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Franziska STÜRMER

Magical Realism and Trauma in Yaşar Kemal's *The Pomegranate on the Knoll*

Abstract

In Yaşar Kemal's *The Pomegranate on the Knoll*, the environment of the Çukurova peasants is depicted meticulously in their daily struggle for survival; however, Kemal transcends purely realist representations whenever the characters try either to make sense of or to gain control over their hostile environment. By using magical realist strategies in his text as well, he gives a voice to the suffering of the Çukurova peasants and engages in a form of political writing different from social realism or village literature. He helps to raise public awareness for the traumatic consequences of the changing social reality in rural Turkey not only by describing it, but also by using magical realist writing strategies which let readers feel it for themselves.

Abstrakt

Yaşar Kemals Erzählung *Der Granatapfelbaum* schildert detailliert den Überlebenskampf der Bauern der Çukurova in Zeiten der Mechanisierung. Sobald die Figuren allerdings versuchen, Bewältigungsstrategien für das erlebte Elend zu entwerfen, wird die realistische Darstellung überschritten. Durch Verfahren traumatisch-magischer Imagination entzieht sich der Text rationalen Bewältigungsmustern und macht so die emotionale Belastung der Figuren für den Leser erfahrbar. Kemal gelingt es, das Elend der Bauern nicht nur zu beschreiben, wie im sozialen Realismus bzw. der türkischen Dorfliteratur, sondern durch magisch-realistische Verfahren auch deren unterdrückte eigene Stimme hörbar zu machen.

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Interférences littéraires / Literaire interferenties
KU Leuven – Faculteit Letteren
Blijde-Inkomststraat 21 – Bus 3331
B 3000 Leuven (Belgium)
Contact : matthieu.sergier@uclouvain.be & laurence.vannuijs@arts.kuleuven.be

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Social realism, magical realism, and folklore

Yaşar Kemal is well-known both for the sociopolitical commitment of his narratives – therefore, he is frequently regarded as a representative of social realism – and for his revival of Turkish and Kurdish folklore and myths which enrich both the language and the plots of his stories.[1] Far from being just, as Helga Dağyeli-Bohne puts it, "a teller of oriental fairy tales"[2] – an image Kemal himself cultivates, although well aware of the power of the written language[3] – he artfully addresses the social and political hardships of the Çukurova peasants while still including unreal elements in his otherwise realist texts – 'unreal' comprising all elements which would be rejected as a disturbance of a realist narrative convention, in comparison with other texts of a related structure, e.g. social realism and village literature. Because of this embedding of unreal elements, together with a "propensity to make use of myth, legend and folklore" and certain "affinities with oral traditions" characteristic for magical realism,[4] Kemal has repeatedly been considered one of the first Turkish writers to make use of magical realist strategies in his texts as well, although he never openly acknowledged this categorization.[5] In his short novel *Hüyükteki Nar Ağacı* (*The Pomegranate on the Knoll*[6]), Kemal describes in detail the experiences of five peasants during their search for

1. Helga Dağyeli-Bohne, *Yaşar Kemal. Sänger der Çukurova,* Berlin, Dağyeli-Verlag, 2004*,* 13-31; see Duygu Köksal, "Turkish Voices in European and Global Literature: From Yaşar Kemal to Orhan Pamuk and Latife Tekin", in: Hakan Yilmaz (ed.), *Placing Turkey on the Map of Europe*, Istanbul, Boğazıçı University Press, 2005, 70-110, esp.75-85; Mark Kirchner (ed.), *Geschichte der türkischen Literatur in Dokumenten. Hintergründe und Materialien zur* Türkischen Bibliothek*,* Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008, 97-111.

2. Helga Dağyeli-Bohne, *Yaşar Kemal*, 14.

3. Yaşar Kemal, "Literature and Language", in: Yaşar Kemal, *Yaşar Kemal on His Life and Art,* translated by Eugene Lyons Hébert and Barry Tharaud, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1999, 56-61; Yaşar Kemal, "Interview", in: *Edebiyat,* 1980, 5, 17-21.

4. Anne Hegerfeldt, *Lies That Tell the Truth. Magic Realism Seen through Contemporary Fiction from Britain*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2005, 64; Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris (eds.), *Magical Realism. Theory, History, Community*, Durham/London, Duke University Press, 1995, 3f.; Wendy B. Faris, "Scheherazade's Children: Magical Realism and Postmodern Fiction", in: Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, *Magical Realism*, 163-190, here 165f., 182f..

5. The idea of associating magical realism with Turkish literature is relatively new; see Börte Sagaster, "Tendenzen in der zeitgenössischen türkischen Prosaliteratur", in: *Zeitschrift für Türkeistudien (ZfTS)*, 2002, 15, 1/2, 7-27. Yaşar Kemal is frequently claimed as a representative: Zülfü Yivaneli, "Yaşar Kemal üstüne bir konuşma (2)", in: *Vatan,* 26.02.2012, [online] http://haber.gazetevatan.com/yasar-kemal-ustune-bir-konusma-2/433212/4/yazarlar. However, Kemal rejects this categorization, referring to the Latin American context of magical realism: Yaşar Kemal, Interview with Doğan Hızlan, in: *Hürriyet*, 21.09.2002, [online] http://webarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/2002/09/21/183714.asp.

