulating the relations with Nature. The rituals, on the other hand, emphasize the communal consciousness.

Moreover, there are certain strict traditions at the regional level. One such tradition is the ban on robbery from the emptied villages in the season of cotton gathering. Regarding this tradition they have legendary stories. The cotton gathering is a recent phenomenon in the region, and the change in living conditions has brought along its moral requirements based on the value of solidarity. As the culture, communal morality is also represented as a phenomenon in the making.

A particularity of the culture, the vernacular of the local people is represented in the text. Indeed, Yaşar Kemal mentions that he has created a novel language by relying on the vernacular. Creations of verbal culture such as elegies, folk songs, sayings, proverbs, rites, benedictions, maledictions and adages are included.²²⁹

Another component of their culture that is exhibited is their beliefs. They are Sunni Muslims. Yet religion for them is rather different from institutional religion. God occurs in their discourses in a personified material form. He is imagined as a rather concrete creature as the dialogues of Meryemce and Koca Halil show.²³⁰

²²⁸ Yashar Kemal, *Iron Earth, Copper Sky* (London: Collins and Harvell Press, 1974), 72.

²²⁹ Pertev Naili Boratav, "Designs on Yaşar Kemal's Yörük Kilims," *Edebiyât. A Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures*. Special Issue on Yaşar Kemal 5, no. 1-2 (1980): 35.

²³⁰ Murat Belge, "Yaşar Kemal'in Üçlüsü Üzerine," in *Edebiyat Üstüne Yazılar* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1998).

Religion exists in the sense of what it means and of what use it is for them. Their saint stories, later applied to Taşbaş and his ancestors, are, according to Yaşar Kemal, pre-Islamic myths that have sought refuge within Islam.

The historical background of the community is relayed as much as it is relevant for the narration. In various instances within the general narrative the reader is provided with the information that the villagers have been engaged in cotton gathering for a few generations, that their fields were more fertile at past times, that most of the male population of the village died on the Yemeni front during the First World War and that banditry was very common in the region until recent times, as common as the occasional emergence of saints is in hard times.

In short, the villagers in misery are presented as the carriers of a culture that is in the process of being made since the beginning of time with the contribution of every generation, enriched by contacts with other peoples and cultures. It is this premodern cultural formation—that is captured maybe in its last generation—on the grounds of which the protagonists struggle against the emerging capitalism on a daily basis.

Social Constellation and Power

Peasants vis-à-vis Modernity and the Modernizers

The peasant attitude towards modernity and his state in his relation with modern institutions are symbolized in a few instances where the protagonists experience contact or pronounce their prior contacts with modernity and the modernizers.

In *The Wind*, while Uzun Ali and his family are having a rest on the way to Çukurova, “three jets were cruising across the blue leaving in their wake shimmering silvery streaks that cleft the sky.”²³¹ At the moment, Ali “lay flat on his back in the sun,” having “rubbed some fat over his swollen feet,” and “Elif, her back against a lone medlar tree, was delousing the children’s clothes.”²³² First, a contrast is provided by inserting modern technology into a scene of misery. Then, by the expression of “shimmering silvery streaks” the reader is familiarized with the enchantment of the protagonists, which is given in more detail through the military service stories of Ali that follow. The stories, told in a mythical tone and loaded with exaggerations, clearly indicate his fascination with the jets, which is shared by the villagers, who get never tired of the famous stories of Ali, although they have already heard them several times. Having seen the three jets he begins retell these stories: “Praised be their Creator, how they flash with light and colour!”²³³

The fascination has also roots in the functions of the airplanes: “One of them can hold a hundred men, a thousand, two thousand, a whole army. Each of these soldiers is given a bomb which he throws over the villages of the infidels. Under this shower of bombs the infidels are killed in masses and not one of their houses is left standing.”²³⁴ The present concerns of Ali, who is engaged in a tough struggle to reach Çukurova, are not irrelevant at all: “the giant ones, as large as that mountain there. You can pack three villages into one of them and carry them way down to

²³¹ Kemal, *The Wind*, 159. “...üç tane jet, göğün bir ucundan bir ucuna gümüş ışıltılı yollar bırakarak gidiyorlardı.”

²³² Ibid., 158. “Ali, kabarmış şişmiş ayaklarına yağ sürmüş, güneşin alnına uzatmıştı.” “Elif, ilerdeki tek alıç ağacına sırtını dayamış, çocukların gömleklerini, donlarını çıkarmış bitlerini kuruyordu.”

²³³ Ibid., 160. “Yaradana kurban olduğum, bir ışıldar, renkler bir döner ki alından moruna, bakamazsın.”

²³⁴ Ibid., 159. “İçine yüz adam, bin adam, iki bin adam, bir ordu biner. Her bir askerin eline bir bomba verirler, salarlar gavur köylerinin üstüne. Üstlerine yağan bombalar gavurları kırfacana çevirir.”

Adana with all the people and cattle and horses and donkeys.”²³⁵ Here, the contrast between the modern technology and the situation of the family appears in the narration of Ali, where the source of his enchantment in his life becomes visible. It is implied that the myth of giant airplanes emerges from the very present need for mobility.

The type of peasant objectified in Ali, one enchanted by a product of modernity, not evaluating it as an “invention of evil,” is full of implications regarding the approach of the author to popular beliefs. The villagers who listen to the stories about airplanes without tiring are the same villagers that will conjure up a saint. The act of mythification, whether performed by relying on semi-religious myths inherited from past generations or experiences with the artifacts of modern technology somehow, has its base in present-day concerns.

The jets make appearances occasionally, in all three novels: in the *Iron Earth*, when Taşbaş is watching over his house to see the Holy Walnut Tree where the peasants claim to have seen it shining at night, in order to see whether he is really a saint or not;²³⁶ and in *The Undying* when the workers—as they have become—are gathering cotton at the plantations: “A flight of jet-fighters from the İnşirlik air-base zoomed overhead, very low and loud, swallowing up the air, and vanished in a moment over the mist-swathed Taurus Mountains.”²³⁷

The jet-fighters enter the novel as a metaphor to emphasize the contemporaneity of two phenomena, exploitation and the resulting poverty, and

²³⁵ Ibid., 161. “Bunların devi de var. Şu karşığı dağ gibi. İçine üç köyü doldur da ta buradan Adana’ya kadar götür. Çoluk çocuk, sığır inek, at eşek.”

²³⁶ Ignored in the English translation, Yaşar Kemal, *Yer Demir Gök Bakır*, Dağın Öte Yüzü (İstanbul: Adam Yayınları, 1999), 317.

²³⁷ Yashar Kemal, *The Undying Grass* (London: The Harvill Press, 1996), 111. “İncirlik Hava Üssünden kalkan savaş uçakları büyük bir hışlıyla, tek mil havayı yutarak çok alçaktan, üstlerinden geçti. Toroslara doğru uçtular, bir anda da Torosların dumanında yittiler.”

technological level of development. By involving the American jet-fighters of the Cold War, the author obviously points out the target of his ethical criticism regarding the priorities of the war economies. The contrast put by the antagonism between the modern and the primitive is sharpened and provided by an ethical load through the antagonisms of luminous/dark, jet-fighter/Nature, hence, death/life: “The shadows of the jets skimmed swiftly over the flat Chukurova earth, tracing dark paths over the luminous fields.”²³⁸

Modernity exists for the villagers of Yalak—in the name of whom this critique is made—as a mere appearance or story, or if more, it is by coincidence. For example, when the son of Bald Osman begins to tremble they put him inside a saddle according to the suggestion of a woman, but are unable to prevent his death in a few hours.

“A doctor!” Bald Osman moaned. “Oh for a doctor!”
If a doctor were found the child would be saved. It had happened once a few years ago when they were picking cotton in a place called Karshiyaka, quite near Adana. Fourteen children had been seized with trembling fits just like this one. There had been a doctor there who had given the children injections and they had been saved. The doctor had called the sickness blackwater fever.²³⁹

Other cases where the peasants face modernity as a story are the responses to the Sainthood of Taşbaş, of the military police Captain and Muttalip Bey, the owner of the plantations for which they work in *The Undying*. Both of them are furious due to the “ignorance” of the peasants and were condemning their backwardness giving examples from science and technology. Interestingly, the Captain holds those who cheat people, like Taşbaş, responsible for this backwardness. His first reaction, when

²³⁸ Ibid., 151. “...uçakların gölgeleri Chukurovanın düz toprağında son hızla kaydılar, aydınlık toprağa kapkara yollar çizerek...”

²³⁹ Ibid., 263. “Gerçekten de bir doktor olsaydı çocuk kurtulacaktı. Önceki yıllarda, Adana yakınında, Karşiyakada pamuk topladıklarında on dört çocuk böyle titremeye tutulmuş, doktorlar çocukları bir iğnede kurtarmışlar, hastalığın adına da zehirli sıtma demişlerdi.”

he heard of the new-born saint, echoes that of the Republican discourse regarding religious fanaticism:

“What?” he shouted. “Saints in this atom age? Mehdis in this space age? I’ll break every bone in his body. I’ll show him how to be a Mehdi in the twentieth century.” He had almost wept with rage. “It’s these exploiters, these liars, these Tashbashes who keep our poor people from modern progress. Mehdis in our modern Turkey, eh? Relics of the Ottoman fanatics, eh?”²⁴⁰

When Taşbaş has been brought into his presence, his attitude symbolizes

“bureaucratic reactionarism” vis-à-vis Islam:

“So!” he had roared. “So we’re playing at Mehdis, eh? In this age of atom, of conquered space? Why, you lout, people are going to the moon now! And not by miracles either, but by the power of science, of technology. And here you are, stuffing our poor ignorant people with fables, nonsense about miracles and spells, so they will be left for another few centuries in the mud and degradation they’ve been wallowing in so long. But I’ll grind you to pulp! This is the twentieth century, and these people still live in the Stone Age as their ancestors did ten thousand, fifty thousand years ago. Nothing has changed for them. And you with your fairytales and sorceries, you come and try to make them worse than the primitive tribes of Africa even! And why? Just for a little profit, just for a handful of silver! A strong, hale man like you, why don’t you do some honest work?”²⁴¹

The sentence of the Captain in the original Turkish version of the novel is indicative of the purpose of the author: “*Ben de seni bu yirminci yüzyılın hatırı için*

²⁴⁰ Kemal, *The Wind*, 173. ““Demek bu atom çağında da ermiş ha? Demek bu uzay çağında da Mehdi ha? Ben o Mehdinin kemiklerini kırarım da, leşini köpeklere atarım. Bu çağda ha?”

Yüzbaşı nerdeyse öfkesinden ağlayacaktı.

“Şimdi, şimdi candarma gönderip getireceğim onu. Şimdi şimdi... Köylümüzün geriliği bu Taşbaş gibi sömürücülerin, yalancıların yüzünden. Geberteceğim onu. Bu devrim Türkiyesinde Mehdi ha? Osmanlı ermiş ha?”

²⁴¹ Kemal, *Iron Earth, Copper Sky*, 180. “Yüzbaşı onu önce hışımla, öldürecek bir öfkeyle karşılamıştı:

“Demek,” demişti, “demek sen Mehdiyi zaman oldun? Demek, bu atom, bu uzay çağında? Ulan mendebur,” diye bağırıyordu, “millet aya gidiyor. Kerametle değil, fenle, bilimle gidiyor. Ulan ayı, sen burada efsaneler uydurup, halkı kandırıyor ve halk bu çamur, bu zillet, bu karanlık, bu yoksulluk, bu cehalet içinde böyle yüzyıllar kalsın diye onlara kerametler gösterip, büyüler yapıyorsun. Ben de seni bu yirminci yüzyılın hatırı için ezerim. Ezerim ezerim ezerim. Ulan bu halk daha mağara çağını yaşıyor. Ulan, bunlar on bin yıl önceki, elli bin yıl önceki gibi yaşıyorlar. Hiçbir değişiklik yok. Bir de sen çıkıyorsun. Onları büyülerinle Afrika kabilelerinden daha geriye atıyorsun. Yazık değil mi bu millete? Bu kötülüğü bu millete ne için yapıyorsun? Azıcık faydan için. Öyle değil mi? Birkaç kuruş için. Baksana, dağ gibi adamsın, çalışsana.”

ezerim.”²⁴² (“And I crush you for the sake of this twentieth century.”) The Captain legitimizes the state oppression of parochialism without questioning the popular daily dynamics behind it, more specifically the economic hardships of the peasants that have brought them to the creation of a myth, a saint out of a neighbor. The Captain’s outlook symbolizes the superficial progressivist and modernizationist class-blind ideology of the political elites, who rely on brute force in the name of progressivism at times of popular resistance, which necessarily turn to premodern terminology under the conditions of relative isolation.

The approach of the land owner Muttalip Bey is similar:

“Now look here, villagers” Muttalip Bey said, “why don’t you speak to this poor fellow? Just because that saint told you not to? Now then, villagers! Don’t tell me you believe in saints! In this age? Haven’t you seen the jets that take to the air from the Injirlik Airport? Don’t you know that men are already travelling into space? A saint in this age? Now villagers!”²⁴³

The airplanes and space expedition are the examples employed to refute the belief of the saint. For these two types, the Captain and the land owner, technological development seems to be an end in itself, equal to civilization. Yet the peasants are already enchanted by the airplanes and space technology, although they have no use for them. The author here puts the cultural rift between the people and the elites, consisting of the the bureaucracy and capitalists. Speaking to the ideological constructs in their heads rather than to the real peasants, the elites are aliens. Moreover, they exist in the lives of the villagers as oppressors and sources of fear. As the alien oppressors, they are not different from colonizers. The military police are to collect taxes, to get what they have in case they cannot repay their debts to Adil

²⁴² Kemal, *Yer Demir*, 307.

²⁴³ Kemal, *The Undying Grass*, 284. “Muttalip Bey: “Yahu,” dedi, “köylüler, bu fikirayla neden konuşmazsınız? Ermiş mi yasak etti? Yahu köylüler, bu devirde hiç ermiş olur mu? Yahu köylüler, İncirlik Hava üssünden kalkıp üstümüzden geçip giden jetleri görmez misiniz? Yahu köylüler, insanoğlu uzaya gitti, şimdi hiç ermiş olur mu? Yahu köylüler...””

Efendi, to beat and jail them in criminal cases or to put their saints into the “madhouse.” Muttalip Bey, on the other hand, treats them well since the harvest of the season has been abundant. He does not decrease the price of the cotton, though it gets dirty after the rain, he rewards some of them with extra payments and gives them a feast at the end of the work with seven boxes of fresh grapes. Moreover, he is a kind of person who feels guilty for having ridiculed Saint Taşbaş. Nevertheless, his men stay behind the lines of the workers after the rains and warn those who leave dirty cotton on the ground by kicking them.

What the Captain and Muttalip Bey are *not* aware of is the fact that the peasants believe in a saint as a remedy to their fears and hopelessness *although* they *are* familiar, and even sympathetic with, the facilities of modernity, such as high technology and modern medicine.

The attitude of the main figures from the outside world towards the peasants is exploitative, oppressive, or at best, ignorant. At the end of *The Wind*, Meryemce remembers the ladybird she put into her headcloth on the road, “long dead and dried up.” She puts the insect on a cotton flower saying “sleep, my luckless one, my lonely one, sleep here.”²⁴⁴ As pointed out by Fethi Naci, this ladybird stands for the peasants.²⁴⁵ They are represented as the forgotten, lonely people of modernization, “luckless” and “lonely,” rather in line with the isolated characterization of the community.

Yaşar Kemal marginalizes these two representative types of bureaucracy and capitalism within the general tension of the narrative, which is the daily struggles of the peasants. The explanation of Arif Dirlik regarding the liberating possibilities of

²⁴⁴ Kemal, *The Wind*, 286. “Kadersizim kimsezizim burada uyu!”

²⁴⁵ Fethi Naci, “Ortadirek,” *Türk Edebiyatı* (1969): 19.

Marxist culturalism is indicative of how Yaşar Kemal exploits these possibilities in the field of literature:

In raising questions about the center of history, Marxist culturalism appears as liberating practice. Hegemony requires a center, not only in space but also in time. The decentering of the hegemonic group, be it class or nation, deprives history of a center and the hegemonic group of its claims upon history. Culturalism that achieves this end points to a liberating possibility. This, I feel, is the intention, and the meaning, of Marxist culturalism.²⁴⁶

This marginalization has moral and political dimensions. First, being the ignorant oppressors, they are denied moral superiority. Second, in these types a model of enlightenment is criticized, one built on the notion of bringing consciousness to the ignorant people. The lectures of the Captain and Muttalip Bey to undermine the myth of the saint stand for this model.²⁴⁷ The emergence of the bureaucrat and the capitalist with rather similar discourses indicates the target of the criticism. The political consciousness can develop in contrast, dialectically in the daily struggles of these people. This issue will be covered later in the chapter “The Politics of Yaşar Kemal.”

Author’s evaluation of Mustafa Kemal, he lets Taşbaş convey, is revealing of the ideological attitude of Yaşar Kemal towards Kemalism and Turkish modernization:

Right above the chimney hung a picture of Mustafa Kemal, a fur *kalpak* on his head, his eyebrows slightly lifted, a faintly sardonic look on his face. Whenever Tashbash glanced at the picture *he felt a strange pang of something like pity*. To him, Mustafa Kemal was a good man, a brave man. But why that paintly sardonic expression? Mustafa Kemal had laboured hard, had given his all to his nation, yet the religious hodjas had branded him as a godless *giaour*. He had done a great many things, surmounted many obstacles, still there must be something missing, *some*

²⁴⁶ Dirlik, "Culturalism as Hegemonic Ideology and Liberating Practice," 33.

²⁴⁷ It seems that behind this criticism lies the critique of Mehmet Ali Aybar towards the Leninist model of organization, calling it a bourgeois type of organization, inevitably producing oppression and ending with authoritarian rule. For a political analysis on Aybar, see Aylin Özman, "Mehmet Ali Aybar: Sosyalist Solda 40'lardan 90'lara Bir Köprü," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 78 (1998).

deed unaccomplished that had proved too much for him. Otherwise why that subtle smile, as if mocking himself and the world too?²⁴⁸

The exact translation of the first emphasized sentence above is as follows: “He had a strange feeling resembling to the moon.”²⁴⁹ Here, the employment of the metaphor of the moon is extraordinary since in the Republican iconography, Mustafa Kemal, or more accurately, *Atatürk* (The Father Turk), is represented by the sun rising from Samsun over the country where he is assumed to have started the War of Independence on 19 May 1919. By employing this metaphor of the moon shining on the night—the darkness can be identified with the pre-Republican era—the author acknowledges to a certain extent the claim of Kemalism to be enlightening. Yet the reason behind the denial of the metaphor of the sun is revealed in the following expression: “still there must be something missing, some deed unaccomplished that had proved too much for him.” The experiences of Taşbaş, who is sympathetic enough to the founder of the nation as to hang his picture up on the wall of his house, make him feel confused and think about the beloved leader nevertheless as a partially unsuccessful one. This stance reflected via Taşbaş is parallel to the socialist evaluation of the Kemalist reforms in the 1960s as “the unaccomplished revolution.”

The positions of Ali, Taşbaş and the villagers, who are seen as ignorant, backwards, parochial peasants unable to modernize, vis-à-vis modernity and the modernizers are not reactionary but sympathetic. For Yaşar Kemal, they are the people forgotten in the process of modernization, and this is the fact that underlies

²⁴⁸ Kemal, *Iron Earth, Copper Sky*, 60–61. “*Tam ocaklığın altında, orta yerinde de büyük bir Mustafa Kemal resmi asılıydı. Başında kalpak vardı. Kaşları kalkıktı. Yüzüne inceden, alay eden bir hal takınmıştı. Taşbaşoğlu ona baktıkça, içinden bir hoş, aya benzer bir duygu geçiyordu. Ona göre Mustafa Kemal iyi adamdı, hem de babayığit bir kişiydi. Azıcık da alaycı. Bu neden böyleydi? Çok çalışmıştı. Varını yoğunu bu millete vermişti. Hocalar ona karşı koymuşlar, millete gavur diye ilanlat vermişlerdi. Çok şey yapmış, çok engeli aşmış... Ama bir eksik yönü vardı, bir yapamadığı işi vardı. Üstesinden gelemediği... Yoksa bir insan böyle inceden inceye oturup da dünyaya gülmezdi. Hiç kimseye belli etmeden.*”

²⁴⁹ “...içinden bir hoş, aya benzer bir duygu geçiyordu.”

their occasional identification with reactionary movements, such as Islamism, rather than an essential feature of them or their culture.

A Pupil of Capitalism: Muhtar Sefer

Here, a more detailed analysis of the character Muhtar Sefer, as a proto-capitalist, a local agent of expanding capitalism in direct contact with the people, will illustrate the attitude of Yashar Kemal towards the capitalist hegemony. The most distinguishing characteristics of Muhtar Sefer are his shrewdness, his realism, his ability to mimic influential people, his persuasiveness, his mercilessness and his precise insights regarding the villagers. In *The Wind*, which was published in 1960, his Democrat Party affiliation is mentioned explicitly, but in the following books, his connections with some local politicians are only implied.

The positive traits of Muhtar Sefer are his realism and his precise insights regarding his people. He is able to foresee everything until the end, although he is unable to prevent unfortunate events from happening. He is an expert at guessing the reactions of the villagers in particular situations, and masterfully uses this skill when required. His attitude towards the villagers changes according to conditions. The author illustrates the mentality of Muhtar Sefer via inner monologues in a detailed way:

It is all the Government's fault. It's the Government that has spoilt them, giving them the right to vote and what not. Think of it! These peasants electing a government! Hah, just look at this Government formed by Mangy Mahmud! Much it cares about Mangy Mahmud! But at election time, you can hardly approach them, they're so arrogant. You've actually got to beg for their votes. No, really this Government has no idea of what it is doing. Granting these peasants the right to vote! Why, they're not even capable of counting half a dozen goats and herding them properly!²⁵⁰

²⁵⁰ Kemal, *The Wind*, 240. "Bunların düşük yerini buldun muydu yükleneceksin. Gözünün yaşına bakmayacaksın. Tüm suç hükümette. Hükümet yüz veriyor bunlara. Kimse değil, hükümet. Tutmuş bir

In reference to Ismet Pasha, the leader of the Republican People's Party between 1938 and 1972, who has been influential in the transition to multi-party politics, Muhtar Sefer says: "A man who lets the presidency slip out of his fingers, just by trusting himself to the vote of a handful of barefooted peasants, is surely incapable of ruling a great nation."²⁵¹ In other cases, he makes rather fine calculations regarding how to behave towards the villagers: "...great men, great leaders, had no pride. They had to bring themselves to the level of the people in order to be loved and respected."²⁵² Here, under the double dealing character of Muhtar Sefer, Democrat Party populism seems to be the target. The use of the democracy discourse in daily politics can be seen in his words as follows:

Where there is no Democracy, there can be no well-being for the people,
and where there is no Unity of Speech there can be no harmony my
friends.²⁵³

Compatriots and beloved villagers, you who have from the very first
given your hearts to Democracy, I warn you, it is a deadly sin to go
against democracy. For that a man can burn right in the very core of hell!
And truly, it is an intolarable thing to remain there in the flames of
hell!²⁵⁴

de bunlara oy verdirip hükümet kurduruyorlar. Hükümeti bunlar yapıyormuş! Teh! Tuzlayım da kokma! Bak hele, şu uyuz Mahmudun kurduğu hükümete! Bak hele, nasıl da dediğini, istediğini yapıyorlar Uyuz Mahmudun! Seçim zamanı gelince de yanlarından geçilmez. İki gün kapısına varıp yalvaracaksın da, öyle verecek oyunu. Bunlar oy verince ne oluyor ki? Canım bu hükümetin işi iş değil. Yanlış işler yapıyor. Bunlar kim, hükümet kim arkadaş? Anlatamazsın. Anlatamazsın ki, bunlar üç keçiyi sayamazlar. Güdemezler."