6. Apart from the title, translations into English are my own if not otherwise indicated, and based on the German and Turkish editions: Yaşar Kemal, *Der Granatapfelbaum,* translated by Cornelius Bischoff, Zürich, Unionsverlag, 2011 (quoted as *GB);* Yaşar Kemal, *Hüyükteki Nar Ağacı*, Istanbul, Yapı Yedi Yayınları, 4. Baskı, 2006 (quoted as *HNA*). The Turkish original will be quoted in the footnotes.

work in the Çukurova plains, their suffering from fever, mosquitoes, heat and cold, thirst, hunger and despair. On their way, they repeatedly encounter acts of cruelty and inhumanity, brought about by mechanization and the ensuing social changes. Their difficulties in dealing with this hostile environment increase dramatically during their journey, finally leading to a dissociation between their individual perception of reality and their surroundings. This is characteristic for traumatic situations like theirs, considering that "a sustained state of anxiety and/or fear may also produce symptoms of trauma".[7] Trauma, as Gottfried Fischer points out, is characterized by the experience of a discrepancy between a threatening situation and individual coping strategies, which often results in a feeling of dissociation between the individual and his/her environment.[8] In the novel, this environment is depicted meticulously in the peasants' daily struggle for survival; however, Kemal transcends purely realist representations whenever the characters try either to make sense of or to gain control over their hostile environment. He introduces unreal elements instead, in order to convey how the peasants react to this traumatic reality by establishing an alternative guiding script for their behaviour.[9] Thus, by giving a voice to the suffering of the Çukurova peasants, he engages in a form of political writing different from social realism. He helps to raise public awareness for the traumatic consequences of the changing social reality in rural Turkey not only by describing it, but also by using magical realist writing strategies which let readers feel it for themselves. To further explore these strategies, I will first sketch a short working definition of the concept of magical realism, and then relate it to trauma; finally, I will analyze the quest of Kemal's protagonists chronologically by applying both theoretical concepts.

First, magical realism makes use of strategies of realism to transcend or to subvert them.[10] As Uwe Durst points out, realism is a "strategy of a literary work to deny its own artificiality".[11] Realism thus suggests the fictional world to be a precise "reflection of the extratextual world", belying the constructed nature (and fictionality) of this fictional world.[12] A text is realist insofar as it strives to hide its own artificiality, and applies various techniques to that effect (accurate descriptions, sensory details etc.).[13] Likewise, it is possible to consider magical realism to be primarily a textual strategy, not about the author as "an implicit structural element of the text", as is frequently supposed whenever it is discussed as a phenomenon characteristic of a Latin-American context, or, more recently, of post-colonialism or post-totalitarianism in general.[14]

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7. Eugene L. Arva, *The Traumatic Imagination. Histories of Violence in Magical Realist Fiction*, Amherst, Cambria Press, 2011, 30-31.

8. Gottfried Fischer / Peter Riedesser, *Lehrbuch der Psychotraumatologie*, München, Reinhardt, 1998, quoted in Gottfried Fischer, "Psychoanalyse und Psychotraumatologie", in: Wolfram Mauser / Carl Pietzcker (Eds.), *Trauma. Freiburger Literaturpsychologische Gespräche Bd. 19*, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 2000, 11-26, here 11-12.

9. A concise summary and discussion of the novel is given in Ramazan Çiftlikçi, *Yaşar Kemal. Yazar-Eser-Üslup,* Ankara, Kültür Bakanlığı, 1997, 228-232.

10. Anne Hegerfeldt, *Lies That Tell the Truth*, 52.

11. Uwe Durst, *Das begrenzte Wunderbare,* Berlin, Lit-Verlag, 2008, 31.

12. Anne Hegerfeldt, *Lies That Tell the Truth*, 50. For a discussion of what should be regarded as 'real' or extratextual world including sociological and anthropological research results, see Christopher Warnes, *Magical Realism and the Postcolonial Novel*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 6-12.

13. See Lilian R. Furst, *All Is True. The Claims and Strategies of Realist Fiction*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 1995.

14. Uwe Durst, *Das begrenzte Wunderbare*, 230-231; Wendy B. Faris, "Scheherazade's Children"; Arva seems to assume this, too, as he repeatedly argues that the authors of the texts he analyses had

Second, the 'magic' of magical realism is allegedly "best understood [...] as 'the fictional device of the supernatural, taken from any source that the writer chooses'", that is, the occurrence of unreal elements within an otherwise realistic system.[15] However, this definition seems to overlook the fact that unreal events occur in all kinds of texts, such as fairy tales, fantasy or science-fiction. "Magical thought", on the other hand, can "broadly be defined as the belief in, or the construction of, causal connections between particular events or items that are due to mystical forces beyond the human sphere".[16] As magical realism is generally considered to reveal a certain substructure underlying reality – hence its affinity to post-colonial texts and other forms of 'writing back' – it is *not* magical simply because it uses unreal elements, but rather because it uses them to reveal the magical *thought* inherent in all texts – and indeed, all representations of reality. As mentioned above, realist texts share "the attempt to convey the impression that such reality is merely reflected in, rather than constructed by, the text".[17] What is often overlooked, however, is that basically all texts share a "pan-determinism" as expressed in magical thought, as they frequently establish a "therefore"- for a mere "then"-relation.[18] This "law of participation" (Levy-Bruhl), the feeling that everything is related to everything else, is made transparent and explicit by magical realism in a way uncharacteristic of 'non-magical' texts, simply by adding unreal elements to the pan-deterministic structure of the text without establishing a hierarchy or conflict between the two, and therefore creating a notable disturbance on part of the readers who find themselves confronted casually with elements that would be rejected in realist texts.[19] This strategy reveals the artificiality and fragility not only of literary texts, which readers generally assume more or less to represent extratextual reality; as magical realism draws on this assumption (hence the 'realism' element), it equally reveals the artificiality of *all* concepts of reality and the guiding scripts of behaviour on which humans rely when dealing with reality. This revelation works in two ways, one affirmative and one deconstructive, as will be exemplified in Kemal's novel.

Third, magical realism is a literary strategy especially suited for expressing traumatic experiences. As indicated above, trauma can be defined as the experience of a discrepancy between a (vitally) threatening situation and individual coping strategies, which are experienced as failure and helplessness, and thus result in a shattered understanding of world and self.[20] According to Kirby Farrell, trauma is accompanied by "traumatic dissociation", which incites "uncanny alterations

been first- or second-hand trauma victims; Eugene L. Arva, *The Traumatic Imagination*. Thus considering the author seems possible but not necessary. For a historical discussion see Anne Hegerfeldt, *Lies that tell the truth*, 11-35; Kenneth S. Reeds, *What Is Magical Realism?*, Lewiston, The Edwin Mellen Press, 2013; Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, *Magical Realism*.

15. See Brenda Cooper, *Magical Realism in West African Fiction: Seeing with a Third Eye*, London, Routledge, 1998, 16, as quoted in Jenni Adams, *Magic Realism in Holocaust Literature*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 7-8. She agrees with this definition.

16. Anne Hegerfeldt, *Lies That Tell the Truth*, 31.

17. Jenni Adams, *Magic Realism in Holocaust Literature*, 10.

18. Uwe Durst, *Das begrenzte Wunderbare*, 230.

19. "Gesetz der Teilhabe"; Lucien Levy-Bruhl, "Das Gesetz der Teilhabe [1910]", in: Leander Petzoldt (Ed.), *Magie und Religion: Beiträge zu einer Theorie der Magie*, Darmstadt, wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978, 1-26.

20. Gottfried Fischer and Peter Riedesser, *Lehrbuch der Psychotraumatologie*, quoted in Gottfried Fischer, "Psychoanalyse und Psychotraumatologie", 11-12. See also the following explanations in Gottfried Fischer, "Psychoanalyse und Psychotraumatologie", 12-15.

of consciousness" and "represent[s] a loss of control".[21] Similar to this "loss of control" within one's own mind, trauma "destabilizes the ground of conventional reality".[22] All these effects can be conveyed by magical realist writing, which either evokes similar emotions in the reader (which LaCapra termed "empathic unsettlement"), or serves to represent the feelings of the traumatized.[23] In "trauma fiction" (Whitehead) and testimonial texts, the "crisis of truth" (Caruth/ Bataille) inherent in traumatic experiences entails an acknowledgement of the basic unreliability, but nevertheless moral credibility, of human perception, although the events related may not be historically 'true', or 'real' in an everyday sense. Memory and the story 'told' by it thus acquires more of an emotional than a factual truth.[24]

Kemal's novel makes use of magical realist strategies in order to convey the traumatic experiences of the Çukurova peasants. On the verge of starvation, five desperate friends embark on a journey into the burning fields of the vast Çukurova plain, where they confront stifling heat by day and bloodthirsty mosquitoes by night, without water, except for the sickly, yellowish puddles carrying the fever – but there still is plenty of work for the industrious, and plenty of food for those eager to use their hands, or so they say. What Hösük, Âşık Ali (Ali the Bard), Memet, Memet Çocuk (Memet the Kid) and Yusuf, the one who knows about the Çukurova and its perils, really encounter is not only a cruel nature but also an equally merciless change in society: the Çukurova no longer is what it used to be.