²⁵¹ Ibid., 241. "Koca Cumhurbaşkanlığını, durup dururken, iki yalınayağın oyuyla başkasına veren, koskoca bir milleti idare edemez."

²⁵² Ibid., 254. "Yükünü yapmakta olan Gömleksizoğluna ilişti gözü bir ara. Kafasında birden şimşek gibi bir düşünce çıktı. Yüksek, halka baş olan kimselerde gönül, kibir olmazdı. Olmamalıydı. Kendini herkesle bir tutacaksın ki, seni sevecek, sayacaklar. Yoksa her insanın yüreğinde bir büyüklük aslanı yatar. Sen benim dersin, o da iki misli, beş misli benim der. Dağdaki iki oğlaklı çoban bile kendince, gönlünce Demirgırat Başkanından üstündür. O yönlerine dokunmayacaksın."

²⁵³ Ibid., 45. "Demirgırası olmayan yerde, söz birliği olmayan yerde hiç bir dirlik düzenlik olamaz arkadaşlar."

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 46. "Demirgırasıyi bozmak, ona aykırı bir hareketlerde bulunmak alimallah günahıdır. Ve de adam cehennem içinde, tam gözünde yanar. Ve de cehennem gözünde durmak ne gayri mümkündür."

Yes, it is because of these Long Alis that Democracy has come to grief. And in truth, they are the tools of that old dictator, of that Ismet Pasha!²⁵⁵

The most prominent craft of Muhtar Sefer is to manipulate the villagers through little deceits, traps and lies. A good example is his overnight campaign in *The Wind* to regain the villagers, who until then have sided with Taşbaş not to work on the plantations found by Muhtar Sefer. He is successful in sustaining his power over the community by using specific tactics:

Village folk are like this, he thought. When their blood is up no amount of browbeating will avail. They take the bit between the teeth and are ready to sell their lives dearly. Take a single twig and you can easily break it, but two hundred twigs all in a bunch, never. And here there are, all bunched together, unbreakable.... The thing to do now is to tackle them one by one and bend them your way, yes one by one. That's the trick!²⁵⁶

Yaşar Kemal, nevertheless, has Muhtar Sefer utter the most realistic observations. It is Muhtar Sefer who knows very well what will happen to Taşbaş, under which circumstances he himself can fall into risky positions, and how to prevent this, and he who makes wise observations regarding the villagers. In the following excerpt, he is pointing out the essentiality of the collective agency of the peasants, while he is insulting Taşbaş:

From now on you're nothing but a plaything, Tashbash. A plaything for the villagers. They'll shit in your mouth one day and make a saint of you a couple of days afterwards, just because they need you at the moment. Then when they've done with you they'll push a finger up your arse, for

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 47. “*Ve demirğırası bu Uzun Aliler yüzünden sersebil oluptur. Ve de İsmet Paşanın diktatur adamı.*”

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 218–19. “*Gözü dönmeye görsün bu köylü milletinin, hiçbir şeyle korkutamazsın. Ölümüne ölümüne yürür böyle zamanda bunlar... Eline bir tek çöpü alır da kırmayı denersen, kolayca kırarsın. Amma hepsini birden kıramazsın. İki yüz çöpü bir araya getirince hiç mi hiç kıramazsın. İşte bunlar şimdi, bir araya gelmişler, toplanmışlar. Mümkünü yok kıramazsın. Teker teker ele alacaksın bunları. Yola getireceksin. Öyle değil mi?*”

in their heart of hearts they don't want to worship you. You'll be nothing but a big plaything for evermore.²⁵⁷

The basic judgment of Yaşar Kemal about Muhtar Sefer is a moral one: Muhtar Sefer is bad. In the generalization he makes on this context he says: “in this world wicked people always meditate evil towards others, and they do it too. This earth is receptive to the sorrow and wretchedness and vileness that they sow.”²⁵⁸

Muhtar Sefer—confessing that the traditions he exploits to deceive the villagers—abuses the concepts and related discourses such as democracy, religion, law, when required and employs them to save the day. Yet the author sees the social conditions at the root of the success of the bad. The facilities provided by capitalism for the people lacking ethical or moral concerns are unlimited. If we return to an important point of *The Other Face of the Mountain* trilogy, it is the capitalist system and the vacuum of moral values caused by it that underlie the isolation of poor people.

Emancipatory Plots: The Solitude of Meryemce, the Struggle of Uzun Ali

The first novel of *The Other Face of the Mountain* trilogy is *The Wind*, in which the main line of the story is formed around the adventures of Uzun Ali and his family, Meryemce, Elif, Hasan and Ummuhan, on the road to Çukurova. The most epic narrative of the trilogy, *The Wind* focuses on the struggle of the family with Nature and on their resistance vis-à-vis poverty and the tough conditions of the

²⁵⁷ Kemal, *The Undying Grass*, 269. “Sen bir köylü oynucağısın. Şimdi ağzına sıçarlar, üç gün sonra sıkışırılar, gene ermiş yaparlar seni, taparlar. Sonra bolluğa erişirler, götüne parmak atarlar, çünkü sana tapmaları ağırlarına gider... Sen bir kocaman ölmez oyuncaksın.”

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 115. “Bu dünyada insanın kötüsü her zaman insanlara kötülük düşünür, kötülük yapabilir. Kurdukları tuzaklar etkili olur. Bugünkü dünya toprağı kötü insanların ektiği acıların, alçaklığın, aşağılığın bitmesine, gelişmesine elverişli topraktır.”

journey. The following words of Yaşar Kemal on the novel make this emphasis clear: “The middle-post of life is the resistance of Man.”²⁵⁹

The main theme of the trilogy, the making of myths, is handled in this novel on an individual basis. It is through the adventures of Uzun Ali and Meryemce that the author presents his understanding regarding the individual basis of myths. The narrative tension of Ali’s story is provided by his struggle to reach to Çukurova before all the cotton is picked without leaving his mother Meryemce behind. This is an allegoric story indicating modern Man stuck between the economic requirements of the day for a better future and the moral values inherited from the past generations. Ali shuttles between the direction of Çukurova and his mother, whom he leaves behind to carry the load first. The story of Meryemce, on the other hand, is a story of survival. In the times when she is left alone on the road in the middle of the desolate wild Nature, what she struggles against is the tremendous fear of death that overwhelms her. In both cases, the psychological situations of the protagonists are shuttling—as they do actually on the road—between fear and hope.

The continuously repeated theme in this novel is the break off of the mood of hopelessness and fear by the formulation of what I call “emancipatory plots.” These are indeed myths on the individual level. By the experience of similar conditions on the level of community, as it is the case in *Iron Earth*, the myths are created collectively.

In the *Iron Earth* there is a scene on the instinctive fear of death, underlying the terror of Meryemce. In this scene the reader is familiarized with the way Hasan, the little son of Ali, is trying to cope with the idea of death. This section is rather

²⁵⁹ Kemal and Öz, “Yaşar Kemal’le Yaratıcılığının Kaynakları Üzerine Söyleşi,” 254; “*Yaşamın ortadireği, insanın direncidir.*” (Ortadirek is the title of the original publication of *The Wind from the Plain* in Turkish).

indicative of the approach of Yaşar Kemal to the state of human mind vis-à-vis death. By focusing on the theme of death from the viewpoints of a child and an old person, the author emphasizes the instinctive character of the fear of death, the need of human beings to cope with it, the function of culture in settling the issue, and the inevitability of an ultimate failure in this endless effort under certain circumstances.

This scene is on the inner struggles of Hasan with the idea of death after he sees a skull in a cave. This passage provides a view of a child regarding the issue:

Ancestors... The children have found a skull last year in the cave of the swing. No eyes, no ears, no hair. How beautiful are its teeth, lively, smiling.

“Our ancestors,” said a child, “our dead ancestors.”

Hasan, chilled, thought about death, and said to himself, “one day, so my head will become as well.” *He fell into a terrible mood of nothingness and helplessness.* Then suddenly, he recalled that he was a child and death was so far away from him. He would become a youngster yet, then an adolescent, and then an Old Halil. Only then would he die. This thought has given relief to him, but he was still concerned. He couldn’t forget the skull for a long time.

Then he found another gate of hope. What would happen when man dies? When he died, they would put him into the earth. His whole body would rot and get maggots. So many maggots in his eyes. The maggots would eat him until the bones remained. Then the Judgment Day would come. How would the Judgment Day come? A wind would blow from the stars, a strong wind. There would not even be a last man on the earth anymore. There would be nothing. The blowing wind would flatten the mountains and fill the rivers, so that you would be able to see an egg on the sunset looking from the sunrise. Then men would crop up from the earth as green mashrooms, as big as a finger, as a finger. The Just Balanced Scale would be set up; those who have sins would be sent to Hell, those without to Heaven.

Hasan was thinking now on the resprouting of man out of the earth and on Hell and Heaven. He asked questions after questions to Meryemdje on how to go to Heaven. And Meryemdje told him about Hell and Heaven with great pleasure.²⁶⁰

²⁶⁰ Kemal, *Yer Demir*, 13–14. This part of the book is to a large extent excluded in the English translation; Yashar Kemal, *Iron Earth, Copper Sky*, trans. Thilda Kemal, *Beyond the Mountain* (London: Collins and Harvill Press, 1974). (Emphasis and translation belong to me.)

“Atalar... Salıncağın mağarasında geçen yıl çocuklar bir kurukağa bulmuşlar. Gözleri, kulakları, saçları yok. Dişleri ne güzel. Capcanlı. Güler gibi.

Bir çocuk:

“Atalarımız,” demişti. “Ölmüş atalarımız.”

Hasan ürpermiş, ölüm üstüne düşünmüş, bir gün demişti, benim de kafam böyle olacak. Bir korkunç yokluğun, çaresizliğin içine düşmüştü. Sonra birden çocuk olduğu, ölümün de ona çok uzak olduğu

The young mind of Hasan is struggling with the idea of death, which instigates in him a terrible feeling of “nothingness and helplessness.” He is in search of an emancipatory idea, which is mentioned by the expression of “*umut kapısı*” (the gate of hope). First, he thinks that he is too young and very far away from death. This idea helps a little, but he still cannot forget the skull. The next source of relief is the religious notion of afterlife he has heard from his grandmother, Meryemce; more precisely, the narratives on the Judgment Day, Hell and Heaven. In this scene, by relating the inner tension of Hasan to these stories, the author makes us think that these plots provided by the cultural heritage of the community have been developed in the historical course in such a way as to provide the members of the community with the discourses required to keep this existential fear bearable. Hasan, as a child, finds comfort in being told the story from someone who possesses adequate authority to make him believe without any doubt, but the repetition of the story is nevertheless required, as he asks “question after question on how to go to Heaven.”

On the other hand, apparently the story of the afterlife was not very helpful to Meryemce when she was on her own, on the way to Çukurova in *The Wind*, and in the village in *The Undying*. The majority of *The Wind* is shaped around the emotional fluctuations of Uzun Ali and Meryemce between the feelings of fear and hope, fury and compassion on the way to Çukurova. Following the death of their old horse,

aklına gelmişti. Daha delikanlı olacak, orta yaşlı olacak, sonra da Koca Halil gibi olacaktı. Sonra da ölecekti. Bu düşünce yüreğine azıcık su serpmiştı ama, gene de dertliydi. Kurukafayı uzun zaman unutamamıştı.

Sonra bir umut kapısı daha bulmuştu. İnsan ölünce ne olacaktı? Ölünce toprağa koyacaklardı. Tüm bedeni çürüyecek kurtlanacaktı. Vıgıl vıgıl kurtlar gözlerinde. Kemikleri kalıncaya kadar kurtlar onu yiyeceklerdi. Sonra kıyamet kopacaktı. Kıyamet nasıl kopacaktı? Bir yel esecekti yıldızlardan. Sert bir yel. Dünyada son insan da kalmamış. Hiçbir şey yok. Esen yel dağları düz edecek, dereleri dolduracak, gün doğumundan baktığın zaman gün batımındaki yumurtayı göreceksin. Sonra insanlar yeşil mantarlar gibi topraktan parmak kadar, parmak kadar fışkıracaklar. Hak mizan terazi kurulacak, günahı olanlar cehenneme, olmayanlar cennete gidecekler.

Hasan, kafasını şimdi, insanların topraktan yeniden filizlenmesi ve cennet cehennem üstüne yoruyor. Meryemceye cennete nasıl gidileceği üstüne soru üstüne soru soruyor. Meryemce de ona cenneti cehennemi aşk ile şevk ile anlatıyor.”

Küheylan, since Ali allowed Koca Halil to ride along his mother Meryemce, Ali and his family remained behind. They could not catch the convoy, despite their insistent struggle, because Ali had to walk the same road almost twice, once to carry the load and once to carry Meryemce, who could not walk continuously. In *The Undying*, Uzun Ali had to leave Meryemce alone in the village since she was not so fit to walk as far as Çukurova. The scenes when Meryemce has to be left alone are scenes of her inner struggles with the terror of solitude and of death and thus will be focused on in order to see how the author constructs the mental processes from fear to hope on the individual basis.

In the scenes of solitude Meryemce's struggle with terror seems to have a common pattern of development. Finding herself alone, she begins to feel the fear that tends to grow. In the face of this overwhelming fear, usually a spontaneous idea grows in her mind indicating a potential source of emancipation. Then she begins to develop "plots of emancipation" upon this idea and acts according to their requirements. These plots often dissolve after a process of disillusionment, which usually occurs with a spontaneous remembering of another source of fear. The circle repeats itself usually until the arrival of Ali.

The first scene of Meryemce's terror is when she was left alone to be carried by Ali after he carries the weight to the next stop. Her fear increased when "*a thought flashed through her head striking her like a thunderbolt,*"²⁶¹ that this was a trap laid for her in order to abandon her to her death. Her fear grew further when she imagined the wild beasts. Remembering the Holy Walnut "*a light broke[s] out within her and all her fears melted away.*"²⁶² But this was a short-lived relief that lasted

²⁶¹ Yashar Kemal, *The Wind from the Plain*, trans. Thilda Kemal, Beyond the Mountain (London: The Harvill Press, 1996), 108.

²⁶² Ibid.

until the disenchantment of the tree: “And of what use is a tree to a human being? It has no hands and feet to drive away the attackers. It has no gun, no knife. It has no village, or house, or family, or food. No medicine or fire. Just a long lonely tree jutting out gauntly into the sky. What help can one expect from a poor tree?”²⁶³ In other words, the tree is lacking what the human civilization has and the attribution of an emancipatory agency to it does not provide a lasting hope under these conditions. After this disenchantment, her feelings turn to fear again: “The overwhelming terror of being treacherously abandoned in the mountains spread within her like a powerful poison.”²⁶⁴

Then she thought about the stops on the road to Çukurova: “The ascents, the dark forests, the black streams barring the way, the graveyards beside the road, the Tiger’s Crag... People have heard huge tigers with fangs of flame roaring on this crag. They say that these tigers snap a man’s head right off his body. And then there’s the Forsaken Graveyard, long and dark and terrifying, its gravestones aslant and untended...”²⁶⁵ When she finds a source of hope again, remembering the wife of an Agha in Çukurova, “the Lady”—whom she met years ago when she was asked to do a little sewing for her and who made a present to her of a cotton dress—her plot of emancipation is ready. It is the protection of a socially powerful person—an actual individual whose class position is different than Meryemje’s—that she is hoping for:

²⁶³ Ibid., 108–09. “Ağacın da insanoğluna ne faydası olur ki... Eli ayağı yok ki gelene git desin. Dili yok ki haydi öte desin. Tüfeği yok, bıçağı yok. Evi yok, barkı yok. Ekmeği aşı yok. Gözü kulağı yok. Sipsivrice uzamış göğşe öte. Bir fıkara ağacın elceğizinden ne gelir ki... Köyü de yok, kömeci de... Avrady yok, uşağı da... Çırılçıplak. İlacı yok, ateşi de... Fıkara...”

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 109. “Korku bastırıldıkça bastırıyor, ona bir tuzak, ona bir al edip dağda koyup gittikleri düşüncesi içine bütün şiddetiyle ağısını akıttıyordu.”

²⁶⁵ Ibid. “Yokuşları, karanlık ormanları, geçit vermez karanlık suları, yol üstündeki mezarlıkları, Kaplan kayasını getirdi gözlerinin önüne. Kaplan kayasında kocaman, pençeleri yalımdan kaplanlar heykirir. Adamın başını gövdesinden ayırır da çeker gider dağına... Ama Körmezar! Körmezar! Körmezar! Karanlık, kötü sağır edici. Uzun bir tarla, taşlar yan yatmış, perişan. Gözünü kapamadan Körmezarın yanından geçemezsin. Körmezar! Körmezar. Olmaz ol Körmezar!”

I'll go down to the plain and knock at the house of an Agha. Lady, I'll say to his wife, it's like this, and I'll explain everything. Tears will come to her eyes. This world is full of charitable souls. You can sit here in a corner for ever, good Mother, she'll say. We have plenty of bread and food, and you can look after the children now and then. And I'll say to her: I've had children too and see what they've done to me! But still, maybe you know better. I'll tend your children with more loving care than I did for my own.

Then the news will reach Ali that I am in the Chukurova staying with the Agha. He'll come and beg and weep and do everything to talk me over. And I... But the lady will come. She'll give Ali a fine dressing down, and to me she'll say, I hold you in higher esteem than my own mother. Don't go with this wretched man who threw you into the jaws of death, who left you stranded with a Holy Tree.²⁶⁶

Thinking on the next issue of how to reach Çukurova, Meryemce hopes to meet some villagers on the road: "They'll see me and ask what's befallen me and when I tell them the women will all weep. They'll sit me on a nice horse with a Circassian saddle."²⁶⁷

Unfortunately, the solution to the problem of transportation does not bring about the final relief because there is an impassable obstacle on the road before the high road where she hopes to meet the villagers:

Suddenly she came to a standstill. The image of the Forsaken Graveyard passed before her eyes, the graveyard winding in a long endless rush of darkness, its stones rolling and tumbling over each other... The dead! The bones of the dead! Oh, the Forsaken Graveyard! It takes a whole morning to walk from one end of it to the other. Near the road is a huge long grave with its stone aslant and a leafless warm-eaten oak over it. No living soul can pass all by himself near the Graveyard without being paralysed with terror. One can pass by the dark waters, the Tiger's Crag, the Jinn's Cave, but one cannot even approach the Forsaken Graveyard. She turned back towards the village, as if fleeing from the Graveyard.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 110. "İnerim Çukura, varırım bir Ağanın evine, Abla derim avradına, hal keyfiyet böyle böyle. Gözlerinden yaş gelir. Dünyada çok merhametli var. Otur da köşeye, ölene dek ye iç ana, der. Bizde ekmek de aş da çok. Arada da şu çocuklara azıcık bakıverirsin. Ona derim ki biz çocuk büyüttük de ne oldu sanki. Ama, sen bilirsin gene de. Senin çocuklarına, benim çocuklarımdan bin kere daha iyi bakarım.

Pamuk dönüşü, benim Çukurovada olduğumu, Ağanın evinde durduğumu haber alır Ali. Gelir yalvarır. Ağlar. Beni kandırmak için bir dil döker ki, olmaya gitsin. Ben de... Derken Abla gelir, Aliye açar ağzını yumar gözünü. Bana dab en seni anamdan ileri tutuyorum, der. Seni ölümün koynuna atıp da giden, Ziyaret ceviziyle kucak kucağa koyan pis adamın yanına, amamı bildin mi gitme, der."

²⁶⁷ Ibid. "Beni görürler, halimi, başıma gelenleri sorarlar. Bir bir anlatınca, başıma gelenleri, kızlar, gelinler ağlarlar. Beni güzelce bi rata bindirirler. Çerkes eyerli ata."

The Chukurova, the Lady, the traveling village, the horse she was to ride, everything had faded away. If only this graveyard did not exist. If only... She pressed on, not daring to look back.²⁶⁸

Having decided to turn back to the village, Meryemce begins to think about how to find food. Then she becomes concerned with the fact that she will have to live in the empty village two months long alone.

She sank down on the side of the road, *the loneliness growing upon her*. The skies were widening in all their blue immensity, the mountains flattening out, the trees and houses vanishing and *the emptiness echoing and re-echoing*... Not even a breath of wind... Nothing stirs... She shivered and shrank in fear. She rose again and turned towards Chukurova.²⁶⁹

By thinking on the dogs, cats and the starlings she remembers the only person who never hunts starlings, Spellbound Ahmet, who is the lunatic of the village. The story of Ahmet, according to the villagers, is as follows:

One day the daughter of the Peri King²⁷⁰ sees Ahmet... and she is struck dumb on the spot. She burns with such a passion for him that smoke rises from the top of her head. That minute she appears to Ahmet in the guise of a beautiful human maiden. As soon as he sees her Ahmet becomes enamoured too. So the maiden takes Ahmet to her father's palace and there they are secretly wed. In the course of time the Peri King discovers that his daughter is married to a human being and he flies into a formidable rage, Allah protect us! And in his fury he strikes Ahmet and cripples him with the blow. He would have killed him but the Peri maiden who throws herself at her father's feet, crying: "Don't kill my

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 111. "Birden yolun ortasında zıncı diye durdu. Orada, bükülmüş beli, beeline dayanmış elleri, gözleri yerde kalakaldı.

Gözlerinin önünden uçsuz bucaksız, karanlık, göz gözü görmez, kurşun geçmez bir karanlık içinden Körmezar geçiyordu. Mezarlık geçiyor, geçiyor, devriliyor. Mezar taşları kaçıyor. Taşlar birbirine giriyor. Ölümler! Ölü kemikleri! Körmezar! Körmezar! Uuuuuuuuy Körmezar. Bir ucundan bir ucu bir öğle çeker. Körmezarda yola yakın, kocaman, taşı yana yatmış, uzun bir mezar vardı. Üstündeki, dalları yapraksız meşeyi kurt yemiş, diş diş etmiştir. Körmezarın önünden, yapayalnız, ödü kopmadan kimsecikler geçemez. Karanlık sulardan, Kaplan kayasından, cin mağarasından geçilir. Körmezarın yanına yaklaşılmaz.

Körmezardan kaçarcasına, geriye, köyüne döndü. Şimdi Çukurova, Abla, yoldan giden köy, bindiği at gerilerde, hayal içinde kalmıştı. Aaaaah şu Körmezar olmasaydı yolun üstünde. Olmasaydı, olmasaydı. Koşarcasına, gücünün yettiğince yürümeğe başladı. Ardına bile bakmıyordu."

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 111-12. "Oraya, yolun kıyıcığına çöktü. Gökler, tüm mavisıyla genişledikçe, genişliyor, dağlar düzeliyor, ağaçlar, veler gözüküyor, ıssızlık çın çın ötüyordu. Gümüş rengi döngeler boşlukta, ıssızlıkta yalnızlar. Bir yel bile esmiyor. Kıpırtı yok. Durgun. Birden ürperdi. İssizlik içine işlemişti. Korktu. Büzüldü. Sonra ayağa kalktı, Çukura doğru döndü."

²⁷⁰ Peri: Fairy.

Ahmet before you kill me! What if he is a human being? I adore human beings. Just give me a cave hereabouts and allow me to live there with my loved one.” The Peri maiden’s mother, her other sisters all plead for her, and obtain permission for the two lovers to live in a cave far away from the palace.²⁷¹

It is also believed that Spellbound Ahmet comes to the village with his wife, children, his sisters-in-law and other *Peris* who wish to live in the village. This idea made Meryemce to change her direction again towards the village, dreaming:

When Ahmet sees me, he’ll be surprised at first, then he will laugh softly in the way small children do and he’ll say: “Don’t hide, women, don’t run away children. Have no fear Peri-folk. Mother Meryemdje here knows how to keep a secret.” And I will say: “Come here, my lovely girl come. You have shown how wise you are, for if you weren’t the wisest of Peris you wouldn’t have chosen the most handsome, the sweetest-laughing of humn beings. Don’t be afraid of me. Aren’t the Peris part of the Islam community too? Aren’t they made like human beings? You run about and play. I’ll sing lullabies to your children and put them to sleep. My voice wouldn’t be as sweet as a Peri’s—who knows how sweet a Peri’s voice is—and yet my lullabies used to hush a crying child like a charm. But it’s so long since I’ve sung babies to sleep. After Ali, after Hasan... I must love a child and then only can my voice be soothing to it. I will love your children. You’ll teach me the Peri language, my daughter, and I’ll sing to the children, half in the human language, half in the Peri language. And when the villagers return from Chukurova, you’ll make me invisible like you and take me to your cave. They say, my daughter, that in your father’s palace are forty chambers, all of them locked, and in each of these chambers is a golden fount of spring water. They say that he who drinks of this water will never die. Have you made Ahmet drink of it? You should, my daughter, even though your father be a harsh king. They say he hides the keys in his hair. You must find a way to get hold of them, my daughter, while your father is asleep, for if you survive your husband you’ll be as miserable as I am. To live on after your husband, bereft and all alone, is like living on in a desolate world without people. Steal the keys while he is asleep, quickly, quickly... Let my Ahmet drink of the spring. Let him not die... You must find a way, my daughter, of unlocking one of the forty chambers and of making your husband drink of this water that bestows immortality. A Peri who is so in

²⁷¹ Kemal, *The Wind*, 113. “*Bir gün peri padişahının kızlarından biri, meşelikte odun keserken Ahmedî görür. Kız Ahmedî görür görmez dili tutulur. Bir vurulur ki, olmaya gitsin. Dumanı tepesinden çıkar. O anda dünya güzeli donunda gözükür Ahmede. Ahmed de kızı görür görmez kıza vurulur. Vuruluş o vuruluş. Kız Ahmedî alır, babasının sarayına götürür. Babasından gizli evlenirler. Gel zaman git zaman peri padişahı, kızının bir insanla evlendiğini duyar. Duyunca bir öfkeye gelir ki, vay anam vay! Vurunca öfkesinden Ahmedî, dal gibi Ahmedî sakat eyler. Öldürecekken kız araya girer, beni öldür Ahmedimi öldürme, der. Varsın insane olsun. Ben insanoğluna vurgunum, der. Şuracıkta bana bir mağara ver de yaşayayım sevdiğimle. Anası, öteki kardeşleri araya girerler, sarayın ötesinde, uzağında bir mağarada yaşamalarına izin alırlar.*”

love with the odour of the human body should do this, my daughter. You'll look after me, won't you, my Ahmet? You'll be my soul's comrade... Let that infidel Long Ali abandon his mother on the high mountains, a prey to the wild beasts and birds. What does it matter since you're there, Ahmet, my child? Let him go and perish ignominiously in hell...

It is said that the Peris have no bridge to their nose. Do your children have noses like that too? Well, it doesn't matter. It's not a great defect, really. What if their noses are slightly flattened out? Don't worry about at all, Ahmet, my child.²⁷²

She still doubted Ahmet's hospitality:

Would Ahmet come to meet her when he learnt that she was trudging up towards the village? Would he bring his wife along? A sudden misgiving gripped her and her feet dragged to a standstill as if heavy lead weights had been clapped onto them. What if he did not come to meet her? What if according to the Peri custom, he did not show his wife and children to her?²⁷³

²⁷² Ibid., 114–15. “Ahmedim beni görünce once şaşırır, sonar tatlı tatlı, bebekler gibi güler. Sonra da kaçmayın avrat, korkmayın çocuklar, korkmayın peri milleti, bu Meryemce Anadan sır çıkmaz. Ben de, gel güzel kızım gel, derim. Sen akıllıymışsın. Perilerin en akıllısı sen olmasan, insanoğlunun en güzelini, en tatlı gülenini almazdın. Korkma benden, periler de din islam değil mi, onlar da insane yapısında değil mi? Siz gidin, gezin, oynayın, ben çocuklarınızı nen çalıp uyuturum. Sesim peri sesi gibi güzel olmaz ama, kimbilir ne güzeldir peri sesi? Olmaz ama, çok yanıktı eskiden. Ninni söylemeyi çok oldu. Aliden sonar, Hasandan sonra. Ağlayan çocuk kirp diye sesini keser. Bir çocuğu sevmeliyim ki, sesim ona dokunsun. Dokunsun da ağlamasın bebeklik. Ben sizin çocuklarınızı severim. Bana peri dili belletirsen kızım, ben ona ninninin yarısını insane dilince, yarısını da perice söylerim. Perilerin de hakkı kalmasın, öyle değil mi? Köy de dönünce Çukurovadan, beni de görünmez edersiniz, mağaranıza götürürsünüz. Kızım, senin babayın sarayında kırk tane oda varmış, kırkı da kilitliymiş, kırkının içinde de altın oluklu birer pınar kaynarmış. O pınardan bir avuç su içen bir daha ölmezmiş. Ahmedime içirdin mi ondan. İçirmelisin kızım. Bilirim baban zorlu bir padişahmış...

Anahtarları da saçının arasında saklarmış. İnsanoğlu da içerse o sulardan ölmezmiş. Bir yolunu bul kızım, baban uyurken. Kocayın arkasına kalırsan, benim gibi perişan olursun. Kocadan arda kalmak, yalnız tek başına kalmak, ıpıssız dünyada, tek başına, insansız kalmak gibidir. Uyurken çaliver. Çabuk çabuk. İçsin Ahmedim. Ölmesin. Hayat suyunu bir Köroğlunun kır atı içmiştir. Ölmez. O olmaz olası Koca Halil söylerdi. Kır at her yıl Halep pazarında bir altına satılmış. Kır at şafaktan önce pazara getirilir, orta yere bağlanırmış. Öyle zayıf, öyle zayıfmış ki, tüm kemikleri dışardaymış. Sallanırmış halsizlikten yürürken. Pazara ilk gelen, atı ilk gören almış onu. Çünkü hangi eve girerse o yıl o eve bolluk, uğur getirirmiş. Bir daha da o eve bela uğramazmış. Bu yüzden pazar olacak günleri, gece sabaha kadar, bütün yıl bekleyenler olurmuş, ilkin göreyim de kır atı alayım diye. Bir yolunu bulup kırk odanın birini açmalı, hayat suyunu hiç olmazsa kocana içirmelisin kızım. İnsan kokusunu bu kadar seven bunu yapar kızım.

Eğildi ayaklarına baktı. Gülümsedi. Ayaklarını kanat takmış da uçuyor, dedi. Kara gözlerine kurban olduğum Ahmedim, bana bakarsın, bana can yoldaşı olursun değil mi? Pamuk zamanı pamuğun olduğunu söyleyen, döngeleyi Koca Halilin kapısına getirip de koyan sensin değil mi? Gavur Uzun Ali, anasını kurda kuşa yem olarahtan yüce dağlar başında kosun da gitsin. Varsın gitsin, yavrum Ahmedim, cehennem zıbarasına gitsin. Sen varsın ya. Derler ki, perilerin burunlarının direkleri yok derler eskiler. Senin çocuklarıyın da mı burunlarının direkleri yok? Varsın olmasın. Çok bir kusur sayılmaz. Azıcık burunları basık olur. Varsın olsun. Hiç ona canını sıkma Ahmedim, yavrum.”

²⁷³ Ibid., 115–16. “Aşağıdan, kayağın içinden köye doğru çıkarken, Ahmedin haberi olur da Meryemce Anasını karşılar mıydı ola? Belki karısını da alır yola çıkardı.

When a ladybird comes and settles on her hand she is convinced that it was sent by Ahmet and the Peris to her and continues her walk joyfully towards the village.

We can see the same cycle in another scene in the following passage where Meryemce tries to cope with her fear, again when she was left alone back at the road:

Terror filled her and she started shouting without knowing it. She ran screaming after them until they disappeared down the valley. Then all her strength ebbed away and she rolled to the ground, her body shaken with convulsions. Darkness encompassed her. She saw death and emptiness closing in on her. Clawing at the ground, she dragged herself up in a desperate effort to break free from this darkness, this nothingness, and wheeled about this way and that...

Wolves are swooping down in packs, ravenous wolves with huge fangs. Each one of them pounced on her, tearing at her flesh until there was nothing but a white carcass left. In an unending, onrushing pack, the wolves came galloping, flying, teeming like ants...

"Ali!" she shrieked, "Ali, my child, run! Help! The wolves..."

Her screams had the power to drive away the wolves. She kept on shouting, spinning around blindly all the while, till it was evening and her voice broke. Then, enormous, rapacious-beaked vultures, with dark unending wings, were swarming in thousands in the maddening dusk. She fell in a heap face to face with death.

A fresh wind blew down from the mountain tops and the stars were bright in the sky. "But I am still breathing," she said, "thank heavens, I am not dead yet." Joy spread within her, the joy of relief at suddenly finding again what one have lost. Staggering to her feet she searched in the undergrowth and found herself a stick to replace the one she had lost. Her throat ached, but she kept up a confident mutter...

Hasan will throw himself down on the road. If you don't bring my granny along, he'll say, then I won't go either. I won't budge. They'll try to drag him along, the infidels, but he'll give them the slip and escape into the mountains. He'll never give in...

What if they trussed Hasan up hand and foot?

Now a fear more terrible than before was setting in, a dark, heavy, almost palpable fear. She broke into a run, calling out Hasan's name in a hoarse voice. She ran until she could run no longer. There were no wolves now, no shadowy long-winged vultures filling the darkness of the sky. But the devastating fear of death, spreading like thick murky water, made her crouch into a small trembling heap, shrinking smaller and smaller until her bones cracked. She drew her legs up tightly to her breast and hid her head between her knees. There was not the faintest sound around her, not even the humming of the night, not even the howling of a jackal or the twitter of a bird, only a cold emptiness that sent jolting tremors through

İçine bir de şüphe düştü birdenbire. Bundan dolayı da ayakları durdu. Sanki ayaklarına kilolarca kurşun asmışlardı. Ya karşılamaz, ya peri töresince avradını, çocuklarını göstermez, kendi de gözükmese?"

her body.

She turned stiffly southward, in the direction of the holy Kaaba, and lifted her quivering hands for the prayer. But not a single one of the few prayers she had managed to learn came to her mind. Allah, my beautiful Allah, I beseech thee my black-eyed one, make me remember just one prayer so I should not pass unclean into the other world....

Allah appeared before her eyes, a luminous haired venerable ancient, his beard ablaze with light, and a prayer flashed across her mind. She pattered it out hurriedly, losing herself in its monotone as she swayed from side to side. The emptiness around her was complete now. Alone with her prayer, fear and death and everything else quite wiped out, she mumbled it over and over again hypnotically.

... As the voices came closer, the warm gladness of deliverance, of coming to life again, flowed slowly into her heart.²⁷⁴

“So I’m really old, really worn out now....I might as well be dead.” The plaint, low murmured and slow, was the despairing cry of death, of one left quite alone in a deserted alien world.²⁷⁵

As it is obvious, the teaching of afterlife is being of no use for the frightened Meryemce. Although she is an adult member of the community, a full-fledged carrier of its culture, the narratives inherent in that culture do not function in the absence of the society. This attitude of Yaşar Kemal reveals his understanding of culture as a communal phenomenon that can only function in the presence of the members of community. In other words the subjectivity of the community is providing the objectivity of its members. Moreover, the culture as the Archimedean point upon which the subjects stand cannot fulfill this function in a condition of absolute solitude, in the absence of others. Thus, the only ground upon which the solitary Meryemce can stand is the “slippery ground of subjectivity.”²⁷⁶

It is under these conditions of emergency that Meryemce is engaged in an activity of creating myths. She does it relying on past experiences of her own (Lady), on semi-religious popular beliefs (The Holy Walnut Tree, Spellbound Ahmet and the

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 147–50.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 152.

²⁷⁶ Gambetti, "The Agent is the Void!" 433.

Peris) or on others (Ali, Hasan and passengers). In all these cases, the myths are emancipatory plots constructed by Meryemce out of the components she cuts out of various narratives with which she is familiar, as to meet her present needs.

The two situations of Meryemdje, first, as the grandmother telling stories about the afterlife and second, as an old woman in panic, and the myths she tells in those situations correspond to the differentiation Homi Bhabha makes between the pedagogical and performative narratives.²⁷⁷ The traditional-religious myth of the Judgement Day told in the village, the pedagogical narrative provided by the authority—here, Meryemce—is of no use for her on the road, standing for the anomie and the liminality of modernity, and she begins to deform various pedagogical narratives and plots that are available to her through the cultural heritage, and “performs” new ones in the very particular conditions she is in and based on her singularity.

Another common trait of these myths is the “attribution of agency” or “transfer of agency” to various objects or people, to play crucial roles in the emancipatory plots. Meryemce establishes discursive relations with other beings—i.e. to the road, the tree, the chicken, the ladybird, Spellbound Ahmet and an unknown Lady in Çukurova—by attributing to them human qualities, in case they are non-humans, or by exaggerating their certain qualities that can be.

It was discussed in the first chapter how Yaşar Kemal sees myths as necessary for all human-beings, in all times and all kinds of societies. Referring to Homer, who stated that human-beings are unique creatures in feeling sorrow, because they are unique creatures who know that they’ll die—the author argues for the necessity of creating myths for the human-beings, unless they solve the problem of death. So, the

²⁷⁷ Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London, New York: Routledge, 1990).

state of Meryemce is neither peculiar to her nor to the culture in which she lives. Her scenes of solitude provide for the author a state-of-nature kind of setting in which he can express his views on the nature of Man. Though universal in character, this Man of Yaşar Kemal by being cut off from the community represents one experiencing anomie under conditions of rapid social change. It was also mentioned in the first chapter that Kemal defines the essence of Man as his creativity and attributes this capacity to all human-beings alongside the drive to resist and rebel.²⁷⁸

On the other hand, at the root of Ali's anxiety beginning after separation from the community in *The Wind*, lays the danger of hunger and misery:

If we keep up this pace we'll catch up with them at the Lower Andurun...
Only five or six days, and before they know it we'll be with them. Isn't that so? ...
We have to catch up with them, we must join them before they reach the lower Andurun. We must, we must. If we don't, then my children will go hungry and naked this year. If I'm not able to pay back my debts, Adil Effendi will make short work of me. If I don't catch up with them, woman, the villagers will be victimised by the Muhtar Sefer and Batty Bekir. We must catch up, do you hear? We must woman, we must! It's sink or swim for us now.²⁷⁹

If not to-morrow, then the day after. If not to-morrow... They'll be starting on the cotton. And if the crop is good, everyone will be back with a stack of money. Oh, my black fortune! How will I ever get there in time if I have to cover every stretch of the journey three times? No one's going to wait for me. As for Adil Effendi, there is no question of Moslem fellowship with him. He'll unhinge the door of my house and take it away. He'll carry off even the burnt plough in the field, even the flour and bulgur we still have in our sacks... If not to-morrow, then the day after... And is there any mercy to be expected from the Muhtar? He'll put us in the first batch of taxpayers, he hates us so... If not to-morrow, then the day after.²⁸⁰

In times of desperation, his anxiety turns to fury toward his mother, whom he holds responsible for their belatedness. The inner struggle of Ali is between economic

²⁷⁸ Kemal and Kabacalı, "Roman ve İnsan Gerçeği Üzerine," 260.

²⁷⁹ Kemal, *The Wind*, 73.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 121.

necessities, the facts, represented by the image of fertile Çukurova and the moral values represented by his mother. The conflict between two distinct sources of his fear, first, that his children, representing the future, “will go hungry and naked this year” and second, that his mother is facing the dangers of staying alone on the desolate road where they left her, representing the past, is the conflict of Ali situated in the present time with the burden of his conscience. Although Ali is also a myth-maker as Meryemce is, this aspect of him will not be focused on in this study because the case of Meryemce is representative enough.

On the other hand, Ali is an important character in representing the contemporary Man coping with actual problems of morality, as opposed to the state-of-nature type context of Meryemce’s plots which is more viable to generalizations about the condition of being human. He holds himself responsible for the three generations of his family and, moreover, for his community abused by the corrupt Muhtar Sefer and voracious town-merchant Adil Efendi. Yaşar Kemal has conveyed two aspects of political agency in two different protagonists in narrative form, namely, the ethical stance and contingency.

On the other hand, the moral of *The Wind* is rather in line with that in the quotation below, made by Arif Dirlik from Eugene Genovese, in order to example the attitude of culturalist Marxist historicists’ “suspicion of theory in favor of descriptive history”

Many years of studying the astonishing effort of black people to live decently as human beings even in slavery has convinced me that no theoretical advance suggested in their experience could ever deserve as much attention as that demanded by their demonstration of the beauty and power of the human spirit under conditions of extreme oppression.²⁸¹

²⁸¹ Dirlik, "Culturalism as Hegemonic Ideology and Liberating Practice," 30. Dirlik quotes from Eugene Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), xvi.

The Making of a Collective Myth: Saint Taşbaş

The main theme of *Iron Earth*, is the making of a saint in the sequence of events and corresponding states of collective mood. The overall atmosphere of the narrative is constructed with an emphasis on the isolation of the community, enabling the author to show the gradual spreading of the feelings of loneliness, fear and hopelessness. *The Wind* ends in Çukurova on the infertile plantation of Miralay, where they were brought by Muhtar Sefer taking commission therefore from the land owner. In the *Iron Earth*, it is winter and the community is back in the village. Yet since the villagers are not able to visit the shop of Adil Efendi in the town, what they have been used to doing on every return from Çukurova in order to draw rations and pay the debt of the previous year, they are having hard times and trying to cope with the fear that Adil Efendi will come and take everything they have for their unpaid debts, as he has done years ago. In this process, when all of their plans end up in fiasco and their hopelessness and fear increase, they made Taşbaş Memet, a saint, as the source of a final hope and relief.

The *Iron Earth* begins in Yalak in a world “shrouded in snow, hill and vale lost under a sheer unsullied whiteness.”²⁸² Meryemce’s mood of loneliness and fear in *The Wind* has become now that of the community strengthened by the image of the village surrounded by darkness, snow and death. In this isolated world, where the earth is iron and the sky is copper, the conditions are ready for the fears to grow. It is the fear of Adil Efendi experienced collectively in an absolute way: “It was in their blood, in their skins, in their marrows... Nobody dares to voice his name; nobody

²⁸² Kemal, *Iron Earth, Copper Sky*, 5.

wants to reveal the fear, growing day by day.”²⁸³ It is in this atmosphere that the interpretation of Zaladja’s dream by Muhtar Sefer about the approaching arrival of Adil Efendi triggers the fear:

It was all over the village in an instant. Adil Effendi was coming, descending upon the village like a thundercloud. Nobody asked where the news came from. Zaladja’s dream was forgotten.²⁸⁴

First, they intuitively expected something from the powerful senior Meryemce, showing up at the moment:

Women began to move and headed towards the steppe. Meryemdje was coming over from far that side leaning on her pole. They’ve felt a light of hope. What was the reason for the revival of their hopes when they saw Meryemdje? What could she do at all? Everybody knew that she couldn’t do anything either and Adil Effendi couldn’t be coped with. Anyway, they were happy about the approaching Meryemdje and have invested hopes in her...

They’ve crowded around Meryemdje, expecting a solution from her. They wanted her to say again “We’ve arrived, haven’t we?” Meryemdje was a power in their view.²⁸⁵

While the men gather in the house of Muhtar Sefer are trying to think up what to do, the women amass in front of the house following Meryemce. Yet after she leaves, their hopelessness becomes absolute:

Hope and power left along with her. Women were singing a sad elegy among themselves, in shame and desperation. They felt as if something had died, the whole village had been flattened by an earthquake and they

²⁸³ Kemal, *Yer Demir*, 25. (Omitted in the English translation; translation belongs to me.) “*Kanlarına, derilerine, iliklerine işlemişti... Kimsecikler adını ağzına alamıyor, kimse kimseye korktuğunu belli etmek istemiyor. Gün geçtikçe de, gün geçtikçe de korku artıyor.*”

²⁸⁴ Kemal, *Iron Earth, Copper Sky*, 29. “*Haber köye bir anda yayıldı. Köyün ortasına çoluk çocuk, kız, kadın, yaşlılar, nineler, bütün kadınlar birikmişler, hiçbirisinden çıt çıkmıyordu. Günlerdir korktukları, hiç kimsenin hiç kimseye açıkça söyleyemediği bela geliyordu. Hışım gibi geliyordu. Bu haberin Zalacadan, onun düşlerinden çıktığının kimse farkında değildi artık. Zalaca yağlı pamuk yığınının bir tutam yalın atmıştı. Kim getirmişti haberi? Kimsenin arayıp sorduğu yoktu.*”

²⁸⁵ Kemal, *Yer Demir*, 65. (Omitted in the English translation; translation belongs to me.) “*Kadınlarda bir kıpırdanma oldu. Yönlerini bozkırdan yana döndüler. Uzaktan, bozkırın oradan, köyün ucundan değneğine çöke çöke Meryemce geliyordu. İçlerinde bir umut ışığı açıldı. Meryemceyi görünce umutlanmalarının sebebi neydi? Meryemcenin elinden ne gelirdi ki? Hiçbir işin gelmeyeceğini, Adil Efendiye güç yetiştirilemeyeceğini herkes biliyordu. Biliyordu ama Meryemcenin gelişine gene de sevinmişler, ona umut bağlamışlardı.... Ondan bir çare bekler gibiydiler. İstiyorlardı ki bir kere daha, “Geldik ya, indik ya,” desin. Meryemce gözlerinde bir güçtü.*”

remained outside.