1. Meeting Abla – and the tractors

The protagonists' first stop is the farm on which Memet worked two years before as the favourite of Abla ('big sister', the leading hand of the farm and representative of the Ağa, the feudal landlord). There, however, Memet is brutally disappointed when Abla does not seem to recognize him and even chases him and his friends away. In the wake of this experience, Memet and his friends wander through the Çukurova and slowly learn about its changes: this year, instead of workers, tractors swarm the plains. Now Abla is "in love", "in black love" with the tractors. She has already lost all traces of humanity because of this black love or "karasevda", which means doomed, ill-fated or melancholy love, a serious mental illness: "'She is in love', blondie said, 'since those motorized machines arrived, she is addicted to them. She is in love with them..."' (*HNA* 17-18; *GB* 18).[25] The tractors, however, are not only fascinating but also frightening: "'Don't [touch] it, Hösük, and don't get so close, you never know!' And Hösük drew back. [...] 'Look!', Memet the Kid sud-

21. Kirby Farrell, *Post-traumatic Culture: Injury and Interpretation in the Nineties,* Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998, 11. He quotes Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, New York, Basic Books, 1992, 1.

22. Kirby Farrell, *Post-traumatic Culture*, 12.

23. Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, 41. Quoted in Eugene L. Arva, *Traumatic Imagination*, 35.

24. Anne Whitehead, *Trauma Fiction*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2004, 33-38, 40; Cathy Caruth and Georges Bataille (eds.), *Trauma. Explorations in Memory,* Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, 6; Also see Lawrence Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1991; Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (eds.), *Testimony: Crises of witnessing in literature, psychoanalysis and history,* New York, Routledge, 1992.

25. "Sari: 'Sevdalanmış', dedi. 'şu motorlar geldi geleli. Motora çalınmış. Sevde bağlamış motorlara..."'; For the historical background of the novel, see Ramazan Çiftlikçi, *Yaşar Kemal*, 231–232.

denly exclaimed. 'He has huge eyes! See how they sparkle!'" (*HNA* 25; *GB* 27).[26] By an animist description of the machinery introduced in the Çukurova plains, Kemal demonstrates what Hegerfeldt terms "the recuperation of the figurative".[27] Taking metaphors literally is maybe the most prominent example. By combining semantically incompatible notions, it is possible to question established concepts and limitations or to reveal the constitutive power of language.[28] As Carole Rathbun shows, tractors have frequently been compared to animals before; they are "decorated and treated like a prize camel" or even sexualized metaphorically: "the tractors, with their rouged lips, were ready for the taking. [....] The red Farmall, tickled by his caress, seemed to look through its mascara-ed lashes and wink at Abit ağa."[29] In his documentary *Çukurova yana yana* ("While Çukurova burns"), Yaşar Kemal also addresses the ambivalent fascination of the tractors. In most of his novels, he takes metaphors literally: "it" becomes "he", so Abla can truly be "in love" with the tractors.[30] The distancing "seemed to" is falling away and the tractor is not only treated "*as if* it were a living creature" but as literally being one in the characters' eyes: in *The Pomegranate*, the tractors appear as frightfully alive entities.[31]

With regard to the way magical realist elements are used in a text, Christopher Warnes distinguishes one that he calls "faith based" and the other "irreverent": the faith-based or metonymic usage aims at establishing an alternative concept of reality, thereby *constructing* it; the other, irreverent or metaphoric, *deconstructs* reality by showing, for instance, the failure of rational thinking or how language builds reality.[32] This approach appears productive in its applicability to both Kemal's novel and theories of trauma narration. An instance of the second mode, the "defamiliarisation of discourse",[33] is Abla's falling in love with the tractors, because in this process figurative language is coming alive, thereby pointing out and questioning the power of language and its influence on all domains of human life.[34] By this strategy, the 'crisis of truth' characteristic of traumatic experiences and the destabilization of reality related to trauma are made apparent. The encounter with Abla and the coming alive of the tractors in the following become leitmotifs for the friends' traumatic situation. Even Memet's beloved yellow ox, which even "cried" when Memet left, has been sacrificed and slaughtered in front of the tractors (*HNA* 20, 58; *GB* 21, 71). The frightful, animist reality that the tractors acquire conveys how

26. "'Etme Hösük', dedi. "Yaklaşma. Nolur nolmaz!' Hösük geri çekildi. [...] Memet çocuk: 'Bakın, bakın', dedi. Kocaman kocaman gözleri de var. Bakın nazıl yıldır yıldır ediyor!'"

27. Anne Hegerfeldt, *Lies That Tell the Truth*, 57.

28. Wendy B. Faris, "Scheherazade's Children", 176.

29. Carole Rathbun, *The Village in the Turkish novel and short story 1920 to 1955*, The Hague, Mouton, 1972, 58, 124. She cites this passage from Orhan Kemal, "Naylon Hikâye", in Orhan Kemal, *Sarhoşlar*, Istanbul, Varlık, 1951, 60: "Traktörler rujlu dudaklaryile, konsomasyona hazırdırlar. [....] Bu temastan gıdıklanan kırmızı Farmall, rimelli kirpikleriyle sanki Abit ağaya baktı, göz kırptı."

30. Yaşar Kemal, *Çukurova yana yana*, Istanbul, Yeditepe, 1955. See Carole Rathbun, *The Village in the Turkish Novel,* 122, 124. Nedim Gürsel also discusses this "fétichisme" the characters in Kemal's texts often display in detail. Nedim Gürsel*, Yachar Kemal. Le roman d'une transition*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2001, Chapter 2 (quote from page 64).