Flowers will bloom with cries this year. The clouds coming over the Mount Tekech will be dark black. The snow will lose its shine. There won't be any green this spring. The sheep will remain silent, the mountains won't blossom. Long Ali won't play pipe. The thistles won't come this year. The steppe won't flourish. And the crops will burn.²⁸⁶

When they like the idea of the shrewd Muhtar Sefer to hide all the goods, they decide to bury the rations and take the animals to the *peri* caves, and begin to wait for the arrival of Adil. Nonetheless, they are disappointed when Adil does not show up. It is Muhtar Sefer who has first anticipated what will happen and why:

These villagers are troubling creatures, Adil Effendi. They'll make a madness after so much waiting. This fear, this waiting... Waiting by swallowing the poison of Adil will drive the villagers mad. Most of them have maddened already, turning to wolves with bloody jaws. Adil Effendi!²⁸⁷

To frighten is half dying. That villagers have become only out of dark brand, only out of fear like this.²⁸⁸

The villagers, who believe that Adil is not coming since he heard they've hidden their goods, turn this time to the idea to dig up a portion of the goods and pretend not to have covered anything at all. However, this idea also seems to come to nothing when no Adil Efendi comes for distress.

In these days, Taşbaş, getting enraged about the deeds and the attitudes of the villagers following Muhtar Sefer, begins to curse them explicitly. Besides these curses we see an alternative critical position regarding the mentalities of the villagers

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 67. (Omitted in the English translation; translation belongs to me.) “*Onunla birlikte bir umut, bir güç gidiyordu. Şimdi kadınların içinden acı bir ağıt geçiyordu. Bir utanç, bir yılgınlık geçiyordu. Bir şey ölmüştü sanki, bir zelzelede tüm köy yıkılmış, açıkta kalmışlardı. Çiçekler bu bahar çağrışarak açacak. Tekeç dağının üstünden gelen bulutlar kapkara olacak. Kar ışıltısını yitirecek. Bu bahar yeşil olmayacak. Kuzular melemeyecek, dağlar nennilenmeyecek. Uzun Ali düdük çalamayacak. Bu yıl döngeler gelmeyecek. Bu yıl bozkır göğermeyecek. Ekinler de yanacak.*”

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 106. (Omitted in the English translation; translation belongs to me.) “*Bu köylü lanet yaratıktır Adil Efendi. Bekleye bekleye bir delilik çıkaracak. Bu korku, bu bekleme... İçinde Adil ağısını yutarak bekleme, köylüyü zıvanadan çıkaracak. Şimdiden çoğu zıvanadan çıktı, ağzı kanlı kurda döndü, Adil Efendi!*”

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 108. (Omitted in the English translation; translation belongs to me.) “*Korkmak yarı ölmektir. İşte bu köylü salt namus belası, salt korkudan bu hale geldi.*”

other than the Captain and Muttalip Bey, this time from an insider. He condemning at the villagers who have left him alone previous year and sided with Muhtar Sefer to go to the field of Miralay. This time it is the dishonouring plans of Muhtar Sefer pursued by the community that drive Taşbaş mad:

For the last time I tell you, shake off this abject fear. Be men! When you were soldiers you saw the world, the big cities, the men who live there like men. You saw the big wide seas. Have you ever given thought to what lies beyond those seas? Have you ever asked yourselves how the sun rises and sets, what is behind the sun? How the wireless works, how the bird flies? Have you ever thought of that?²⁸⁹

As opposed to the Captain and Muttalip Bey, who evaluate the mentality of the villagers as backward and underdeveloped comparing to high technology that is a product of instrumental reason, Taşbaş accuses them of cowardness, implying the meaninglessness of such a feeling within the totality of existence. According to him, instead of waiting frantically frightened what to do is to ask for a commandment for this year, and if Adil rejects this and insists to take everything they have letting them starve, he can then be better lynched.

The reaction of the villagers, in return, is hate at the first instance, but later and more than that is fear as if to prove him right. On the other hand, they begin to hate Taşbaş, although they find him right, as to want to kill him. Yet it is fear that dominates, and they prefer to keep away. The call for action initiated by Taşbaş, “arkhein” in the terminology of Hannah Arendt, is *not* carried through by the villagers, there is no “prattein,” and finally no political action comes about. The fear that had to be overcome by the villagers for this action to happen could not be

²⁸⁹ Kemal, *Iron Earth, Copper Sky*, 74–75. “O Adil bir korkutmuş ki... Korkunuzdan erkekliğiniz düşecek, kadınlığınız kapanacak. Son olarak söylüyorum size, korkmayın, evlere girip saklanmayın. Atın korkuyu yılgınlığı üstünüzden. İnsan olun. Chukurovada insan gibi insanlar gördünüz. Askercilikte şehirler, ulu denizler gördünüz. Hiç düşündünüz mü bu denizlerin, şu ulu bozkırın sonu nerede biter? Denizlerin arkası nereye dayanır? Gün nasıl doğar, nasıl batar? Günün arkasında ne var? Radyo nasıl söylüyor, kuş nasıl uçuyor, hiç düşündünüz mü?”

overcome and instead it was reflected towards Taşbaş. This fear will be fought against by Memidik in *The Undying*, and finally overcome.

Bear with the lash of this tongue if you can! Slowly, the fear of Adil Effendi fades, to be replaced by a worst fear, an almost holy dread of Tashbash. When he opens his mouth to speak, people tremble as though his words would come true that minute.²⁹⁰

The events making Taşbaş into a saint begin hereafter when the villagers are stuck between two fears, the fear of Adil Efendi and the fear of Taşbaş. The first fear has rather material reasons, being the fear of misery and hunger. The second fear, on the other hand, is more complex in its roots. First of all, the community feels guilty in following Muhtar Sefer instead of Taşbaş to whom they have promised otherwise, and have caused thereby their own disaster. Second, Taşbaş is using a rather authoritarian, prophetic language as to feed this feeling of guilt. This particular composition of the feelings of fear and guilt in the face of a powerful, distinguished member of the community and the general state of hopelessness gives way to the creation of the myth of “Our Lord Tashbash” (*Taşbaş Efendimiz*).

First, they think that “there’s something about this Tashbash.”²⁹¹ When the lunatic of the village, Spellbound Ahmet, who is believed to be the son-in-law of the *Peri* king, swears one night to everyone in their houses and bents down and kisses the ground in front of Taşbaş, they begin to say this time “depend upon it, there’s something about this Tashbash.”²⁹² They evaluate the maledictions of Taşbaş as prophecies relying on the precise language he used. Asking “how does he know?”

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 75. “*Taşbaş da şimdi köyde bir ürküntü bir korku... Yavaş yavaş Adil Efendiyi unutup, Taşbaşın çekecek köylü ne çekecekse. Herkese öyle geliyor. Kutsal bir yaratıktan ürker gibi ürktüyorlar artık ondan. O ağzını açar açmaz, sanki bütün dedikleri olacaktı, oluyormuşçasına köylüyü irkiliyor. Yılan derse, yağacak derse, köylüye öyle geliyor ki, ha yağdı, ha yağacak. Gözlerini gökyüzüne dikip bekleyenler de çıkıyor.*”

²⁹¹ Kemal, *Yer Demir*, 151. “...bu Taşbaşta birşeyler var.” (Omitted in the English translation.)

²⁹² Kemal, *Iron Earth, Copper Sky*, 85. “Mümkünü yok bu Taşbaşoğlunda bir iş var.”

they doubt a supernatural ability of omniscience of Taşbaş. “Tashbash was becoming more and more a burning question in the minds of the villagers.”²⁹³ That he kept to his house and the dreams of Zaladja distances him in the eyes of the villagers.

The most realistic character of the trilogy, Muhtar Sefer, foresees everything. The author lets him reveal one of his most basic assumptions regarding the villagers: “...they were well on the way to making a saint of him. These villagers will catch at the slightest straw when they’re in trouble, and if they find no straw, well, they’ll produce one out of the blue and then cling to it for dear life.”²⁹⁴

The next step of the villagers is the adaptation of the saint stories to the descendants of Taşbaş. Molla Ahmet the Holy Man of the Mountains becomes the great great grandfather of Taşbaş, renamed “Molla Memet Tashbash,” and Lokman the Physician to “Tashbash Lokman.” Those who counter the reality of these stories recognize that they will not be able to convince anybody, and give up. Actually, everybody wants and needs to believe in them.

The experienced and realist Muhtar Sefer knows where the things are leading: “The Muhtar knew exactly where it would all end. Experience had shown how in years of famine or pestilence, saints would arise out of nowhere. Murtaza was the last example, still in the madhouse where he’d ended up, the poor fool, egged on by those unscrupulous villagers.”²⁹⁵ He knows that the villagers lie out of the lack of a way out: “They concoct, these pigs, they concoct. Once they’re in trouble, they

²⁹³ Ibid., 86. “Köylünün kafasında sorulaşıyordu. Sorular gittikçe çoğalıyor, ihtimaller elle tutulacak bir hale geliyordu.”

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 88. “Köylü böyle anlarda sarılacak dal arar. Türlü türlü dala sarılır, bırakır. En sonuncu sağlam sandığı bir dala sarılır, sarıldıkça sarılır, her bir şeyini dalın gücüne verir, dala sığınır. Bir dal bulamazsa, kendisi dalı yaratır, sonra da sarılır. Köylü dalsız edemez.”

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 95–96. “Muhtar Sefer biliyordu ki, bittecrübe sabitti ki bütün ermişler ortalığa kıtlık yılları, salgın yılları çıkmışlardır. Son örneği de Murtaza. Fıkara daha tımarhanede. Adamcağızı bu namussuz köylüler bağırta bağırta ermiş ululuğuna çıkarmışlar, başına da bu işi açmışlardı.”

concoct many things.”²⁹⁶ Taşbaş says similar things when speaking to Muhtar Sefer who visits him to offer collaboration to prevent his becoming a saint: “It’s always been like this with these villagers. There’s no end to the stories they can concoct.”²⁹⁷ Muhtar Sefer is more aware of the seriousness of the situation and is giving examples from history to persuade Taşbaş:

Holy men have always appeared in times of famine and war and pestilence. When our men were fighting at Sarikamish, there was a new Mehdi cropping up in these mountains every other day. You’re too young to have seen those days, but you’ve heard about them, how every village had its Mehdi and people clung to them and worshipped them more than they did Allah. Then the big war was over and the war with the Greeks ended too, and suddenly all these Mehdís fell into oblivion.²⁹⁸

One of the men of Muhtar Sefer who he tasked to learn the source of the stories within the village comes back without any clues. The interpretation of Muhtar Sefer thereabout is indicating the parallel between the anonymity of the folksongs and the myths: “Such are the folksongs. Nobody knows who made them either. Everybody knows the known yet the unknown, nobody knows.”²⁹⁹ This gives clues on the author’s view regarding the reproduction of culture as being collective.

The story making Taşbaş finally into a saint was fashioned by Memidik adopting the story of the Holy Man of the Lights from Karacadağ to him. Memidik, living most of the time in the mountains and hunting, is an orphan boy who is laughed at by the girls due to his shortness. With the need to prove himself he has

²⁹⁶ Kemal, *Yer Demir*, 194. (Omitted in the English translation; translation belongs to me.) “Uydururlar, uydururlar bu domuzlar. Başları dara gelince neler uydurmazlar ki...”

²⁹⁷ Kemal, *Iron Earth, Copper Sky*, 103. “Köylüdür, ha söylesinler, de söylesinler. Ne olurmuş ki... Her gün bir ayak üstünde bin yalan uydururlar.”

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 104. “Bütün ermişler kılık-larda, salgınlarda, harplerde çıkar. Bizimkiler Sarıkamışta harp ederken bu dağlarda her gün bir Mehdi çıkıyordu ortaya. ... O günlerde her köyün iki üç mehdisi vardı. Köylü Allaha değil, onlara sarılmış, tüm umudunu onlara bağlamıştı. Harp bitti, Yunan harbi de sona erdi. Ondan sonra da bütün Mehdiler unutulup gittiler.”

²⁹⁹ Kemal, *Yer Demir*, 208. (Omitted in the English translation; translation belongs to me.) “Türküler de öyle. Onları çıkaranları da kimseler bilmez. Bilinenleri herkes bilir de, bilinmeyenleri kimse bilemez.”

reasons to make up the story. As this was recognized by Muhtar Sefer, he calls Memidik, lets him retell the story and makes some offers to deny and retell it to the villagers as his dream. When the boy rejects this he is tortured by Ömer on Muhtar Sefer's order. Once again, the author lets Muhtar Sefer make objective judgments:

There he was ready to give his life rather than betray Tashbash.
Obviously, he had made up this story of the lights and then worked
himself into believing it was true, and now he would not recant.³⁰⁰

Wouldn't anybody else have come out with something sooner or later?
People were always ready to make up such tales, deluding themselves
and eager to convince the rest of the world too.³⁰¹

So, the psychological process underlying the creation of the myth of Saint Taşbaş is accomplished: the need for hope borne out of fear and the need to seek refuge in a lie to overcome this fear. The collective character of this process is clear in the words of Memidik trying to justify to Muhtar Sefer why he cannot deny the story he has once told: "When I go now and say to the villagers "I haven't indeed seen any light or whatever, and there is neither such a man, that man wasn't Tashbash," the villagers will immediately kill me. Even if they don't, they'll force me to leave the village. They'll look at me as they're looking at a dog. Even my mother won't talk to me anymore."³⁰² Memidik is aware of the reaction he is going to get in case he rejects his story, which was made in line with the need of the

³⁰⁰ Kemal, *Iron Earth, Copper Sky*, 139. "Canımı verdi de, ölümü seve seve göze aldı da tükürdüğünü yalamadı. Taşbaşına hıyanatlık etmedi. Gözlerinden yalan söylediği belliydi. Işıklı hikayeyi düpedüz uydurduğu, sonra da bir iyice inandığı belliydi."

³⁰¹ Ibid., 140. "Bu hikayeyi Memidik uydurmasa, sanki başkası uydurmayacak mıydı? Böyle hikayelerin öylesine talibi çoktu ki... İnsanlar böyle hikayeler uydurmaya, uydurdıkları hikayelere inanmaya, inandıktan sonra büyük bir esriklik içinde başkalarına anlatmaya, onları da inandırmaya can atarlardı."

³⁰² Kemal, *Yer Demir*, 239. (Partially omitted in the English translation; translation belongs to me.) "Ben şimdi gidip de köylüye desem ki, ışık müşık görmedim, öyle bir adam da yok, o adam Taşbaş değildi, dersem, beni öldürürler köylü. Öldürmeseler de bu köyde koymazlar, bana ite bakar gibi bakarlardı. Anam bile benimlen konuşmaz."

community. So, the story of Memidik is not just a lie, but a lie ready to be accepted as the truth, a lie prone to become the reality itself.

The next step of the community is to generalize and absolutize their new-born hope:

“As long as our Lord Tashbash is among us, we’ll be safe from all evil.”
“Adil Won’t come...”
“There will be no pestilences.”
“The serpents won’t attack us.”
“The earth will yield in plenty.”
“The women won’t be barren.”
“They’ll even give birth to twins.”³⁰³

“O Lord Tashbash, the chosen of the Forty Holies, if this base, this corrupt world is still standing, it is only for the grace of your holy presence!”³⁰⁴

“If this village has not been destroyed by earthquakes, it’s for your sake. If the grass greens and the flowers bloom, the crops ear and the waters flow, if spring comes again...”

“The mainstay of the earth and the sky and of our blessed religion...”³⁰⁵

While Taşbaş rejects being a saint, he is at the same time willing to believe in it. “What were saints like, he wondered for the first time. Maybe they were only men, just like him...”³⁰⁶ He begins to search for evidence. First, he decides to believe, if the malediction he made for Muhtar Sefer when he was leaving for the town has

³⁰³ Kemal, *Iron Earth, Copper Sky*, 143. “Taşbaş Efendimiz bu köyde oldukça, bu köye hiçbir musibet giremeyecek.”

“Adil gelemeyecek.”

“Salgınlar uğramayacak.”

“Yılanlar yağmayacak.”

“Toprak vermemelik etmeyecek.”

“Çiçekler açacak, otlar bitecek. Toprak da bereketinden çatlayacak.”

“Bu köyün kadınları kısır kalmayacak.”

“İkiz doğuracak.”

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 154. “Varıp da kırklara karışan Taşbaş Efendimiz, bu dünya, bu alçak dünya, bu pis dünya daha yerinde duruyorsa senin yüzün suyu hürmetinedir. Yaaa, öyle işte, onun yüzünden yıkılmıyor bu dünya. Ulu kimselerden görünmezlerden olan Taşbaş Efendimiz.”

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 156. “Bu köy zelzeleden gitmediyse, senin yüzünden... Otlar bitecek, çiçekler açacaksa, ekinler başaklanacak, sular akacaksa, bahar geleceksen... ”...
Yerin göğün, dinimizin direği Taşbaş Efendimiz.”

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 151. “Acaba ermişler nasıl kişilerdi? Bunu ilk olarak düşündü. Belki de tıpkı kendisi gibi insanlardı.”

come true. Yet Muhtar Sefer returns very well and Taşbaş goes on with his search without even remembering his previous decision. Then, he begins to go outside at nights in order to see the Holy Walnut that is said to shine over his house. After surviving two frosts, seeing in the second semi-consciously the sun rising, he takes it for the tree. Yet he is still confused.

After as the first case Fatmaca brings him her paralysed daughter for a prayer, indeed being also one of the forthcoming story tellers in the process of saint making, Taşbaş gives a speech to the villagers after Fatmaca and her daughter leave, and tries to convince the crowd that he is not a saint and there can't be a saint out of a sinner like himself. The villagers feel "seething hatred" for him since "they had built a whole world around Taşbaş's holiness, and now it was falling apart, their beautiful, enchanted world of hope..."³⁰⁷ Yet they don't allow this to happen after one of them asks "whoever heard a saint say he's a saint?"³⁰⁸ and explain the behaviour of Taşbaş with his humble character, typical for a saint.

The following inner monologue indicates that he is aware of the dangers of sainthood: "But what monsters these villagers are, raising a man to high heaven and making a saint of him one moment, then casting him down into the mud the next, at the bidding of the saint himself even."³⁰⁹ On the other hand, he saw the hatred of the villagers as he denied being a saint. Later he gets sorry for the denial: "What a fool he'd been! "You're an ass Tashbash," he told himself. "Did you have to look a gift-horse into mouth? Here you were, all-powerful, the villagers ready to come and go at

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 161.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 162. "*Köylü insanı canavara benzer. Az önce göklere çıkarıp, Tanrıya eş ettiğini, işine gelmeyince biraz sonra çamura batırır. Batırır da gözünün yaşına bakmaz.*"

your command, and you had to destroy it all with that accursed tongue of yours. You fool, how d'you know you're not a saint when all the villagers are sure you are?"³¹⁰

The confusion of Taşbaş will last until the end of the trilogy. While the strong belief of the villagers, the healing ills, his surviving the frost in his escape from the military police persuade him of to his sainthood, the lack of an open proof makes him believe in the creation of it by the villagers. Nevertheless, he likes the idea and wants to see the proof. He even dreams of what he can do if he is a real saint:

Afraid he would end up like all the other saints, on the gallows or in a dungeon? Afraid of being accused of heresy...

"But these things can't happen to me," he thought. "The villagers will never betray me because I will make them follow the path of righteousness and virtue. I will make those who have much give to those who have little. I will strive for the good of the oppressed, the exploited, for truth and justice."

But hadn't it been just for this that all saints had striven? For this very reason they have become martyrs. If they had not tried to take from the rich to give to the poor, who would have flayed them alive, who would have touched a hair of their head? No one, that was certain, but then, what poor men would have put his faith in them? It is the poor of this earth who make a saint, looking to him for help in their distress, their sickness, their poverty, who force him to stand up against oppression and slaughter and war... For this, they cleave to him, and if the saint won't do what they expect of him, then they look elsewhere. But if he does, then he loses his life, for such things don't suit the Government.³¹¹

Yet the military police comes before he could see the proof and he runs away on the way to the town since he has not held his promise to the Captain.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 164. "Keşki ermiş olarak kalmış olsaydı. Söylediği sözlere bin pişman oldu. "Ulan," diyordu kendi kendine, "Ulan eşek kafalı Taşbaş, bir günün beyliği de beylik. Hazır köylü seni ermiş yapmışken, ne der de önüne geçersin bunun? İşte o zaman da köylü senin ağzına sıçar, seni bu köyde, bu dünyada yaşatmaz. Ulan eşek kafa başına bir devlet kuşu konmuş ki, devlet kuşu derim sana..."

³¹¹ Ibid., 197. "Ben," dedi, "bir ermiş olsam, ne derimi yüzdürürüm, ne de darağacına giderim. Köylü beni ele vermez ki... Hak, adalet üzere yürümelerini isterim. Çoğun aza eklenmesini isterim. Kimse kimseyi ezmesin, soymasın, hak yerini bulsun isterim." Bütün ermişler bunu istememişler miydi? İşte kelleleri de bu yüzden gitmişti ya... Zenginden alıp fakire vermek istemeseler, kim onların derisini yüzerdi, kim onların tüylerine dokunurdu? Kimse onların tüylerine dokunamazdı ama, ermiş diye de hiçbir fıkara onların yüzlerine bakmazdı. Ermişi ermiş yapan fıkardır. Fıkara ermişlerden tüm dertlerine, hastalıklarına, sayrılıklarına, yoksulluklarına derman ararlar. Zulümlere, öldürmelere, harplere karşı koysun isterler. Ermişlere bu yüzden sarılırlar. Bir ermiş de dediklerini yapmazsa eteğini bırakırlar. Dediklerini yapınca da, kelle gider. Hükümetin işine gelmez."