31. Carole Rathbun, *The Village in the Turkish novel*, 58. My emphasis.

32. Christopher Warnes*, Magical Realism*, 13-17. He refers to Echevarría's distinction between ontological and epistemological usage and distinguishes his usage from the way the terms are understood in Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, New York, Methuen, 1987.

33. Christopher Warnes*, Magical Realism*, 16.

34. Something which has fascinated Yaşar Kemal throughout his life; see Yaşar Kemal, *Yaşar Kemal on His Life and Art*, 56-61.

the peasants' society has been turned upside down: all human kindness seems to have vanished, and what Memet considers the dearest and most faithful animals are slaughtered in favour of machinery; both the oxen and the hearts of men seem dead while the tractors are alive.

2. Struggling on

Disenchanted by this experience, the friends struggle on through their hostile environment. After desperately having drunk the "disgustingly yellowish water" in the fields – "while Yusuf was wailing and pleading, screaming 'poison!', screaming 'death!', screaming 'We've got family and children!" (*HNA* 28; *GB* 29-30)[35] – they settle in for the night, only to immediately fall victim to swarms of mosquitoes. Relief is brought by Ali the Bard, whose "firm voice full of yearning rose and subsided, raged and wept, waving through the nightly dark, filling the whole plain" (*HNA* 31, *GB* 34).[36] In the morning, "a peaceful, happy glow shone on his face" (*HNA* 31; *GB* 35)[37] and the friends find enough strength to continue their journey. After this, the narrative accelerates and the friends range across the plain for an indeterminate period of time. Descriptions of their immediate surroundings are intertwined with references to the machinery dominating the Çukurova:

> In the plain there were many unemployed, hungry and ragged like they were and equally helpless and distressed. On country-lanes knee-deep covered with grit, they encountered blue, yellow, red and violet tractors, harvesters and giant off-road trucks, whirling up loads of dust. [....] Beside the roads they saw the corpses of broken-down men. One night they came across another dust-covered dead man. His face was amber. His legs were stiffly stretched out, his feet stood upright. When the tractors came, they said, people changed [...]. (*HNA* 37; *GB* 42)[38]

Kemal's images of nature do not just serve as internal landscapes, but also reflect the social situations of the characters.[39] According to Nedim Gürsel, nature in Kemal's works is always entangled with mankind and its social and economic surroundings: "[e]lle a un véritable statut de personnage et non un statut de paysage ou d'objet de description"; it acquires the status of an agent itself, not only of a mere description.[40] Thus, nature plays a vital role in Kemal's approach to the transformations taking place in the Çukurova.

In nearly all his texts, Kemal addresses the everlasting conflict of helplessness in the face of the powerful, "Ohnmacht der Herrschaft gegenüber", as Günter Grass put it in his laudation dedicated to his fellow-writer.[41] Therefore, Kemal's ear-

35. "Yusuf boyuna yalvardı. 'Zehir', dedi, 'ölüm', dedi. 'Çoluk çocuğumuz var', dedi."

36. "Gür yanık sesi gecenin karanlığında dalga dalga tekmil ovayı dolduruyordu. İniyor, çıkıyor, kızıyor, ağlıyordu."

37. "Ondan sonra da ağzını açıp bir söze varmadı. Yalnız, yüzü rahat, mutlu bir ışıltı içindeydi."

38. "Ovada çok işsiz ırgat dolaşıyordu, kendileri gibi aç yoksul. Hepsi onlar gibi şaşkınlık içindeydiler. Tozları dizkapağına kadar çıkan yollardan tozutarak mavi, sarı, kırmızı, mor traktörler, biçerdöverler, kocaman kamyonlar geçiriyordu, üstlerini yarım parmak kalınlığında toz bağlamış. [....] Yollarda kalmış ölüler gördüler. Bir akşamüstü karşılaştıkları ölünün üstünü yolun tozları örtmüştü. Tozların altındaki yüzü kehribar gibiydi. Bacaklarını germiş, ayaklarını dikmişti."

39. Helga Dağyeli-Bohne, *Yaşar Kemal,* 58-61.

40. Nedim Gürsel*, Yachar Kemal. Le roman d'une transition*, 59.

41. Günter Grass*, Laudatio für Yaşar Kemal anlässlich der Verleihung des Friedenspreises des deutschen Buchhandels*, printed in: Günter Grass, *Steine wälzen, Essays und Reden 1997-2007*, Göttingen, Steidl

ly texts are particularly associated with village literature, which, "[d]ealing with the merciless reality of poverty, […] portrays the peasant threatened by natural disaster and man's inhumanity"[42] and, similar to postcolonial literature, is a way of 'writing back' against rash modern attempts to reform the country. A politically committed writer and "advocate of human rights", Kemal frequently addresses social conflicts and problems arising from the ongoing industrialisation of the Turkish countryside.[43] Unlike in village novels, however, in Kemal's texts the reason for the peasants' misery is not mainly nature itself (heat, drought, floods etc.) but especially society and social injustice. Karin Schweißgut points out that in some texts, because of this sociocritical aspect, natural calamities no longer appear natural but man-made, spurred by capitalist exploitation.[44] In *The Pomegranate*, this causal relation is not that straight, resisting a simple victim-perpetrator dichotomy. The hardship endured by the peasants is not an immediate result of capitalistic exploitation of nature; rather, the text subtly parallels the dying of the landscape with the dying of humanity in the Çukurova, and shows the devastating effects in minute detail.