When, in *The Undying*, the author lets Muhtar Sefer to tell Taşbaş that he is an immortal plaything at the hands of the villagers, he in fact emphasizes the collective agency behind the creation of the myth. The two most realistic persons in the narrative, the proto-capitalist Muhtar Sefer and proto-intellectual Taşbaş, who have foreseen what will happen, nonetheless are unable to avoid living their fates, both of which are made by the collective agency of the community. The medium of freedom and determination of this agency has been culture. Yet this is not a political agency. The community has enforced a role on Taşbaş to perform the emancipatory agency in their name. This transfer of agency was based on the traditional narratives of popular religion and lacked the potential to reach universality. Here, we see again the performative deformation of the pedagogical narratives as indicated by Homi Bhabha.³¹² The community appears as the hegemonic collectivity aiming to impose the traditional position of “savior” in traditional (pedagogical) myths, which it has deformed and applied to the present case, on the protagonist, instead of assuming the political agency and responding to the call of Taşbaş.

Transgressing Boundaries: The Revenge of Memidik

Memidik is another protagonist in the trilogy who is a competent myth-maker. His first myth, as we have seen, was his finalizing contribution to the collective effort of making the saint out of Taşbaş Memed. This act he undertakes in order to prove himself to the community. This is a need in his case as the smallest boy of the village at the age of marriage. As he was tortured by Muhtar Sefer almost to death, the social recognition he hoped to attain through this act seemed even further away.

³¹² Bhabha, "DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation."

The Undying is about the next myth of Memidik, which is as expressed by Yaşar Kemal, “the myth of murder,” or the myth of revenge. By killing Muhtar Sefer in turn for his insults, Memidik expects to save his honor, which seems to be an obligation to be fulfilled in order to deserve the union with his love Zeliha. Only by overcoming the humiliation caused by the torture of Muhtar Sefer, an act of objectification/reification,—Memidik is made an object of violence since he was seen as an obstacle to overcome at any price by Muhtar Sefer rather as than an individual subject—through proper revenge, he thinks he will be a proper man for love, a subject, an agent of a love story. In the view of Yaşar Kemal, love is also a myth. The attitude of Memidik can be understood, therefore, since the myths require agents. “Too well he realizes that there can be no Zeliha for him as long as Muhtar Sefer is alive. Muhtar Sefer is the stumbling-block of his life. Without him the world would be a paradise for Memidik.”³¹³

Yet the revenge is a tough contest for the boy, who has internalized the power embodied in Muhtar Sefer and in front of whom he becomes as if paralyzed of fear. In confronting that fear, the myth of Taşbaş empowers him. He got the agency he has transferred to Taşbaş back, when in a dream the saint gave him his hand with which to kill Muhtar Sefer. In killing Muhtar Sefer, Memidik has transgressed the social boundaries established by the power relations and which he has internalized. This can be evaluated as an example of a proto-political agency, a conscious action of resistance without a purpose or capacity of structural transformation. On the other hand, within the limits of the novel at the allegorical level this is certainly standing for a political agency resulting in the annihilation of the oppressor. The struggle of Memidik is to break the position of passive oppressed for an active resistance.

³¹³ Kemal, *The Undying Grass*, 248. “Sefer varken Zeliha olmayacak, bunu iyice bilir. Yaşamındaki her engel Seferdir. Sefer olmasa dünya onun için bir cennettir.”

The inner struggles of Memidik imply a departure from the state of villagers as they have been easily frightened by Muhtar Sefer in *The Wind* when they sided with Taşbaş. Memidik is fighting the boundaries established by power and internalized by him. These are the boundaries Muhtar Sefer remembers and reinforced the villagers in *The Wind* with his micro-tactics, standing for the practice of hegemonic politics.

Different from Uzun Ali and Meryemce, Memidik's drive in the process of gaining agency is based on a desire rather than a fear, namely the love of Zeliha. The comparison of Memidik with the community creating Saint Taşbaş in the *Iron Earth*, and the women, again in the same novel, who tried to lynch Muhtar Sefer but were not successful, indicates the centrality of the *individual* and the *desire* in the emergence of political action for the author.

After the women of the village gather in front of Muhtar Sefer's house and break its door with the stones, but can not kill him since he has his rifle and points at Meryemce, Yaşar Kemal discloses his approach regarding the collective action stating that when a single person loses s/he will retry, but when a group loses they will hardly join together again. Memidik is the opposite example. Similarly, the villagers made Taşbaş into a saint since they were not willing to take the initiative for political action, fear being the only motivation behind their actions. Lack of desire or utopia, holds them back from a political action or resistance.

CHAPTER THREE
THE MAKING OF THE LIBERATING NARRATIVES:
THE POLITICS OF YAŞAR KEMAL

An Allegory of Liberation

In the ninth chapter of *Iron Earth, Copper Sky*³¹⁴ the author cuts off the regular flow of narration with a ritual-like event, the singing of Bald Minstrel of a tale of a wounded crane and the legendary Kurdish minstrel Abdal-é-Zeyniki,³¹⁵ which—as an extraordinary scene within the novel, a narrative within a narrative—seems to be a metaphorical expression of the author’s high objectives in writing, signified by the introductory words of Bald Minstrel: “Today, you shall draw a moral from my tale.”

Abdal-é-Zeyniki used to walk and sing all the time “as a running water never tires of flowing” and he sang “for all living things of creation.” Although he sang in Kurdish, even “the Turk, the Arab, the Persian, the Russian, the Englishman” could understand him, the secret of which no one knew.

On a “black heavy night” weighing upon him, “in a desolate world where no creature but he breathes or moves,” the blind Abdal was walking by “groping at his night” and “clinging to his night” with his one hand and with his other hand holding “a knife with a luminous point ... cleav[ing] the night into two.” Then he finds a crane with a wing torn off at the tip and he holds his fate for one with that of the crane. Retiring into the mountains, Abdal begins to sing for the crane, he set before himself, instead of his love to whom he used to sing every sunset, every sunrise and

³¹⁴ Kemal, *Iron Earth, Copper Sky*, 51–54.

³¹⁵ Abdal: A rank in some sufi orders. (Sufism: From Greek *sophos*. A Neoplatonic mystical tradition in Islam.)

every midnight, though “he had never seen nor ever touched.” He sings from sunset to sunrise for months until one day when “the sun is about to rise...a great light bursts before his eyes.” The light opens his eyes and cures the wings of the crane, so when Abdal puts up his hand to touch it, the bird flies and “vanishes in the infinity of the sky.” Thereafter, Abdal-é-Zeyniki sings “only of the light and brightness of this world, and always he cursed the darkness.” The final words of Bald Minstrel are “let mankind rejoice.”

This little allegorical story brings five assumptions together—which are also at the center of this study—that are about the author himself, about the people, about the narrative, about the time lived in and about the effects of the activity he is practicing. First, Abdal standing for the author himself, could not see prior to the burst of light. This seems to imply the limitations on the intellectual to have knowledge of the world, to see the world. Before the burst of light the only tools of Abdal we know were the knife with the luminous point to cut the dark night and his talent of singing stories and playing *saz*. Second, the wounded crane stands for the aimed audience, who are the people. The crane, being wounded on the wing, cannot fly south with other cranes and will experience winter for the first time in its life. The restricted ability of the crane is more than flying; it is the ability to live in spring for all time. A restriction on the natural ability to fly brings along a restriction to experience spring for all time, a peculiarity of the kind to which it belongs to. Thus, the people are in a fallen situation too, as the intellectual is, short of fulfilling what their potentials allow. Yet this time the potential is related to belonging to a community and a social one, and the fallen situation implies an alienation from that community.

Third, the narrative sang by Abdal to the crane is about the crane and various phenomena in the universe—like Man, high mountains, mother earth, flowing waters, the ant on the ground, the fish in the sea, the stars on the sky—and has the power of universal understandability beyond the particular language of Kurdish it is sung in. Here the author states his belief in the universality of particular cultural forms, the universality of meaning. Fourth, the “black heavy night weigh[ing] upon him” stands for the present time of humanity, the contemporary age of modern capitalism. And finally, “the great light burst[ing] before his eyes” and giving to Abdal and to the crane their lost potentials back letting them transcend their existing situations, stands for a spontaneous moment of enlightenment.

In short, this mythical scene symbolizes a liberation following a moment of enlightenment, which is prompted by a process of narration, articulating the particulars of the universe in a universal language, performed for the crane, with the faith of Abdal, saying “this bird’s fate and mine are one.” With this allegory of Abdal and the crane, Yaşar Kemal expresses his self conscious liberating intentions, thus his political/ethical objectives, in literature.

Construction of the Narrative

Covering the Subject/Recuperating Agency

Literary Techniques Employed

Yaşar Kemal employed various literary techniques in order to cover the subjectivities of the protagonists and that of the community, which is the culture. These were mainly inner dialogues and inner monologues of the protagonists and the modernist technique of stream-of-consciousness. The position of Meryemce as one

of the prominent protagonists, although she was not talking to the villagers in the second half of *The Wind from the Plain* and the whole *Iron Earth*, and who was alone in the final book, is a good indicator to the effective use of the subjective looks in the narrative. On the other hand, to cover culture as the subjectivity of the community, Kemal turned to the cultural heritage of Anatolia. He creatively exploited the local Turcoman and Kurdish cultures—with which the author was acquainted due to his background as the son of a Kurdish migrant family, and his daily experiences and research in Çukurova, where he was born and lived until 1951, and the nomadic Turcoman culture was dominant. This cultural heritage helped him in the creation of an authentic literary language, emphasizing the particular cultural identity of the communities—the community usually exists in his novels as an entity acting as a protagonist from time to time—and the members of these communities, and providing the cultural embeddedness of the subjective looks of these communities and their members through the use of cultural forms such as myths, folktales, folk songs, elegies, maledictions, benedictions, adages, sayings and proverbs.

The inner talk is the most prominent formal tool the author uses in focusing on the subjectivities of the protagonists. By the use of this technique, the author provides transparency to the motives behind the actions of the protagonists that come out of the relations of the individual with its environment, with society and nature. The inner talks appear as a dialogic form of narration of these relations in the eyes of the first person, picturing the successive mental states of individuals.

In *The Undying Grass*, on the other hand, where the main axis of the novel is the inner struggles of Memidik against his fears—standing for the boundaries of the power relations he has internalized—the literary technique the author employs to

picture this struggle is the stream-of-consciousness technique. Regarding the position of the narrator, we see a synchronized coexistence of subjective looks, relayed through the inner monologues, inner dialogues and the technique of stream-of-consciousness, and the objective look in the voice of the third person narrator. The narrator identifies himself from time to time with the protagonists, and sometimes gains distance from them.

In the passage in *Iron Earth*, after the wife of Taşbaş is wounded in the fight, the author approximates gradually starting from the viewpoint of the villagers towards Taşbaş's fury after mentioning the strange attitudes of Taşbaş towards the villagers: "Those who saw Tashbash these days said he had gone out of his mind. And it was true there was something strange about him."³¹⁶ After giving the statements of the villagers about Taşbaş from the impartial third person narrator in the first sentence, the third person reveals his agreement with the villagers. And then the narrative gradually focuses on the subjective world of Taşbaş, so that, finally, we hear only his voice. Here are the two paragraphs where the voice of the narrator gradually approximates that of Taşbaş and gives him the word at the end:

After the fight all the villagers met in front of the Muhtar's house with no exception but Tashbash. It is Tashbash who shun and cursed the villagers. Once it is summer, once the winter is over, it is Tashbash who won't live in this village anymore... Tashbash will do this. In spring or summer he'll set his house on fire and leave the village. The wretched villagers should remain with their Muhtar. They should remain and may stones rain on their heads. Let them be the worst, worst of the worst!³¹⁷

³¹⁶ Kemal, *Iron Earth, Copper Sky*, 72. "Görenler, bu Taşbaşoğlu bir hoş olmuş diyorlardı. Sahiden de bir tuhaflığı vardı Taşbaşın."

³¹⁷ Kemal, *Yer Demir*, 149–50. "Dövüşten sonra Muhtarın evinin önünde bütün bir köy, atıyla itiyle toplanmıştı da, aralarında bir kişi yoktu, o da Taşbaşın ta kendisi. Köye kahreden, köye küsen ki Taşbaşoğludur. Bir yaz gelsin, bu kışı bir savuştursun bir daha bu köyde oturmayacak olan Taşbaşoğludur... Taşbaşoğlu bu işi yapacak. Yaz bahar ayları gelince, bir gece evine ateş verip köyden çıkıp gidecek.

Kalsın köylü, kalsın bu alçaklar Muhtarıyla birlikte. Kalsınlar da başlarına taş yağsın. Daha beter, beterin beteri olsunlar."

The author's attitude of employing a mobile narrator serves his purpose of balancing the objective look with the subjectivities. In other words, he prevents the subjection of the subjects with the omniscient narrator without falling into subjectivism, which is provided by that mobility. We can say that there is a general understanding of objective reality by the author, which includes the subjectivities and, from time to time, is conveyed through subjective appearances. This attitude of the author also seems to be related to his understanding of human agency, which has significant similarities to that of Hannah Arendt, as pointed out by Zeynep Gambetti: "although freedom enables the actor to become the 'hero' of a story by beginning something new, she is never the author of the whole story."³¹⁸ The focus on the subjectivities shows the protagonists as agents, but this agency has limits and the author distances his narrator from the protagonists, denying any of them the centrality in the story. The author's identification with the protagonists is temporary, and he lets the reader feel his existence as an author. For Yaşar Kemal, this is the attitude of an epic writer.³¹⁹

The covering of subjectivities is important in providing the narrative with an epic sense. The placement of the subjects within a totality and leaving them in the middle of tough struggles with big powers and then telling their stories with a special focus on their inner struggles seem to provide that epic sense. The mobility of the narrator, his changing position vis-à-vis the subjects and the powers in his universe, provide him with the ability to tell the little stories of the individuals situated within the whole story of the totality, the universe they live in, as far as it is relevant.

³¹⁸ Gambetti, "The Agent is the Void!" 432–33.

³¹⁹ See Chapter I.

In *The Wind*, the establishment of a setting with harsh physical conditions and the shaping of the narrative around the adventures of a few characters, indeed, Ali and Meryemce, each with particular struggles, contribute to the epic atmosphere of the novel. The heroes are trying to cope with tremendous powers in a dangerous struggle of life or death, situated within moral tensions.

Moreover, we are provided with the knowledge of the social totality, first because the novel is set in a real place and real time. Second, we know that the residents of the village *Yalak* have been doing seasonal work for a few generations, parallel to the development of the agricultural capitalism in the Çukurova region. The political developments can be followed due to the Democrat Party affiliation of the Muhtar Sefer, who stands for the local politician of the 1950s. So, major social influences also are indicated besides the physical ones, the subjects have to deal with in their tough struggles.

The epic attitude of the author also has reflections in the protagonists created by him. A fundamental feature of the subjects is their drive to establish relations with the objects and other subjects around them according to their subjective states. This attitude of the author is related closely to his belief in the essence of Man as his creativity.³²⁰ This creativity occurs sometimes as the attribution of the self-qualities to the others or other objects. His protagonists assume an inter-subjective cosmology, a condition of plurality, the characteristics of which may change according to the situations in which they find themselves.

For instance, when Meryemce is alone on the road or in the village, she attributes subjectivity to the objects around her, such as the rooster or the slope on a hill that had to be overcome to reach Çukurova:

³²⁰ Kemal and İpekçi, "Edebiyat ve Politika," 419.

She tore her eyes away from the hill. I shouldn't look at this accursed unhallowed slope again, she thought as she rose and started up the hill. She had not gone far when she slipped and pitched forward on her hands. "May your heart be destroyed, infernal slope fathered by a hog," she cursed. A new boldness filled her now, the boldness of defiance. "I'll climb you, slope," she shouted again, "right up to your very summit."³²¹

To get engaged in a contention with the slope, to which she attributes a subject position, empowers her vis-à-vis her physical weakness and the toughness of the slope.

Similarly, she is involved in a power struggle with a rooster, the only living creature in the village in *The Undying*. The issue is that Meryemce wants to have some meat, but the rooster is too agile to be caught by the old woman:

So you're playing with me, eh, you wretched bird of those rascally villagers? I'll show you how to play tricks on me. You'll see what's what when you're sizzling over red-hot embers. So you think I won't catch you, eh? You just wait! Go on with your shifting and dodging. Go on...³²²

The rooster had stopped a little way off and seemed to be watching her. He took a step or two and turned back to look. This drove Meryemdje to fresh fury.³²³

The rooster was perched on top of Blind Ali's dung-heap, one leg drawn up to his belly, straight as a poker, with a high and mighty air seeming to say, I am the sultan of this world and *Meryemdje is only one of my subjects...*

This roused Meryemdje's wrath. "Just you wait, you wretched bird," she

³²¹ Kemal, *The Wind*, 171. "Durdu. Bir zaman orada, sağına soluna bakarak durdu. Bir kere de dayanamadı, yokuşun tepesine doğru baktı, gözlerini hemen geri indirdi. İçinde bir güç belirdi. Bir karşı koyma gücü.

"Ben de seni çıkarım yokuş!" diye bağırdı. Sesi, böyle bağırması hoşuna gitti. Yeniden bağırdı, sesini dinledi. Bir daha, bir daha bağırdı:

"Ben de senin başına çıkarım, yokuş! Taa tepene çıkarım. ""

³²² Kemal, *The Undying Grass*, 188. "Beni kandırıyorsun, benimle oynuyorsun öyle mi? Alçak köylünün alçak horozu. Sana gösteririm. Benimle oyun nasıl oynanmış, alaca közüün üstünde yağların cızırdayınca, hem de dumanlanınca görürsün oynamayı. Ben de seni yakalamaz mıyım? Oyna, oynama bakalım. Oyna, oynama bakalım!"

³²³ Ibid., 189. "Horoz az ilerde durmuş, onu seyreder gibiydi. Bir, birkaç adım gidiyor, bir dönüp yere serilmiş Meryemceye bakıyordu. Bu da kudurtuyordu Meryemceyi."

muttered. “Playing at sultans with me, eh? You’ll see what’s what when I’ve wrung your neck!”³²⁴

The antagonism underlying this struggle is shaped around the physical incapability of the old woman trying to catch and grill the rooster and her attribution of arrogance to the animal in face of this. She objects to being subjected by the rooster that is arrogant, as she attributes to the manner of the animal saying, “Meryemdje is only one of my subjects.”

In her lonely days in the empty village, on a dark night when Meryemce on the roof can’t sleep out of fear, she begins to call herself by the name, this time creating an “other” out of herself:

She was struggling in a welter of emotions.
“Meryemdje’ll never sleep tonight, never. Meryemdje had better carry her bed up here to the roof hadn’t she? Yes, but tell me, Meryemdje sister, how can you go down and get it?”... “Well then, Meryemdje’ll have to sleep on the roof tonight without a bed. Meryemdje can go without sleep tonight too.
It comforted her to say Meryemdje again and again aloud as though there was someone beside her.”³²⁵

Koca Halil, when he is furious with the villagers is engaged in an inner dialogue with them as if they are in his presence:

Why, you beggars, not a single one of you has ever said to me, “Bless you, Uncle Halil, thanks to you we have always got down to the cotton in good time.” Well, what if I went amiss this year. Any human being might. Am I what I used to be? You can see for yourselves how weak

³²⁴ Ibid., 246. “Horoz, karşıdaki Kör Alinin gübrelüğünde, gübrenin tepesinde, bir ayağını karnına çekmiş dimdik duruyordu. Bu dünyanın sultanı benim der gibi. Meryemce de tebam... Meryemce onun bu haline öfkeleni: “Yürü gidinin alçağı,” dedi. “Şimdi görürsün gününü. Sana sultanlığı da padişahlığı da şimdi gösteririm. Seni alçak seni. Meryemce senin canına sıçacak, anladın mı lapacı?”

³²⁵ Ibid., 244. “Çelişik duygular içinde çırpındı durdu bir süre. “Bu gece, bu gece uyuyamaz Meryemce. Meryemce inip varmalı, yatağını damın üstüne çıkarmalı. Öyle değil mi? Öyle ama Meryemce baci, sen şimdi aşağıya inebilir misin?” ... “Meryemce de bu gece damın üstünde yataksız uyur. Meryemce bir gece uyumasa da olur.” Kendisine Meryemce derken sanki yanında başka birisi daha varmış gibi geliyordu. Onun için her sözün başı bir Meryemce...”

I've grown. How could I know whether the cotton's ripe in the Chukurova, how could I? I just can't, you cuckolds!³²⁶

His dialogues and also those of Meryemce with God indicate the need of relating themselves with the beings they can imagine. And, they can imagine the God in the form of Man. As mentioned by Murat Belge as well, rather than relying on an abstract God they prefer to attribute him the qualities they can imagine.³²⁷

Allah, my beautiful Allah, I beseech thee my black-eyed one, make me remember just one prayer so I should not pass unclean into the other world....

Allah appeared before her eyes, a luminous haired venerable ancient, his beard ablaze with light...³²⁸

But that rock planted there like a mountain on the road! Who could have brought the unholy thing and dumped it in such a place? Don't they have anything better to do than play with rocks, those mighty creators of the earth and heavens? Oh dear, oh dear, there I am blaspheming now....

"Allah," she cried, as she extended her arms to the sun-drenched sky, "forgive me my sins. And please delay this Ali. From the seventh story of seven-storeyed heaven you hold sway over the earth and waters. You can make him be late."³²⁹

These instances show the attitude of the author regarding the inter-relatedness of the subjects with the objects around them and their creative use by the subjects in

³²⁶ Kemal, *The Wind*, 9. "Bire deyyuslar, biriniz bir gün, bin yılın bir başı gelip de, sağ ol Halil Emmi, zamanında, tam pamuğun açtığı gün bizi tarlanın başına götürüyorsun, demedi. Ben de şaşırdım bu yıl. Kul olan şaşırrır. Şaşırdım işte. Halim yok. Şuradan şuraya gidecek halim yok. Ne bilirim ta Çukurovadaki pamuğun açıp açmadığını. Bilemem ulan. Bilemem işte teresler.

Sabaha kadar böyle içi aldı aldı verdi." In the continuation he swears the Molla's son for his questioning the time of cotton ripening: "İt dölü. Adam değil ki Mollanın oğlu. Yayvan yayvan güler. Pis. Sırtkan.

Bire köpoğlu, eğer adamsan bir yılcık da sen bil pamuğun açma zamanını. Döngeden bilme de kendiliğinden bil."

³²⁷ Belge, "Yaşar Kemal'in Üçlüsü Üzerine."