Kemal, however, is not famous only for his social criticism, but also for a revival of folklore and myth.[45] In some of his texts, social realism and myth are presented as alternate, hierarchical modes of perception, unreal elements being identified as dreams, visions etc. In others, they are presented as indistinguishable from each other (regarding their reality status), or become so in the course of the story. During their wandering across the plain, the desperate friends in *The Pomegranate* are repeatedly saved and held upright only by Ali the Bard: "often they had to go hungry for days. Without Ali the Bard things would have been bad for them" (*HNA* 38; *GB* 43). Obviously, Kemal is well aware of the forces of myth, belief and imagination: "Men have always forged myths as a refuge in times of stress and will go on doing so."[46] Myth and folklore "constitute a strategy for living" – they are "notable not only for their ways of overcoming a weakness or frustration, [...] but also for serving as a continuing critique of and a challenge to entrenched authority [...] They are [...] a form of resistance against tyranny, inequality, or any iniquity".[47] Thus, by indistinguishably including myth and folklore in his novels, Kemal "establishes a political subtext" and

Verlag, 2007, 11-22, here 14.

42. Tâlat S. Halman, *An overview of Turkish Literature,* Ankara, Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey, General Directorate of Libraries and Publications, 2005, 19. Again, Kemal does not acknowledge this categorization; see Karin Schweissgut, "Mensch und Natur in Anatolien", in: Brigitte Heuer, Barbara Kellner-Heinkele ansd Claus Schönig (eds.), *"Die Wunder der Schöpfung". Mensch und Natur in der türksprachigen Welt*, Würzburg, Ergon Verlag, 2012, 39-51. She contrasts him with Mahmut Makal, the first and most prominent author of village literature. Also see Robert Anciaux, "Le 'Réalisme Social' dans la littérature turque contemporaine", *Correspondance d'Orient, Etudes* 19-20, 1971-1972, 111-115, and Carole Rathbun, *The Village in the Turkish novel.*

43. Günter Grass, *Laudatio*, 13; see Yaşar Kemal, *Dank*, printed in: Manfred Bissinger and Daniela Hermes (eds.), *Zeit, sich einzumischen. Die Kontroverse um Günter Grass und die Laudatio auf Yaşar Kemal in der Paulskirche*, translated by Cornelius Bischoff, Göttingen, Steidl Verlag, 1998, 27-32, here 29.

44. Karin Schweissgut, "Mensch und Natur in Anatolien", 45f.

45. See, most recently, Laurent Mignon, "Yaşar Kemal", in: Burcu Alkan and Çimen Günay-Erkol (eds.), *Turkish Novelists Since 1960. Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 373*, Detroit, Gale Cengage Learning, 2014, 156-171. See also TBEA (= *Tanzimat'tan Bugüne Edebiyatı Ansiklopedisi*), Istanbul, Yapı Kredi Kültür ve Sanat Yayıncılık, 2001, Vol. 2, 893-899.

46. Interview with Yaşar Kemal in: *Edebiyat*, 1980, 5, 19; see Tâlat Sait Halman, *A millenium of Turkish Literature*, Ankara, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2008, 83-91; Pertev Naili Boratav, "Designs on Yaşar Kemal's *Yörük* Kilims", in: *Edebiyat*, 1980, 5, 23-36; Ilhan Başgöz, " Yaşar Kemal and Turkish Folk Literature", in: *Edebiyat*, 1980, 5, 37-47; Nedim Gürsel, *Yachar Kemal*, 99-151.

47. Tâlat Sait Halman, *A millenium of Turkish Literature*, 90.

explores the capacity of imagination.[48] He focusses not only on the (tragic) social aspects of rising Turkish capitalism, but also on ideological and folkloric wealth in his epics; he "replaces the secular masterplot of modernisation with regional myths, legends, and traditional cultural forms as guiding social scripts".[49] In the power attributed here to Ali the Bard, Kemal prepares the reader for the coming developments which will soon reach their climax, as will the peasants' misery.

3. The blue butterfly

The situation gets worse until finally Yusuf is close to dying (saved by Ali the Bard and his prayers; *HNA* 41; *GB* 48), and while the rest of the group wants to give up and return home, Memet urges them on and puts his faith in every next village (*HNA* 39, 42-45; *GB* 45, 48-50). The inhumanity prevalent in the Çukurova finally seems to have seized the friends, as they keep arguing all along the way, exacerbating their pain and desperation. The very moment their anguish seems to reach its climax, Memet the Kid notices a blue butterfly sitting on a bush. Miraculously still alive despite the scorching heat and the drought, the butterfly becomes a symbol of survival and hope for the friends – "even Yusuf now is as fresh as a daisy" (*HNA* 46-48, 48; *GB* 55-58, 58).[50]

While in itself not an unreal element, the butterfly marks a turning point in the way unreal elements are assigned meaning in the text. From now on, those elements no longer convey the disturbing effects of the peasants' surroundings (like the animist tractors) but serve to *construct* reality as an alternative guiding script for the characters. According to Hannes Fricke, in trying to deal with reality, people rely on certain scripts which function as means of interpretation for their perceptions.[51] When confronted with perceptions disturbing the basic harmony between organism and environment, the human psyche seeks to assimilate this environment according to the set of scripts available. In the case of traumatic experiences, however, any attempt at assimilation fails because of the extremity and singularity of the experienced sensation – the aforementioned 'crisis of truth' and destabilization of reality occurs. In this case, the individual no longer assimilates his or her environment, but strives to rework the *script* until he or she can manage to deal with the new perceptions. The Çukurova peasants find themselves in such a situation: they are finally overwhelmed by their continued exposure to hostile nature and inhumanity and no longer have any means to remodel their environment in any way that could satisfy their needs. Thus, their interpretation of the world changes into a script that they can apply to the traumatic experience, and which allows them to survive.

The next village reflects this transitory process as it appears to be enchanted itself: in the evening, "tractors, trucks, harvesters and carriages moved through the

48. Erdağ Göknar, *Orhan Pamuk, Secularism and Blasphemy. The Politics of the Turkish Novel*, London, Routledge, 2013, 84; See Taner Timur, *Osmanlı-Türk Romanında. Tarih, Toplum ve Kimlik,* Istanbul, AFA Yayıncılık, 1991.

49. Erdağ Göknar, *Orhan Pamuk*, 37; Taner Timur, *Osmanlı-Türk Romanında Tarih, Toplum ve Kimlik*, 172.

50. "Yusufun bağırmasıyla kelebek bir karış kadar havalanmış, yerine gene hiçbir şey olmamış gibi konmuştu."

51. Hannes Fricke, *Das hört nicht auf. Trauma, Literatur und Empathie*, Göttingen, Wallstein Verlag, 2004, 17.

village. Apart from that, there were neither people nor animals to be seen in the lanes. As if the whole village was still asleep" (*HNA* 50; *GB* 60).[52] Only four old men begin to murmur about a mysterious "There," where they once found a cure for the disease from which Yusuf is dying: "the man was talking without a pause, but it was impossible to find out where this There was, although the old man kept repeating this man [Yusuf, FS] would die if he could not make it there" (*HNA* 51; *GB* 61).[53] Finally, as more villagers gather around, a little girl blurts out "the pomegranate on the knoll!" – and is immediately scolded for overtly talking about the wonder-working tree (*HNA* 52; *GB* 62).[54] Starting roughly halfway through the plot, the reactualized myth of the pomegranate on the knoll dominates the actions of the peasants, and finding this tree becomes their only ambition.[55] Henceforth, the text displays what Warnes calls faith-based magical realism. Unreal elements no longer serve to destabilize reality but offer an alternative guiding script to follow. Significantly, the two modes of magical realism reflect Kemal's attitude towards nature: the disruptive, disturbing events being related to man-made instances, whereas it is a natural phenomenon leading the way in the peasants' struggle for physical and mental survival.

4. The pomegranate on the knoll

The changing of the script is mediated by Ali the Bard, illustrating the reality-building power of myth and folklore. The friends settle in for another night, and Ali starts to sing for them:

> He took up his lute and began to play. [...] Every mosquito turned into a fierce wolf, he sang... God, who made Yusuf, He will not heed us, he sang... our bones will bleach in the Çukurova, he sang, not one will be there to sing and lament our deaths... like the carcasses of dogs they will throw us into a pit, he sang... our roses have faded, who knows where our bones will bleach... over there on a knoll, a pomegranate, swaying since the olden days, bestowing strength upon the tortured, work upon the hungry, bright waters swelling under its rosy blossom... Until the break of dawn Ali the Bard told many an unheard story and sang many an unheard song about the pomegranate. (*HNA* 55; *GB* 67)[56]

Ali first sings about their endured hardship and their desperate situation, and then subtly introduces the pomegranate and its promises until the tree and the search for it fully replace reality. Thus, after having introduced the tree, they talk about it for a while, and Hösük, still not fully convinced, wants to leave them:

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52. "Köyün içinden traktörler, kamyonlar, biçerdöverler, at arabaları geçiyordu. Bundan başka köyde dolaşan, gezen insanlar, hayvanlar yoktu. Her şey uykudaydı sanki."

53. "Adam boyuna konuşuyordu. Orasının neresi olduğu anlaşılmıyor, o boyuna, bu adam oraya yetişmezse ölecek, diyordu."