³²⁸ Kemal, *The Wind*, 149. "Allahım, güzel güzel Allahım, canını sevdiğim, kurbanlar olduğum, tırnağına, kesip attığın tırnağına kurban olduğum, gökgözlüm, karagözlüm, sevdiğim, şu duadan birini aklıma düşür de mırdar gitmeyim öteki dünyaya."

³²⁹ Ibid., 173. "Şu kayayı, yolun üstünde dağ gibi oturmuş şu kayayı dolanıp çıkmak güç olacaktı. Kim getirip o pisi koyuvermişti oraya? İşleri güçleri yok da kayaylan oynarlar. Koskoca yeri göğü yaratan olmuşlar da. Of, of, dinden çıkıyordu! Aman Allah başışla diyordu. Büyük kusurları, şu yol boyunca işlediği günahları vardı.

Göge baktı... Ellerini açtı:

"Geciktir. Azıcık daha geciktir şu Uzunca Aliyi, Allahım. Sen yedi kat göğün, yedinci katında oturursun, yere göge, suya, karıncaya kuşa sözün geçer. Geciktir."

making the reality, which is culture under the conditions of plurality of subjects. Culture appears in Yaşar Kemal as the tradition of these practices of identification and relating of the selves to the beings which constitute the cosmology as envisaged by the subjects and the situating of themselves within this cosmology.

Narrative is the form they make the reality. It is through narrative that the tradition is transmitted and the human agency enters the scene making and changing the reality. The myths around Saint Taşbaş are good examples to retell the traditional narratives with a novelty, a novel attribution of agency. The villagers have equipped an individual among themselves with the qualities of a supernatural agency to find relief vis-à-vis the communal fear and threat they feel. Myths as cultural particularities serve in the narrative to express communal subjectivity, a function similar to the inner dialogues.

It was already shown in the second chapter how the author decentralizes the elites by rendering them ethically irrelevant. They and their discourses are distanced from the villagers as well as from the main line of the narrative. Yaşar Kemal constructs the plot structure of the *Iron Earth*, for a rather similar end. Muhtar Sefer and Taşbaş this time, standing for the proto-capitalist and, the proto-intellectual, respectively, are denied an agency transcending that of the community. *Iron Earth* is constructed in the form of parody. Behind the making of the saint, as the central process of the narrative, there is the collective agency of the community. On the other hand, Muhtar Sefer and Taşbaş, the most realist and clever persons in the village who are engaged in a power struggle and cannot prevent this from happening, although they can predict what will happen from the beginning to the end. The scenes of Muhtar Sefer where he is unable to change the development of events and the scenes of Taşbaş where he tries to convince himself that he is a real saint are

where they are drawn in ridiculous positions vis-à-vis the community. The author weakens these two figures vis-à-vis the collective agency. Muhtar Sefer is struggling in vain and Taşbaş is deceived by the myth-making community due to his excitement he couldn't overcome concerning the crown of sainthood.

Solitude and Contingency

“Nach innen geht der geheimnisvolle Weg,
In uns oder nirgends ist die Ewigkeit, mit ihren Welten”³³⁰
Novalis, from *Hymnen an die Nacht*

“With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world, and this insertion is like a second birth...”³³¹
Hannah Arendt, from *The Human Condition*

In his 1969 essay on the trilogy, Murat Belge praises Yaşar Kemal for covering the psychological inconsistencies of Turkish peasants and the social roots of this characteristic. He ends his study by stating that “these changeable beliefs, the psychological mechanism of this mental fickleness that we observe in the trilogy should be evaluated very well, especially by the revolutionaries.”³³² As time has shown that the revolutionaries themselves are not immune to this “fickleness,” we are also of the conviction that Yaşar Kemal has not constructed this characteristic of his protagonists to illustrate a socially specific type of “the Turkish peasant,” but rather as an analogy for a general universal human trait. The author’s attitude

³³⁰ “İçimizde biter o giz dolu yolun sonu
Ya içimizdedir, tüm dünyaları ile sonsuzluk, ya hiç bir yerde.” (Translated by Melahat Togar)

³³¹ Gambetti, "The Agent is the Void!" 432. Quoted from Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 176.

³³² Belge, "Yaşar Kemal'in Üçlüsü Üzerine," 232. (Original publication, Ant, 107, 14.01.1969)
“Üçlüde gördüğümüz bu değişken inançları, bu zihni kaypaklığın psikolojik mekanizmasını özellikle devrimcilerin çok iyi değerlendirmeleri gerekir.”

towards the myths, which are the “changeable beliefs” in the novels as expressed by Belge, supports this conviction:

My point is that men will create worlds of myth and dream and will seek refuge there until the end of time. What else can they do do you think while coming from a darkness towards another one. And with so much dissatisfaction...³³³

Myth is for human life one of the most necessary components providing its continuity, such as bread, water, sex... Healthy man cannot live without myths in this age. Maybe he won't be able to in any age. In other forms maybe, mankind will always create myths as long as it exists.³³⁴

For the author, the creation of myths by mankind is a positive tradition while it is a universal one beyond ages and cultures. He goes on to comment on the trilogy we focus after the first evaluation above: “In my *The Other Face of the Mountain* trilogy, I told how and why a community creates worlds of myths and dreams as well as the individual...”³³⁵ So, the creation of myths in his view has an individual as well as social dimension. In this study, we are handling the *Iron Earth* and the making of Saint Taşbaş as an example of the social dimension, and the cases of Meryemce, Uzun Ali and Memidik, in *The Wind* and *The Undying* of the individual dimension of myth making.

Indeed, the concept of “fickleness” used by Belge is not irrelevant for our purposes. Nevertheless, the term “contingency” will be employed instead, and mainly due to the centrality of the term in explaining the notions of “freedom” and

³³³ Kemal and Naci, "Yaşar Kemalle Edebiyat ve Politika," 281. “Benim savım şu ki, kıyamete kadar insanlar mit dünyaları, düş dünyaları yaratarak o dünyalara sığınacaklardır. Bir karanlıktan gelip başka bir karanlığa karışırken, insanlar ne yapabilirler dersiniz. Bir de bunca doyumsuzluk varken...”

³³⁴ Kemal, "Fransadaki Accueillir Dergisiyle Söyleşi," 196. “İnsan yaşamında mitos, yaşamı sağlayan en gerekli öğelerden biridir. Ekmek gibi, su gibi, seks gibi... Sağlıklı insan bu çağda mitossuz yapamaz. Belki de bütün çağlarda yapamayacaktır. Biçim değiştirerek belki de insan soyu bütün yaşamı boyunca mitos yaratacaktır...”

³³⁵ Kemal and Naci, "Yaşar Kemalle Edebiyat ve Politika," 281. “Benim Dağın Öte Yüzü üçlüsünde bir topluluğun nasıl, niçin mit, düş dünyası yarattığını söylediğim gibi, bireyin de nasıl mit dünyası yarattığını anlattım...” See Chapter I for the views of Yaşar Kemal on myths and creation of myths by men.

“agency” in the works of Yaşar Kemal. The term “contingency” occupies a central position in the theoretical analyses that aim to explain social change and consider how an ethically desired social change could be brought about.

The answer of Yaşar Kemal to a question on Berthold Brecht reveals the parallelity of the understanding of “the individual” between the discourses of Yaşar Kemal and Hannah Arendt: “I cannot think of Men as puppets, nowhere and for no purpose.”³³⁶ They both base their understandings of freedom on the contingency of the individual.

The close affiliation of Yaşar Kemal with the Turkish socialist leader Mehmet Ali Aybar is meaningful in this respect concerning the theoretical premises underlying the political formulations of Aybar, who from the years as early as mid-40s on began to develop political formulations such as “individualist socialism” (*fertçi sosyalizm*), “libertarian socialism” (*hürriyetçi sosyalizm*), “smiling socialism” (*güleryüzlü sosyalizm*) and “socialism for the Man” (*insan için sosyalizm*).³³⁷

In the trilogy, the motif of solitude fulfills the function of representing subjectivities at the individual level, and at the communal level, as the culture. This motif begins with the adventures of Meryemce in *The Wind*, and then becomes the general condition of the community in the *Iron Earth*. As we have seen in the case of Meryemce, the author constructs scenes of solitary individual trying to overcome her anxiety by creating emancipatory plots. Similarly, the isolation of the village community, the collective solitude, seems to provide a focus to the communal subjectivity.

³³⁶ Kemal, “İşçi Gazetesi Arbetet’in Sorularına Yanıtlar,” 210.

³³⁷ Özman, “Mehmet Ali Aybar: Sosyalist Solda 40’lardan 90’lara Bir Köprü,” 134.

In *The Undying*, Meryemce is left alone in the village. Although being in relative security in a mild climate and having all her needs met, she is still terrified at times. She is looking for somebody, any human being, whoever it may be. The assumption of the author becomes more visible in these scenes that human beings find the relief from their existential fear of death and termination through each other. It is only through social relations that they can get out of the state of fear. This state is what Gambetti calls, the “slippery ground of subjectivity” where the individual finds himself in the absence of the others’ gaze. The subjects in the narrative are presented as the singular subjects in strong need of overcoming their condition of absolute singularity by the creation of inter-subjective spheres with the presence of others. Human struggle is presented as a run away from the reality of ultimate termination, in other words the final objectification by Nature through death, and absolute singularity, towards relief via socialization—for which culture is providing the rationales—and having a subject position within an inter-subjective context. The subjects of Yaşar Kemal get their power vis-à-vis Nature from their reflections, or repetitions, in the community, from the visible selves, its co-species: the others. And in their struggle in the void, they show the basis of human freedom: speculation.

Contingency is the ultimate condition of the subject in void where the fixation of meaning is impossible, as mentioned by Gambetti. The subjects of Kemal cannot live on “the slippery grounds.” In the void, the Archimedean point to stand on has to be created artificially. In the absence of the others, the Archimedean point provided and enforced by the culture does not function at all. So, the protagonists create the others out of objects in Nature, the grass, the walnut tree, the rooster or supernatural beings such as God, *Peris*, Saints or other individuals from among themselves, such as Taşbaş and Spellbound Ahmed. The attribution of subjectness or agency reveals

the need of subjects to think in terms of community constituted by human beings. The three existential mechanisms of Arendt that connect the singular subject to the world and to the others, the plurality, are at work to overcome the anxiety. Relying on this fictive plurality the subjects create their emancipatory plots, the myths and beliefs that bring them hope and the power to resist. Once they find the Archimedean point on which to stand, the next step is to generalize this to all aspects of life. The myths are of a diffusive character, as well as the fears. Anticipation of both, catastrophe and emancipation, derive from the myths in a sporadic manner. The belief of the villagers in *Iron Earth* that everything will be well from now on owing to Saint Taşbaş and Memidik's belief in *The Undying* that the world will be a paradise when he kills Muhtar Sefer and takes his revenge for his humiliation are examples of this habit of generalization.

Meryemce's successive scenes in *The Wind* and in *The Undying*, where she creates emancipatory plots, her individual myths, and where these myths are dissolved, indicate the role of the plurality in making the reality; in the absence of others no myth is durable, when Ali arrives Meryemce's myths become useless and forgotten. Every myth being prone to dissolution indicates the contingency of subjects and the effects of this contingency in the "making and changing the world." It is in *Iron Earth* when this condition of solitude gains a communal dimension vis-à-vis social powers and the community brings about the myth of Taşbaş. This myth empowers the villagers vis-à-vis Muhtar Sefer and Adil Efendi, who are terrified by the rising probability of collective action. According to the contingency principle embedded in the singular subjects, they destabilize the hegemonic structures by their actions, and hence, contingency acquires a social character. In *The Undying*, the

author presents the dissolution of the collective myth with the changing social conditions. Disappearance of the threat brings along the end of the Saint.

In short, the theme of solitude along with the literary methods to cover the subjectivities, such as inner dialogues, inner monologues and stream-of-consciousness, enable the author to present the contingency of the subjects and indicate the conditions on which human agency and freedom may occur.

Culture as Practice

During the creation of the myth of Saint Taşbaş it becomes evident that the villagers use narrative as an infallible form of knowledge. The narratives cannot be falsified since they claim empirical origin, and their plots are culturally familiar. There is always some eye-witness—as in the case of Memidik seeing Taşbaş with seven balls of green light behind him or when the whole village believed that Ali killed Meryemce before coming to Çukurova—or the story is heard from an eminent source, as in the stories applied to Taşbaş.³³⁸ Yaşar Kemal lets one of his protagonists, Ömer, reveal in *The Undying* his evaluation behind this situation:

How had they got wind of his passion? He had never told anyone. But that's how it was, these villagers always knew everything, even the innermost thoughts in a man's heart. They know everything but keep it to themselves. Won't they know who killed Meryemdje? Of course they will. But they'll never admit it even to themselves. Don't they know that Ali would never kill his mother? Of course they do. Why are they after his blood then? At any other time even if Ali had murdered his mother before their very eyes they would have stood by without turning a hair. Ali was just a scapegoat. If he hadn't been there they'd have found someone else to vent their fury on, they'd have invented another reason or just raged on for no reason at all.³³⁹

³³⁸ I should note here the functionality of “-miş” tense peculiar to Turkish for the author in providing this effect. This form of past tense signifies the mediated state of a knowledge. For the inspiration of this note, I am thankful to Kathrin Obst for sharing her experiences with the Turkish language.

³³⁹ Kemal, *The Undying Grass*, 166. “Köylü bu, bilir. Köylü beladır, adamın yüreğinden geçeni bilir. Bilirler de insanın yüzüne vurmazlar. Şimdi Meryemceyi kimin öldürdüğünü bilmeyecekler mi, bilecekler. Ama kendi kendilerine bile söylemeyecekler. Bilecekler, söylemeyecekler. Köylüler yalnız aşık olan şeyleri söylerler. Gerisi yüreklerinde çöreklenir kalır. Alinin anasını öldürmediğini

The truth and fiction are differentiated by the community depending on the actual needs. The needs have the priority of the existing accumulation of knowledge. When the villagers began to tell stories about Taşbaş—the last of which is that of Memidik, which made Taşbaş into a Saint—the stories told are indeed the ones they all have heard many times before and they are for sure aware of their original versions. At various instances the author makes it clear that the protagonists lie without being aware of it. For example, when Muhtar Sefer is sure that Adil Efendi is underway to the village, the narrator intervenes: “He was not even aware of lying to himself.”³⁴⁰ Or, when Koca Halil is exaggerating his memories with the father of Ali, whose horse he hoped to be allowed to ride to Çukurova, the narrator conveys the following observation: “At the time while he was telling these to Ali, Old Halil believed in what he was saying. This was clear in his determined face.”³⁴¹ In the following paragraphs we see how the eye-witness provides the infallibility to the concocted stories:

“Father’s killed my Granny,” Ummuhan said. “I saw it with my own eyes. She was in her bed and he had his huge hands about her throat. Poor Granny, she died on the spot.”³⁴²

It’s Old Halil who killed Shevket Bey, I know. I saw him one night plunging a dagger into his breast and Shevket Bey crashed down like a huge tree.³⁴³ [May my two eyes drop out before me if I didn’t!]

bilmiyorlar mı, biliyorlar. Öyleyse neden böyle ölümüne öfkeleniyorlar Aliye? Anasını öldürseydi, hem de gözlerinin önünde yapsaydı bu işi gene böyle öfkelenirler miydi? Tüyleri bile kıpırdamazdı. Öfkelenmeleri gerekti, Aliyi buldular. O olmazsa öfkelenecek başka bir insan bulurlardı. Öfkelenecek bir insan bulamadılar mı, kendi kendilerine hiçbir şeysiz öfkelenirlerdi.”

³⁴⁰ Kemal, *Yer Demir*, 121. “Kendi kendine bile yalan söylediğinin farkında değildi.”

³⁴¹ Kemal, *Ortadirek*, 13. “Şu anda Aliye dönmüş bunları söylerken, Koca Halil söylediklerine iyice inanıyordu. İnandığı yüzünün kararlı görünüşünden belli oluyordu.”

³⁴² Kemal, *The Undying Grass*, 84. “Ummuhan: “Babam, nenemi öldürdü,” dedi. “Ben gözümle gördüm. Yatakta boğdu da öldürdü. İki kocaman eliyle bir sarıldı boynuna... Nenecik hemen ölüverdi, fıkara.””

³⁴³ Ibid., 99. “... Şevket Beyi Koca Halil öldürdü. Bir gece karnına bıçağı soktu, öldürdü. İki gözüm önüme aksın ki gördüm! ...”

The author uses these instances to indicate that the people really believe in the myths they create, however inconsistent they may be or even though they are provided with the sufficient knowledge not to believe them. This perspective of the author helps to historicize the cultural narratives, and thus, culture, and the importance of “the social” in the making of it. He lets the reader to think that the stories applied to Taşbaşı—the readers are also familiar with—should have been created under similar circumstances of emergency; they had to be meeting the needs of the communities who have created them and who let them survive by repeating and changing them, inevitably, in every repetition.

The parallel between the case of Taşbaşı and the life of Jesus are rather clear. The events evolve in such a way even the reader, beyond Taşbaşı, begins to think that the new-born saint really cures the ills of the people coming from the neighboring regions for remedy. Taşbaşı repeats here in fact the miracles of Jesus. The author apparently aims to demythify the cultural narratives as artifacts; while on the other hand, he presents culture as “a way of making and changing the world,” and thereby empowers the human subjects by acknowledging their agency in the making of it. In providing a context of social crisis for the creation of the saint, the author is in line with the understanding of Karl Marx regarding the making of culture: “it is not the consciousness of man that determines his social being, on the contrary, it is his social being that determines his consciousness.”

In his struggle to overcome his fear holding him back from killing Muhtar Sefer, Memidik gets support of Saint Taşbaşı in one of his habitual daydreams: “Memidik, I have given you my hand. With this hand of mine you will kill Muhtar Sefer. The hand that kills him will be mine.”³⁴⁴ Memidik takes power from the

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 179.

agency he has transferred to Taşbaş by making him a saint.³⁴⁵ The hand of Taşbaş is indeed his own creation. In other words, Memidik is practicing an agency in an indirect way through the mediation of a mythical, prophetic hero. Here, we see traces of Karl Marx's approach to religion in his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, where he argues that the human-beings create the God and believe that they were created by him. Yaşar Kemal illustrates this in a narrative form by letting Memidik and other protagonists—including the community as a collectivity—transferring agencies, again with narratives they justify on empirical grounds, and empower themselves in this process. The individual myths, the lies providing relief to their creators vis-à-vis various anxieties, become accepted by the community and turn to a collective myth. When the discourse meets the needs of the community it gets the social support and reproduced by the others and brings about the reality.

Demythification is the other face of the coin that has to be presented as well in order to cover the political implications of contingency in the narratives of Yaşar Kemal. The people of Yaşar Kemal destroy the myths they have created in the disappearance of the conditions that rendered them required. Yet what they destruct is the justification for the validity of cultural forms in particular cases, not these cultural forms themselves.

In *The Wind*, the spiritual fluctuations of Meryemce follow the successive processes of mythification and demythification. We have seen how the Holy Walnut Tree, held as a saint and so much respected, seems suddenly so powerless to her. Even God is seen in certain cases as an imperfect being making wrong decisions. The most impressive case is the demythification of Taşbaş whereby real Taşbaş is separated from Saint Taşbaş. When Meryemce tries to catch the rooster and is

³⁴⁵ To give the hand is a religious practice in certain Islamic sects whereby the responsibility is transmitted. The sheikh gives his hand to the person who he decides to lead the community after him.

disappointed since Taşbaş is not coming to visit and help her she turns her anger towards the saint:

“And as for that Tashbash, yesterday’s little whipper-snapper turned saint who doesn’t deign to come this way now... Why don’t you [come], you saintly son of a bitch? ... Come and hear the things your Mother Meryemdje’s got to tell you. Don’t you ever get bored up there with those gloomy immortal forty brothers? Who knows how high and mighty they are, how swollen with pride because they’ll never die”... Others [said] that he had gone to join the Forty Holies... They said he was a great saint now, clad in green robes, taller, and with a long white beard that flowed like a waterfall down to his knees. They said wherever he set his foot the earth turned green and lush, that wherever his eyes rested large dawn-roses unfolded into bloom. A dawn-rose! She had always wondered what that could be; a kind of special rose for the saints, no doubt. They said also that a snow-white cloud followed him wherever he went like a canopy over his head to protect him from the sun and the rain... If Tashbash were to appear before her draped in those green garments, with his newly-acquired white beard, Meryemdje knew she would die of laughter. Who wouldn’t? Think of our Tashbash all got up like that! Why, he’d be the first to laugh himself! If only he would come, what a good laugh they’d have together. It would not hurt Tashbash’s saintly reputation, for there was no one in the village to see them. “Well, why don’t you come then, Allah’s wretched saint?”³⁴⁶

Her reaction is similar when Spellbound Ahmed runs away without catching the rooster for her:

“Eat poison, you son of a bitch, before you eat my cock,” she panted wrathfully. “The very root of poison. And as for your father-in-law, that peris’ muck, he can put his head on a dung-heap for a pillow. Feathers indeed! That’s what comes when a huge peri-king takes a wretched dog

³⁴⁶ Kemal, *The Undying Grass*, 191. “O Taşbaşoğlu da batsın. Ermiş olmuş da itin dölü sümüklü Taşbaş, semtimize bile uğramaz. Ulan oğlum Taşbaş, mademki ermiş olmuşsun, baksana şu alçak köylünün alçak horozu başıma neler getiriyor... Gelsene ulan köpeğin oğlu ermiş... Gel sana neler anlatacak Meryemce Anan gel! Hiç mi canın sıkılmaz, o uğursuz, o hiç ölmemiş, hiç ölmeyecek kırk belanın içinde? Kim bilir o Kırk ölümsüz arkadaşlarıyın, kim bilir nasıl da burunları büyük, hiç ölmedik, hiç ölmeyeceğiz diye. Senin de burnun büyüdü mü?... Kimi de Kırklara karışmış Kırklar dağında safa sürüyor, diyor. Yeşiller giyinmiş. Baş ermiş olmuş. Bir ak sakalı varmış Taşbaşın, amanın aman! Amanın aman, bir su gibi yukardan aşağı, dizine kadar süzülüyormuş. Boyu da uzamış, büyümüş. Bastığı yerde çayır çimen bitiyormuş. Baktığı yerlerde iri iri şafak gülleri açıyormuş. Şafak gülü de ne ki, ne bileyim ben, ermiş gülü zaar. Yazda kışta üstünde bir akça bulut, o nereye giderse oraya gidiyormuş. Güne göstermiyormuş. Şimdi Taşbaşoğlu o yedi karış sakalı, üstünde bulutu, yeşil giysileriyle gelse, Meryemcenin karşısında dursa, Meryemce güle güle ölür. Böyle bir kılığa girmiş Taşbaşçaya kim gülmez. Taşbaşça kendi de kendini görse güler. Bir gelse, karşı karşıya gül babam gül ederler. Köyde kimse yok ki Taşbaşın ermişliğine halel gelsin. “Ulan Taşbaşım gelsene. Allahın mendebur ermiş gelsene!””

like you for son-in-law. Just let me lay my hands on you again, you sniveling pig, just let me!”³⁴⁷

Although the villagers do not respect Taşbaş, who joins the community in Çukurova and faces the humiliations of a man from Muhtar Sefer and the land owner Muttalip Bey, they still believe in Saint Taşbaş who joined the Holy Forties and mention him in their prayers. And when Taşbaş dies, he is buried with rituals and high respect.

One of the fundamental deeds accomplished by the author in his narratives is the recuperation of human agency in the making of history, culture and society; in general, reality. The perception of culture as a daily practice is central in this accomplishment. The components of culture, such as traditional narratives and cultural forms used by the community to create and communicate meanings, are subdued to the will of the subjects who are presented in their daily struggles standing for the contemporary social experience of the exploited majority. Culture in the hands of these people becomes the raw material to create the tools of resistance under the state of emergency that is relayed through the narrative tensions, as the story of Ali in *The Wind* on the road to Çukurova. Here, we see a materialist understanding of culture, as a means of seeing, but also making and changing the world, as argued by Arif Dirlik.

The heritage of premodern cultures presented in these narratives in their last instance facing the devastating diffusion of capitalist relations establishes a contrast with the modern discourses of subjection. The decentralization of the structural factors—the agents of capitalism and nation-state—vis-à-vis the collective agency,

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 195. “Horoz yerine zıkkımın kökünü ye it soyu. O Taşbaşoğlu olacak ermişler domuzu da horoz yerine zıkkımın kökünü yesin. Ağının hasını. Senin kayınbaban da, periler boku da kuştüyü yastıkta uyuyacağına gübrelige koysun da başını uyusun. Senin gibi it soyunu kocaman bir peri boku da güvey alırsa, işte böyle olur. Bir daha, bir daha elime geçersen sümüklü domuz! Bir daha!”

with a proper role to the individual in it, leads to a certain notion of identity. This is a socially situated loose identity, constantly recreated by the people in order to meet their present needs. In other words, the process of identification of the selves—at the individual and communal levels—is presented in rather specific settings, the changes of which find immediate reflection in the practices of identification. The identity, as we will see, proposed by the author is a political one rather than merely a social or cultural one.

Moral Tension

The moral tension in the first and the third novels is built, not unexpectedly, around Meryemce, who represents the resistance of the humans and the moral values of the community as the “Middle-Post” (*Ortadirek*, the title of the original publication of *The Wind from the Plain* in Turkish) of it. In *The Wind*, she is the load of Ali heading for Çukurova. It is the poverty and loneliness of the family vis-à-vis the economic conditions that brings about the threat to her existence. Ali, on the other hand, with whom Meryemce’s story is interwoven, represents modern Man, standing in the middle of necessities, the facts of capitalist economies, and values. He is struggling to keep his mother alive and to guarantee the future of his family and children.

In *The Undying* (the title stands actually for Meryemce again), Meryemce is left alone in the village with everything she needs, except a human being, since they don’t have a horse anymore to carry her to Çukurova. Yet the evil Muhtar Sefer has sent one of his men, Ömer, to kill Meryemce so that Ali will be jailed. When Ömer reaches the village, he is welcomed by Meryemce, who is suffering from loneliness. This attitude of Meryemce confuses the boy, who is hated by the most of the

villagers. The novel ends without revealing the fate of Meryemce, which probably is implied by the title of the book. Here, the choice expected to be made by Ömer between his self-interest in killing Meryemce and his ultimate love for her establishes the moral tension of the narrative.

In the *Iron Earth*, the solitude of Meryemce becomes a communal experience under the threat of Adil Efendi, the greedy town merchant who is expected to come and take everything they have right down to the underwear of the women, as he has done for many years. This time the community is facing capitalism on its own. The author lets Taşbaş disclose this threat to the community, including the public and the private spheres:

Serve you right! Yes, it'll serve you right, all of you, when Adil comes and seizes everything, down to your women's drawers! ... In the end Adil will come and take your women too, and sell them in the town, and for nothing! Serve you right, a hundred times right! Just imagine it, a troop of women with bare rumps in the middle of the town market! How will you like that? Where will you be able to show your faces again? Why you wretches, can't you be men enough to go and tackle Adil Effendi yourselves?³⁴⁸

The case of Memidik in *The Undying* contrasts the state of the villagers as described by Taşbaş. When the villagers are frightened they create a hero and find a relief in him. Memidik does the same, but he uses the myth to empower himself in overcoming the fear. Whereas the villagers do not face Adil as offered by Tasbash, Memidik succeeds in taking the revenge of tortures from Muhtar Sefer. On the other hand, Memidik does not accept the humiliation as Taşbaş expects the villagers to do.

³⁴⁸ Kemal, *Iron Earth, Copper Sky*, 74. "İnşallah yarın değil de öbür gün Adil gelir de avratlarınızın donunu bacaklarından çeker alır götürür. Hem de elinizden avratlarınızı alır... Adil avratlarınızı alır götürür de kasabada satar. Hem de yok pahasına satacak. Ooooh çekerim size. Yüz kere oooh! Avratlarınızın kıcı açık kalacak. Bunu gözünüzün önüne getirin bir kere bakalım. Hele bir getirin! Ne göreceksiniz? Kıcı açık bir avrat sürüsü! Adilin arkasında, kasaba çarşısında. Beğendiniz mi? Ne güzel olur öyle değil mi? Öyle değil mi, Muhtar Seferin akıllı, namuslu köylüleri? Siz de evlerinizin köşesine, karanlığa saklanır, utancınızdan avradınızın yüzüne bakamazsınız. Öbür köylülere rezil ki bin rezil olursunuz."

Relating the Text to the Social Context

The meanings created within the narratives are related to the social context through representative social types, cultural narratives (such as semi-religious popular myths), political discourses (such as elitist/positivist progressivism), and typical instances of contemporary social experience.

What has caused the misleading attribution of social realism to these works probably has been their inclusion of social experience, through the constitution of themes based on humanist socialist ethical/political stance, and their resulting political motivations. Yet these motivations were generated through the connection of the texts—with their inherent narrative tensions—to the social context. The identifications provided for the reader through the narrative tensions within the narrative context were transferred thereby to the social context, giving the narrative a sense of actuality and provoking the readers for political action in line with a political identity matured from the identifications incited within the narrative framework. Moreover, the trilogy has an epic open end, leaving the tensions of the narrative unresolved and thereby transmitted to the readers. The author renders thereby the narrative actual.

On the other hand, solitude is the condition of the village community in the modern age of high technology and the nation-state. So, this motif provides a critical stance concerning the process of modernization in Turkey. Moreover, the agents of the central state, beyond being useless for the villagers in their struggles for survival, are practitioners of oppression. With this their images do not differ very much from a colonial power. Here, we see the main line of division within the society the political position of the author implies: the people versus the alienated rulers and exploiters.

Solitude and poverty are the most distinguished characteristics of the people, seen as a class.

Another aspect of this political position seems to be its favoring stance regarding the political intervention, but not an oppressive one, as expected from the alienated elite. The drive for politics then is based on the solitude of the subjects, in other words, social alienation. The purpose of the politics seems to be to reach a certain unity of the subjects under a social formation preventing this social alienation.

The focus on subjectivities serves also to situate the subjects within a social context viewed in the form of the totality of daily experiences, thereby making the text referential to the general political issues of the day, so that the reader can affiliate himself with the protagonists. The social groups occupying the centrality within the development of the narrative, namely the peasants, are empowered vis-à-vis the hegemonic groups disseminating their own narratives through the institutional apparatus they control. Moreover, this focus reveals the conditions under which the protagonists destabilize the hegemony on the basis of their experiences, whether they attain political agency and are involved in practices of resistance as in the case of Memidik or whether they remain attached to cultural discourses. The use of vernaculars, in a similar way, indeed a vernacular created by the author, emphasizes the cultural peculiarity of the community and thus the subjectivity of it.

The Wind is an allegorical novel, as the author reveals himself. The road between the village and Çukurova represents the present time. Ali represents the modern Man, stuck between the moral values of the past and the present-day economic requirements for the future of his family. Meryemce, on the other hand,

represents the moral values dying out with the diffusion of capitalist relations and the resulting alienation.

In *The Undying*, Ömer obviously stands for the fascist killer as the collaborator of the exploiter who aims to destroy the human values. Yaşar Kemal anticipates here the increasing violence of the 1970s and offers to win Ömer over, as Meryemce with her caring manner almost succeeds. In the view of the author, Ömer is also the victim of solitude, a traumatic character as an orphan boy first raised then used by Muhtar Sefer.

Imagining the Ethical

Overcoming Antagonisms, the Making of the Antagonism

We have seen above that Meryemce empowered herself via the power struggle she engages in with the slope and the rooster she has personified. This seems to be also the case at various instances within the narrative when individuals oppose each other. When Meryemce has to be carried in *The Wind* by Ali after the death of her horse, she is furious with Ali, whom she blames for killing her horse by allowing Koca Halil to ride along. She stops talking to him, an attitude later generalized to the whole village after the villagers have organized the prayers for Koca Halil, whom they think has died. Ali reveals in *The Wind* that the fury of Meryemce is indeed towards her own oldness. Yet she reflects this fury on her son, relying on the Koca Halil issue since there is no opponent to take responsible for her aging.

The one-sided antagonism of Koca Halil with the villagers, who, he thinks, are going to kill him for the belated arrival to Çukurova, is another example. When the villagers deny any anger towards him, it becomes clear that Koca Halil needed the

antagonism and felt humiliated by the villagers, who arranged a friendly visit to give him relief from his fears.

Old Halil was left in a void. So, won't the villagers kill him ever?³⁴⁹

He pulled the mattress over his head again and started to be afraid of something. He recalled that the villagers will kill him. He used to fear from this, but now...

He was left in a big void, suffering... Is this what they call death, he thought. Nothing helped. He wanted to go out and cry out until the morning.

He struggled to get rid of this nothingness. More he struggled, more drawn he was into loneliness and solitude. Suddenly, he found a twig to hold on to. He saw in his mind's eye a way of emancipation, bursting like a light. Why haven't the villagers beaten him?... What were they meaning with this? They wanted to say you are so wretched and debased of a creature that it is not worth to touch your dirty skin even. They are holding you for nothing... Now he was relaxed and the emptiness in him was filled.³⁵⁰

To have been left unpunished by the villagers, Koca Halil feels not to be respected by them. When the expected antagonism between the villagers and him does not realize, he tries to create one. His feelings when he finds himself in the void are obviously similar to the feelings of solitary Meryemce on the road. The lack of an expected antagonism seems to have caused the same state of mind. We can reach to the conclusion that, according to Yaşar Kemal, individual subjects need antagonisms as much as they need others. On the one hand, to identify an antagonist seem to

³⁴⁹ Kemal, *Yer Demir*, 49. "Koca Halil bir boşluk içinde kalmıştı. Demek köylü onu hiç mi hiç öldürmeyecekti?"

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 50–52. "Yorganı başına çekti gene. Bir şeylerden korkmaya başladı. Aklına köylünün onu öldüreceğini getirdi. Eskiden, daha dün nasıl korkardı. Şimdi belki bir saat, iki saat uğraştı, kanlı, parça parça bedenini gözlerinin önüne getirdi, hiç tınmadı. Halbuki nasıl ürperirdi, tüm bedeni nasıl çıngıştırdı!"

Koskocaman bir boşluk içinde kalmıştı. Acı çekiyordu... Ölüm dedikleri böyle mi olur acep, diye düşündü... Düşüncesini nereye vardırırsa, elini atsa boş çıkıyordu. Çıkıp sabaha kadar durmadan bağırarak istiyordu...

Bunalıyor, boğuluyordu. Uzun bir zaman, can çekişir bir durumda, karanlık bir duvar önünde kaldı. Bu bomboşluktan kurtulmaya çabaladı. Çabaladıkça boşluğa, yalnızlığa, kimsesizliğe daha çok batıyordu.

Birden sarılacak bir dal, dolu bir yer buldu. Gözlerinin önüne bir kurtuluş, bir sevinç umudu, bir top ışık gibi patladı. Köylü niçin dövmedi, niçin öldürmedi? ...Ne demek istiyordu köylü? Ağama söyleyim, demek istiyor ki, sen öyle alçak, dört kitapta katli vacip, öyle düşük bir yaratıksın ki köylü sana, o pis tenine dokunmaya değmez, diyor. Seni hiç sayıyor... Şimdi rahatlamıştı. İçindeki boşluk dolmuştu."

provide a responsible for the approaching death, and thus a pseudo-opportunity to struggle against and to overcome it. On the other hand, the explanation of Gambetti to the Arendtian concept of “the gaze” seems to correspond to the understanding of our author on the need of antagonisms:

The gaze of others, themselves in the plural and also subject to the same relation of visibility, exhorts the self out of itself, toward *unity with itself*, toward the irrevocable (positive) reality of its own existence and of its own (positively acquired) identity. Plurality is a blessing in that the perspective of the others not only defines and stabilizes one’s own perspective, irrespective of how it was obtained in the first place, but also puts it in relation with the world, the “in-between.” The possibility of fixing meanings and identities is not a minor blessing; it is a remedy to solipsism. I am who I am by virtue of my actions that “*take effect*” *among others*—and not by virtue of some fantastic ego-ideal that I may have constructed in the socialized solitude of my psyche.³⁵¹

If we take others not only as other people, but as positions and the plurality beyond the sum of subjects as the plurality of opinions, the need for antagonism is explained by the function of the gaze provided by the plurality to “exhort the self out of itself, toward *unity with itself*, toward the irrevocable (positive) reality of its own existence and of its own (positively acquired) identity.” Koca Halil gets furious since his actions don’t “take effect among others,” the villagers.

The scene of solitary Meryemce in the village, when she begins to call herself by her name and tries thereby to overcome her loneliness, is a perfect example of the opposite of what the gaze provides, as mentioned by Gambetti above, “the unity with itself.”

The antagonism between the Muhtar Sefer and Memidik, on the other hand, is based on Memidik’s myth of revenge. He hopes to overcome the humiliation of Muhtar Sefer’s torture by killing him. The young and disrespected boy aims to

³⁵¹ Gambetti, “The Agent is the Void!” 433.

realize himself through the action of killing the torturer. This is one of the real antagonisms besides the one between Muhtar Sefer and the community.

There are two more cases of antagonism for which the author does not reveal the reasons. The antagonism between Koca Halil and Meryemce is a deeply rooted one. Yet we are not provided with certain knowledge of their hatred towards each other. And even we see sometimes the artificial character of this hatred and the need of each, for the other's existence.

Another antagonism for which there is no reasons given is the one between the villagers and Ali in *The Undying*. The seeming reason for this antagonism is the belief of the villagers that Ali has killed his mother Meryemce before coming to work in Çukurova. The thoughts of Ömer, also quoted above, indicate nevertheless the arbitrary character of this antagonism: "Ali was just a scapegoat. If he hadn't been there they'd have found someone else to vent their fury on, they'd have invented another reason or just raged on for no reason at all."³⁵² After Ali was beaten as a result of the growing hatred among the villagers—especially when they've found out that he was picking cotton during the night—and once the anger was discharged, the villagers felt sorry for Ali and he was immediately taken care of by Shirtless, who had been the first to hit him.

The antagonisms mentioned seem to empower the subjects by contributing to the consolidation of individual or collective selves. In the last two cases, my conviction is that the author especially does not give sufficient account of the roots of the antagonisms and leaves the reader confused on the issue. He exhibits the arbitrariness of some antagonisms by overcoming them at the end of the narrative,

³⁵² Kemal, *The Undying Grass*, 166. "Öfkelenmeleri gerekti, Aliyi buldular. O olmazsa öfkelenecek başka bir insan bulurlardı. Öfkelenecek bir insan bulamadılar mı, kendi kendilerine hiçbir şeysiz öfkelenirlerdi."

and differentiates them from the real antagonism, the one between Muhtar Sefer and the community. This helps him in his endorsement of the collective self, “the people” of the populist socialism he defends, with humanist Marxist postulates and a materialist understanding of culture.

The transcendence of antagonisms towards a unity, in other words, the transcendental inter-subjective experience is symbolized by various motifs by the author. In this respect the love scenes of Hüsneh and Rejep in *Iron Earth* provide a good example: “His blood flow into hers and hers into his. The two bodies were one now, merged into each other, never to come apart till death, never, for all eternity.”³⁵³ This experience seems to stand for the overcoming of singularity, or particularity of the singular individual, through “merging” with each other.

Similarly, when Meryemce recalls a folk song we see that the motif of the bloods mixing is repeated, this time transcending the historical context:

We had sat together on the spring earth of a hundred thousand years,
sang the voice, and loved with a love of a hundred thousand years, a love
as old as the earth. In love we have found each other and in death again
we are together. Ah, together we have sat on the warm earth of a
thousand springs and our fresh young blood has flawed and mingled...³⁵⁴

In *The Undying*, both Meryemce and Koca Halil forget the hatred of decades between them. Koca Halil does everything so that Ali can leave earlier and go back to the village before something bad happens to Meryemce. He reveals the importance of the antagonist for the self by his following words when he questioned Ali, suspected to have killed his mother: “How could you do such a thing? How can a

³⁵³ Kemal, *Iron Earth, Copper Sky*, 39. “Şimdi artık iki beden bir olmuştu. Birbirine karışmıştı. Bu iki yapışmış, karışmış beden ölüme kadar, kıyamete kadar birbirinden ayrılmayacaktı. Onun kanı ona, onun kanı ona akıyordu. Elleri ayakları, kimin eli, kimin ayağı belli değildi artık. Kimin yüreğinin kanı kime akıyor belli değildi.”

³⁵⁴ Kemal, *The Undying Grass*, 310. “Bin yıllık bahar toprağının üstüne oturduk, diyordu türkü. Yüz bin yıllık aşka geldik. Toprak kadar eski. Aşkta buluştuk, ölümden buluştuk, yüz bin yıllık bahar toprağının üstüne oturduk. Aşka geldik. Ala kanımız birbirine karışacak, karıştı, diyordu.”

man kill his own mother? And a mother like Meryemdje too! Look, she and I, we were like cat and dog for fifty years, but still we couldn't do without each other.”³⁵⁵

Meryemce, getting mad on her own in the village, will welcome anybody even if it is

Koca Halil:

Ah, aaah, if only somebody would come! Anyone, even Muhtar Sefer, even that accursed prince of rogues, that deserter from the Yemen wars, that rebel against Allah, that dregs of mankind, Old Halil. I'd talk to him, even to him.³⁵⁶

Let them come back, just let them, and see if Meryemdje will ever hurt a single one of them again! See how she'll love them all, even Old Halil, just like her own beloved grandson Hassan. So you don't talk to your own villagers, you spurn them, eh? Well then, this is what Allah does to you, he makes you pine for the sight of a single human being, he makes you crave even after Old Halil... That's Allah for you, powerful, long-bearded sky-eyed Allah!³⁵⁷

The arbitrary antagonisms are overcome under certain conditions. The antagonism between Muhtar Sefer and Memidik and also between Muhtar Sefer and the villagers is, on the other hand, resolved by the killing of Muhtar Sefer by Memidik. Moreover, the villagers, who have organized a beautiful burial for their former Saint, have left the corpse of Muhtar Sefer stinking two days along under the sun: “His blood gathered into a pool on the warm earth. It frothed under the heat, grew dark and black and hard and crusted. Two days the body lay there under the sun

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 78. “*Nasıl yaptın bu işi? Neden yaptın? İnsan hiç anasını öldürür mü? Hele insanın Meryemce gibi bir anası olursa, onu hiç öldürür mü? Yazık değil mi Meryemceye? Biz onunla kedi köpek gibi elli yıl çekiştik. Çekiştik, ama ne o bensiz yaşayabilirdi şu dünyada ne ben...*”

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 134. “*Ah, aah, ah! Bir insan olsaydı, bir tek. İstersen Muhtar Sefer olsun, isterse o dört kitapta katli vacip, hırsızlar başı, Yemen kaçkını, hükümete, hem de Allaha asi, insanın kötüsü Koca Halil olsun. Ağzımı açar da konuşurdum.*”

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 134–35. “*Köylü dönsün, hele bir dönsün. Meryemce kimseyi incitmeyecek. Herkesi, Koca Halili bile öz yavrusu Hasan kadar sevecek. Köylüyle konuşmamak onlara buğzetmek ne demek. İşte insanlara sen böyle yaparsan, Allah da seni bir tek insan kokusuna hasret kor. Koca Halilin kokusunu bile sana mumla aratır. Allah demişler buna, mavi gözlü, koca sakallı Allah!*”

and the green flies flashed about it, steel green, thousands of them in swarms.”³⁵⁸

The green flies about the corpse bring to mind the green balls of light behind Saint Taşbaş heading to Mount Tekech, and emphasize the contrast of the places of these two figures in the public conscience.

The Ethical Load: Humanism as the Myth of Yaşar Kemal

–Such is the story;

can you think of any device to make them believe it?

–Not in the first generation;

but their sons and descendents might believe it,

and finally the rest of mankind.³⁵⁹

Plato, from *The Republic* regarding the “Myth of Metals”

The “enlightenment” causing Meryemce to overcome her antagonisms happens through her experience of solitude—standing for the “social alienation”—as an effect of capitalism—standing for the “ethical alienation,” the condition under which the practices of objectification/subjection make up the essence of social relations. In *The Undying*, Meryemce longs for somebody after weeks of solitude, no matter who it is. She feels regretful for not speaking with the villagers for a year:

Let them come back, just let them, and see if Meryemdje will ever hurt a single one of them again! See how she’ll love them all, even Old Halil, just like her own beloved grandson Hassan. So you don’t talk to your own villagers, you spurn them, eh? Well then, this is what Allah does to you, he makes you pine for the sight of a single human being, he makes you crave even after Old Halil...³⁶⁰

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 318. “Kanı sıcak toprağa göllendi. Kan sıcakta köpürdü, koyulaştı, karardı, üstünü kaymak bağladı. Ölü orada gün altında iki gün kaldı. Yeşil sinekler, sıcakta çelik yeşili, arı oğul verir gibi Seferin ölüsü üstünde binlerce çıktılar.”

³⁵⁹ Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Francis MacDonald (Cornford, New York, London: Oxford University Press, 1941), 107.

³⁶⁰ Kemal, *The Undying Grass*, 134–35. “Köylü dönsün, hele bir dönsün. Meryemce kimseyi incitmeyecek. Herkesi, Koca Halili bile öz yavrusu Hasan kadar sevecek. Köyliyle konuşmamak onlara buğzetmek ne demek. İşte insanlara sen böyle yaparsan, Allah da seni bir tek insan kokusuna

Meryemdje felt all the dread of this desolate empty world in the very core of her heart. A world full to the brim, yet lifeless, dead. In the very core of her heart, piercing as a poisoned dagger, she felt the absence of the human being. So it is the man that fills the world, man that is everything. Without him the world does not exist.³⁶¹

Here, Meryemce draws a moral from her experience, and recognizes the importance of human beings, the others in the community. The belief she acquired that the world does not exist in the absence of man and that man is everything, indicates the epistemological basis upon which the author formulates his Marxist/humanist narratives, where Man exists as a social being. The world, here standing for reality, exists with the condition of the existence of man. The author lets Meryemce reveal his conviction that human beings create the reality in which they live in. He doesn't deny the existence of the world outside, but has a stance recognizing the human agency of creating the reality, as in Heideggerian notion of the world as "in-between-ness." Here, it is once again beneficial to turn to Gambetti:

Capitalism is, in fact, the sociohistorical context in which the preoccupation with the self emerged: "The greatness of Max Weber's discovery about the origins of capitalism lay precisely in his demonstration that an enormous, strictly mundane activity is possible without any care for or enjoyment of the world whatever, an activity whose deepest motivation, on the contrary, is worry and *care about the self*. World alienation, and not self-alienation as Marx thought, has been the hallmark of the modern age" (1958, [Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*] 254, emphasis added). The implication is clear: what happens to the self must be thought in conjunction with what happens to the "world" in the Heideggerian sense of an existential-relational "in-between."

Yaşar Kemal's opposition to capitalist modernization on the basis of degenerating human values and defending Marxism finding the latter emancipatory

hasret kor. Koca Halilin kokusunu bile sana mumla aratır. Allah demişler buna, mavi gözlü, koca sakallı Allah!"

³⁶¹ Ibid., 243. "Meryemce ıssızlığın yamanlığını ta yüreğinin başında duydu. Dünyanın bomboşluğunu. Her şeyi var, ağzına kadar dopdolu, kıvıl kıvıl dünya, bomboş, ıpissız, ölü gibi. İnsansızlığı yüreğinin başında duydu. İnsansızlık ta yüreğine işledi, bir kara hançer gibi. Demek dünyayı dolduran insanmış. Herşey, her şey, bütün dünya insanmış. İnsan yoksa dünya yokmuş."

for the individual (self) becomes clear with the perspective provided by Gambetti relying on Arendt and Heidegger. Capitalism in dissolving the community that has a culture of its own—its own “ways of seeing, making and changing the reality” in the words of Arif Dirlik—and human values developed alongside this culture, leaves the individual human being in solitude, as in the case of Meryemce.

In his narrative he aims to show “the reality” as it is made inter-subjectively, an activity necessarily embedded in the culture. And his call is to fight ethical alienation and to remake the reality through cultural liberating practice by men instead of the ethically alienated rationales of capitalism and by those who are subjected to them. His understanding of politics as indicated by the “re-appropriation of antagonisms”—in Gambetti’s terminology—is rather parallel to that of Hannah Arendt, as pointed by Gambetti also:

Borrowing from Hannah Arendt, a political identity would run “from place to place, from one part of the world to another, through all kinds of conflicting views, until it finally ascends from these particularities to some impartial generality.”³⁶²

At the moment of the re-appropriation of antagonisms—in the narrative, reduction of all the antagonisms to one between Muhtar Sefer and the community—Yaşar Kemal employs humanistic discourses he recuperated from the authentic cultural heritage of the Anatolian people, especially from those of the Alevi faith. In the *Iron Earth* he has the Corporal Jumali disclose the centrality of the Man in Alevism, while he is thinking on the Sainthood of Taşbaş and sees it possible on the grounds of the Mahdi³⁶³ faith:

Out of the corner of his eye Corporal Jumali took stock of Tashbash.
There was nothing of the crackpot in this man. He was not a hodja or

³⁶² Gambetti, “The Agent is the Void!” 426. Quotation is from Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 242.

³⁶³ Mahdi: The expected messiah of Shiite Muslim tradition, and deriving sects.

anything religious either. How on earth had he turned into a saint? Of course, every man has something holy in him, but still!... Corporal Jumali was a member of the Alevi sects from the region of Sivas. Like all the Alevis, he sported a huge bushy moustache and believed that man was the most precious creature on earth. Allah himself was sometimes manifest in the human form. After Allah, perhaps even before him, man was the lord of the universe. Allah was the light and a portion of that light was immanent in every man. Who knows, maybe one day that light would shine forth in a truly pious person. And so the Alevis always paid worship first and foremost to light and to man.³⁶⁴

Here, we see the emphasis of the author on the closeness of the Man and God in the Alevi faith, as they are held as almost identical. A few pages later, Taşbaş thinks about the Alevis and gives the clue for what light stands for in the trilogy:

What warm-hearted people these Alevis are, Tashbash thought. Theirs is indeed a cult of justice and friendship and love. It isn't man and light they worship, though they say so, but love, universal love. And isn't that just what light really is?³⁶⁵

And here, "love" is identified by Taşbaş to Man and light. In *The Undying*, we witness to the thoughts of Meryemce on men, which she attributes to the Peri King:

There's not much to be said for these earthlings, the Peri King says. They wage war and kill one another. They gouge each other's eyes out. They wrong and oppress each other with cruel, evil acts. They sell their fellow creatures into slavery and reduce them to poverty and hunger. They are a craven race, these earthlings, that's why they rave so much of bravery and courage. They trample on the fallen and cringe before the strong.³⁶⁶

Cruel, evil, lying... Men are like that ready to humiliate, to usurp, to kill. No creature on earth could think up the wicked things man can do to his

³⁶⁴ Kemal, *Iron Earth, Copper Sky*, 208. "Cumali Onbaşı yan gözle Taşbaş'a baktı. Cin gibi bir adamdı bu. Nerden, nasıl ermiş olmuştu? Hoca falan da değildi. Her insanda, her yaratıkta kutsal bir yan vardı. Vardı ama!..

Cumali Onbaşı Sivasın Alevilerindendi. Pos bıyıklı, bir okumuş, bir düşünmüş adamdı. Yeryüzüne insan yarattığı gibi değerli hiçbir yaratık gelmemişti. Allah bile insan suretinde tecelli ederdi. Allahtan sonra, belki de ondan önce yerin göğün yaratıcısı insandı. Allah bir ışık olarak görünürdü. Ve o ışık tek mil insanlarda vardı. Belki bir gün iyilerin iyisi bir insanda gözükürdü. O yüzdendir ki Aleviler insana ve ışığa secde ederlerdi."

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 210. "... Bunlar her bir işlerini sevgi üstüne kuruyorlar. İnsana tapıyoruz, ışığa tapıyoruz diyorlar ama yalandır. Bunlar insan sevgisine, dünya sevgisine tapıyorlar. Dünyanın sevgisi de ışığı değil mi?"

³⁶⁶ Kemal, *The Undying Grass*, 192. "Şu insan soyunda iş yok iş olmaya ya, diyor. Onlar harp ederler, diyor, onlar birbirlerini öldürürler, diyor, birbirlerinin gözlerini oyarlar. Onlar, hak yerler, zulmederler, kötülük ederler, birbirlerini aç yoksul bırakırlar, onlar korkaktırlar, yiğitlere bunca hayranlıkları da hep korkak olduklarındandır, onlar düşküni ezerler, zorluğa boyun eğerler."

fellows. Nor the good things either...

The Bald Minstrel would sing a lay of the empty universe, with nothing, nothing at all, no earth, no air, no water, no emptiness even, nothing but a little blob of light no bigger than a hand, yet filling the whole universe with its brightness, dazzling, blinding to the eyes, had there been eyes to see... Well, that was man, that was the light that burned in every man. Out of that little blaze of light all human beings had been fashioned. God first created Adam out of mud and then he put this light in him.³⁶⁷

In the author's interpretation of the Alevite faith, God obviously is identified with humanity. This image provides the author with a symbol for his ethics of the ethically unalienated human community which is parallel to the integrity of God. And as it is attributed to God, he sees the human community as the creator of the reality in which it is living. The reality for Yaşar Kemal is transcendental as it is inter-subjectively made and remade. And human freedom and agency has high priority in his perspective since it is the only way to bring about an ethical transcendence to overcome social, and thus ethical, alienation.

Call for Action

It is because of the ethical stance opposing alienation, and as the protagonists' overcoming of antagonisms on the grounds of their own experiences reveals, the author is for a decentralized political activity for liberation. The symbol he employs for the collective action is a real event that happened in 1946 in a village named Baladız in the province of Isparta whereby the corrupt land owner was lynched by

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 243–44. “Zulmeder, kötülük eder, insanı aşağılar, hak yer, insanı öldürür, yalan söyler, tüm kötülükler ona mahsustur. Dünyaya gelmiş hiçbir yaratık insan kadar birbirine, ve de dünyadaki öteki yaratıklara kötülük düşünemez ve de iyilik. Dünya yoktu, hiçbir şey yoktu, hava, su yoktu, boşluk bile yoktu, der Kel Aşık... Hiçbir şey yoktu, el kadar bir ışık parçası vardı bütün evrende. Bütün evreni şavkıyla dolduran. El kadar ışık o kadar keskin bir ışıktı ki hiçbir göz ona bakamazdı, bakacak göz de yoktu ki, kör olurdu. İşte bu ışık insandı. İşte bu ışık insanlıktı. Her insanın içinde bu ışık yanar. İnsanoğlu bu bir tutam ışıktan halkolunmadır. Allah önce Ademi çamurdan insan suretinde yaptı, sonra içine bu ışığı soktu.”

the women of the village.³⁶⁸ The author uses this leitmotif of lynch in most of his novels and also in the *Iron Earth*, in a fantasy of Muhtar Sefer:

The villagers waking up one morning to see Adil Effendi there, in the middle of the village, motionless, his head and shoulders white with snow. The villagers quaking with fear, trembling, trembling, until the trembling is no longer with fear but with rage, and closer, closer they creep to each other like sheep flocking together, pressing together, tighter, tighter... One solid compact mass gathering momentum... A thunderbolt striking Adil Effendi... When the mass breaks apart, there is no Adil at all! A spot of blood on the ground, a leg maybe, a bit of an arm, half a nose... Where has that large man vanished to? The police are nowhere to be seen. Panic-stricken, it didn't take them long to decamp. The villagers are tired. There is no more Adil.³⁶⁹

Here, the power of the collectivity is emphasized. The trilogy ends after the return of the villagers to home with the symbolic gliding of the lonely eagle off towards the mountains:

Up in the sky, as though stuck to it, slightly huddled over himself, his wings wet and slow, the great eagle was flying off towards the distant mountains. Three times he wheeled round and round at the far end of the Chukurova land. Then he glided off towards Mount Aladag.³⁷⁰

In *The Undying*, Memidik's victory over his fear and his transgressing of the boundaries established by the power relations within the community indicates the possibility of the same victory for the community as Taşbaş invited them to do.

³⁶⁸ Oğuzertem, ed., *Geçmişten Geleceğe*, 300. Yaşar Kemal visited this village and knew Kara Eşe who lead the women on this event. Later he also brought Elia Kazan to this village.

³⁶⁹ Kemal, *Iron Earth, Copper Sky*, 56–57. “Köylü yarın sabah erkenden kalkmış bakmış ki, ne görsün, Adil Efendi yirmi candarmayla birlikte köyün ortasında durup durur. Köylüler onu orada öylece durmuş bekler bulurlar. Omuzlarına kar yağmış. Önce, içlerine büyük, çok büyük bir korku düşer. Sonra azıcık sevinirler. Sonracığıma efendim, içleri korkudan gene titremeye başlar. Titrer, titrer, titrerler. Sonra titremeleri durur. Usul usul öfkelenmeye başlarlar bu sefer de. Yavaş yavaş bir araya gelirler. Birbirlerine sokulurlar. Koyunlar gibi birbirlerine sokul ha sokul ederler. Sonra daha da sokulurlar. Bir araya, bir araya gelirler, gelirler... Bir iyice, bir topak olduktan sonra yıldırım gibi toparlanıp Adilin üstüne düşerler, orada patlarlar. Dağıldıklarında artık Adil yoktur. Yerde azıcık kan damlası, belki bir bacağın, bir kolun bir parçası, belki burnun yarısı... Koskocaman Adil nereye gitti? Candarmalar nereye giderler? Köylü Adilin başına düşünce, neye uğradıklarını bilemeyen candarmalar başlarını alırlar, bir anda köyü çıkarlar, giderler. Köylüler yorgun, Adil yok.”

³⁷⁰ Kemal, *The Undying Grass*, 322. “Koca kartal gökyüzünde kanatları ıslak, ağır, azıcık büzülmüş, göğün yamacına yapışmış gibi uzak dağlara uçuyordu. Çukurovanın ucunda üç kere döndü, sonra Aladağdan yana yön değiştirdi, süzülüp gitti.”

The illustration of the potentialities for liberating action within these narratives in a dispersed manner and unreduced moral tension at the open-end give the story a political voice calling for political activity, while at the same time making it thinkable.

EPILOGUE

“Flood leaves, sand remains.”

Turkish Proverb

“Sing on: somewhere at some new moon,

We’ll learn that sleeping is not death”³⁷¹

William Butler Yeats, from *At Galway Races*

The concern of this study has been to point out the liberating aspects of the novels of Yaşar Kemal by focusing on his trilogy *The Other Face of the Mountain*, published between 1960 and 1968. The first chapter presented a literature review around the notion of “reality,” where I focused on the perspectives developed regarding the fictional realities created by Yaşar Kemal. In the following two chapters, which made up the main body of the study, I analysed the trilogy with a special purpose to show the characteristics of the novels that allow us to employ the conceptualization of “liberating narrative” to describe their political effects. The second chapter analyzed the novels to reveal how they are constructed, whereas the third offered a political analysis indicating how the narratives function.

The three main components making the liberating effects of these narratives are first, the socialist humanist ethical stance with communitarian emphasis that is primarily critical of alienation; second, the Marxist/existentialist epistemology enabling the materialist culturalist approach of the author and thereby covering the subjectivities at the individual and communal levels without being drawn into

³⁷¹ “Sürdürün türkünüzü: bir yerde doğarken yeni bir ay,
Göreceğiz uyumanın ölmek olmadığını” (Translated by Cevat Çapan)

subjectivism; and finally, the particular literary approach reflecting the characteristics of both modernist and social realist schools. A transcendental understanding of reality—a reality that is made and remade everyday by human activity—enabled the author to present the political, cultural and also moral agency of common people in Turkey. In Sartre's words,

This is humanism, because we remind man that there is no legislator but himself; that he himself, thus abandoned, must decide for himself; also because we show that it is not by turning back upon himself, but always by seeking, beyond himself, an aim which is one of liberation or of some particular realisation, that man can realize himself as truly human.³⁷²

On the other hand, this study did *not* include a detailed biography of the author, a thorough analysis of historical background and the relation of his ideological stance with it, a comparative analysis with other Turkish authors or poets such as Nazım Hikmet, Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, Kemal Tahir or of the more recent names, which would enable me to situate Yaşar Kemal within the Turkish literary canon. I was not able to compare his work with any author from the world.

Although this study is limited to a single trilogy of the author and it is supported additionally by the interviews made by him, leaving his other novels, interviews and political writings outside, I am of conviction that I have been able to show the basic dynamics in his narratives and their relationship with his political stance.

One of the important outcomes of this study has been to find out the heritage of the phenomenological tradition—we can trace from two figures mentioned within this study, Hannah Arendt and Jean-Paul Sartre who are connected to this tradition through Martin Heidegger—in the world view of Yaşar Kemal. He aimed to

³⁷² Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," (1946).

empower socialist politics vis-à-vis hegemonic politics that used the essentialized cultural identities more from the 1950s on.

The phenomenological turn in philosophy and development of modernism in literature and arts, with the privileged place of experience and perception in both, are relevant to the social developments of the late nineteenth early twentieth centuries, among which the emergence of mass politics can be counted as a preminent fact. Similarly, Marxist existentialism paralleled decolonization movements following the Second World War. In the case of Yaşar Kemal, beginning to write right after the Second World War, we can see the influence of these two historical moments that coincided in the Turkish case in the post-War period. The social transformations that happened following the transition to the multi-party regime and the victory of the right-populist Democrat Part in the 1950 elections can be seen as a decolonization process under the sovereignty of the same state. At that historical moment, Yaşar Kemal was one of those who succeeded in opening a political space in the post-War Turkey under conditions of regulated fascism where they could appropriate cultural identities under a political identity of humanist socialism shaped around the antagonism of people versus hegemons.

Today, in the wake of the second decolonization—with the contested cultural issues of political Islam, the democratic rights of the Kurdish population and the liquidation of the over-narrowed Turkish national identity which wait for political solutions—while the pseudo-liberal and pseudo-social democratic parties of post-1980 decades have left institutional politics to Islamic and military-indexed semi-authoritarian camps, both of which have proven their adaptability to neoliberal economic policies, the opening of political spaces, in the Arendtian sense, seems essential. The popular conscience that is intoxicated constantly through invented

crises around the issues of political Islam and Kurdish identity and seems to be limited to the artificial polarization of Islamist-laicist can be won over to a political identity on the political spaces to be opened. Politics seems to be a constantly narrowing sphere at the hands of reactionaries and the army abandoned by democratic socialism and even social democracy. The left should not forget that the right reactionarism in Turkey is supported by class dynamics rather than an essential parochialism inherent to the Muslims of the world as well as the Turks and Kurds. The capitalist superstructure and its agents seem to have developed mechanisms that also can function under these conditions. They stand immune to political instability behind a discourse of European integration that is not much more complicated than one can hear at a university Erasmus club meeting (probably less) or does not go beyond the pragmatist motto of the 1930s defining the national purpose to catch up the level of contemporary civilizations.

The post-Cold War era brought new possibilities, as Yaşar Kemal evaluated in his interview with Fethi Naci in 1991, viewing “the collapse of the Soviet Union” as “a victory of world socialism” rather than “the collapse of socialism.”³⁷³ Yet democratic transformations seem to be remote as far as the labour classes remain hegemonized by the culturalist politics of Islamist or nationalist (or a synthesis of both) discourses. The formation of universalizable political identities is a struggle by which the challenges of culturalist politics must be overcome. A clue from the work of Yaşar Kemal predating half a century ago is to remain blind neither to cultural nor to class facts. The appropriation of the ethical on the ethically opened political spaces (not a coup d'état to put it frankly) is an important part of the task rather than relying on merely critical political discourses of left reactionarism. History and culture might

³⁷³ Kemal and Naci, "Yaşar Kemalle Edebiyat ve Politika," 285.

be good resources for the realization of that ethic when the political space is narrowed down constantly by the agents of hegemonic politics. The communal values of socialism can be developed in the face of the ever dominating corporate value(s) of capitalism. Cultures, as the heritage of past societies and historical traditions of value creation, can be inspiring only as far as they are *not* essentialized and employed within reactionary politics in a way reproducing social and ethical alienation.

To conclude this study with the following quotations, first a sentence from Sartre and then a poem from the thirteenth century Turkish sufi Yunus Emre seems fitting: “There is this in common between art and morality, that in both we have to do with creation and invention.”³⁷⁴

A feast should be celebrated
A generation should be generated
A word should be uttered
That even the angels do not know.³⁷⁵

³⁷⁴ Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism."

³⁷⁵ “*Bir toy toylamak gerek
Bir soy soylamak gerek
Bir sözü söylemek gerek
Melekler de bilmaz ola.*” (Translation belongs to me.)

APPENDIX

The Works of Yaşar Kemal³⁷⁶

<i>Ağıtlar-I</i> (As Kemal Sadık Gökçeli)	1943
<i>Sarı Sıcak</i> (Short stories).....	1952
<i>İnce Memed-I</i>	1955
<i>Teneke</i> (Long story)	1955
<i>Yanan Ormanlarda 50 Gün</i> (Reportages)	1955
<i>Çukurova Yana Yana</i> (Reportages).....	1955
<i>Peri Bacaları</i> (Reportages)	1957
<i>Ortadirek</i> (<i>Dağın Öte Yüzü-I</i>)	1960
<i>Taş Çatlarsa</i> (Articles)	1961
<i>Yer Demir Gök Bakır</i> (<i>Dağın Öte Yüzü-II</i>)	1963
<i>Üç Anadolu Efsanesi</i>	1967
<i>Ölmez Otu</i> (<i>Dağın Öte Yüzü-III</i>)	1968
<i>İnce Memed-II</i>	1969
<i>Ağrıdağı Efsanesi</i>	1970
<i>Bu Diyar Baştan Başa</i> (Reportages)	1971
<i>Binboğalar Efsanesi</i>	1971
<i>Çakırcalı Efe</i>	1972
<i>Demirciler Çarşısı Cinayeti</i> (<i>Akçasazın Ağaları-I</i>)	1973
<i>Bir Bulut Kaynıyor</i> (Reportages)	1974
<i>Baldaki Tuz</i> (Articles edited by Alpay Kabacalı)	1974

³⁷⁶ Andaç, *Yaşar Kemal'in Sözlerinde Yaşamak*; Alpay Kabacalı, ed., *Yaşar Kemal* (İstanbul: TÜYAP, 1992).

<i>Yusuřcuk Yusuf (Akçasazın Ağaları-II)</i>	1975
<i>Al Gözüm Seyreyle Salih</i>	1976
<i>Yılanı Öldürseler</i>	1976
<i>Filler Sultanı ile Kırmızı Sakallı Topal Karınca</i>	1977
<i>Kuşlar da Gitti</i>	1978
<i>Allah'ın Askerleri (Reportages)</i>	1978
<i>Gökyüzü Mavi Kaldı</i>	1978
(Selections from folk literature, with Sabahattin Eyübođlu)	
<i>Deniz Küstü</i>	1978
<i>Ağacın Çürüğü (Articles and Interviews)</i>	1980
<i>Yağmurcuk Kuşu (Kimsecik-I)</i>	1980
<i>Hüyükteki Nar Ağacı</i>	1982
<i>İnce Memed-III</i>	1984
<i>Kale Kapısı (Kimsecik-II)</i>	1985
<i>İnce Memed-IV</i>	1987
<i>Kanın Sesi (Kimsecik-III)</i>	1991
<i>Alain Bosque tile Konuşmalar (Interviews)</i>	1992
<i>Ağıtlar (Selections and Analysis of Elegies)</i>	1993
<i>Sarı Defterdekiler (Folklore, edited by Alpay Kabacalı)</i>	1997
<i>Fırat Suyu Kan Akıyor Baksana (Bir Ada Hikayesi-I)</i>	1998
<i>Karıncaın Su İçtiğı (Bir Ada Hikayesi-II)</i>	2002
<i>Tanyeri Horozları (Bir Ada Hikayesi-III)</i>	2004

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