54. The legend of the Pomegranate on a hill is taken up by the Kurdish writer Bakhtiyar Ali in *The Last Pomegranate of the World* (2002). See Hashem Ahmadzadeh, "Magic Realism in the novels of a Kurdish writer, Bakhtiyar Ali", in: *Middle Eastern Literatures: incorporating Edebiyat*, 2011, 14, 3, 287-299.

55. Ramazan Çiftlikçi, *Yaşar Kemal*, 230.

56. "Sonra sazını kucağına çekti, üstüne yumuldu, başladı çalmaya. [...] Her sineği bir alıcı kurt olmuş, yarıyor, parçalıyor, diyordu. Yusufu kuyudan çıkaran Allah, bizim yüzümüze bakmadı, bakmayacak, diyordu. Ak kemiklerimiz kalacak Çukurovada. Ölümüze bir ağıt söyleyen bile bulunmayacak, it ölüsü gibi ölümüzü bir hendeğe atacaklar, diyordu. Orada hüyükteke bir nar ağacı, kadim günlerden bu yana, orada, tepede salınıp durur, diyordu. Dertlilere derman, işsizlere iş verir, diyordu. Al çiçekli nar ağacının dibinden ışık gibi bis su kaynar, diyordu."

> 'Wait, Hösük!', Ali the Bard exclaimed, again seized his lute, bent over and pitched another song about the pomegranate... 'Everybody in the Çukurova knows this pomegranate', Yusuf said afterwards. 'Don't do it, Hösük! I have been sick for seven years now. Maybe god will restore my strength when we reach the pomegranate.' (*HNA* 55-56; *GB* 67-68)[57]

Ali's songs manage fully to establish the reality of the tree for the peasants; they even convince the doubting Hösük and stop him from leaving his friends. After the last song, the legends of the tree, which allegedly "everybody in the Çukurova knows", gain their own momentum. The characters attribute various properties to the tree: it is capable of fighting the mosquitoes, for instance, and can paralyse those who speak out against it (*HNA* 56; *GB* 68). From that point on, none of the characters questions the reality of the tree any further; just like the tractors *are* living creatures, the tree *is* more than just a tree. To learn more about the tree's whereabouts, the friends return to a villager named Cennet, who scolded the girl for talking about it the day before. They try to tell Cennet about their experiences, picking up the traumatic leitmotifs established before – and again the tree appears entangled:

> 'We couldn't find work', Memet moaned, [...] 'whatever became of the Çukurova?' 'I don't know', the woman replied. 'Since a couple of years, everything has changed.' 'Indeed, everything has changed', Memet said. 'my big sister didn't even look at me. And my yellow oxen, you know, they sacrificed it to the tractor, they let his red blood drain away in front of its huge tyres. With this yellow oxen, I ploughed the fields for three years. When we parted, he cried.' 'Oxen cry', the woman nodded. Suddenly Hösük grew impatient and blurted out: 'Where is it, sister, where?' (*HNA* 58; *GB* 71)[58]

The peasants' experiences are again related to the tractors and the inhumanity they inspire – signified by the slaughter of the crying oxen and Abla's cruelty – and the very moment the memory of those experiences becomes too painful, Hösük can no longer bear it and jumps into the alternative reality offered by the wonder-working tree. As Eugene Arva points out, memories of painful events are frequently replaced by "screen memories (or *Deckerinnerungen,* Freud's original term)", which are "a means of both covering up and working through a personal trauma of one kind of another".[59] According to Michael Rothberg, memory is "primarily an associative process that works through displacement and substitution".[60] Focussing on this strategy of displacement and substitution, it is possible to relate screen memories to the activation of alternative guiding scripts, as they both "provide access to truths [...] that produce insight about individual and collective processes of meaning-making".[61] By dominating the characters' behaviour, magical realist elements in Kemal's text thus turn it into "a narrative that writes, rather than writes

57. "'Dur Hösük', dedi Âşık Ali, sazına yapıştı gene, üstüne yumuldu, bir nar ağacı türküsü daha tutturdu. Yusuf: 'Çukurovada herkes bilir o nar ağacını. Etme Hösük, bu marazı ben karnımda yedi yıldır taşırım. Belki bir şifa verir Allah bana, nar ağacına varırsak.'"

58. "'Hiç iş bulamadık', dedi. '[...] Ne olmuş böyle Çukurovaya?' 'Bilemem›, dedi kadın. 'Bir hal oldu birkaç yıldır Çukurovaya.' 'Bir başka hal olmuş', dedi Memet. 'O Ablam var ya, o benim yüzüme bakmadı. Hani benim sarı öküz var ya, onu da traktöre kurban kesmişler, al kanını o kocaman tekerleğinin dibine akıtmışlar. Benim sarı öküz var ya, ben onunla tam üç yıl çift sürdüm. Ondan ayrılırken fıkaracık ağladıydı.' 'Öküzler ağlar›, dedi kadın. Hösük sabırsızlanıyordu, birden patladı: 'Nerede, bacı, o?', dedi."

59. Eugene L. Arva, *The Traumatic Imagination*, 10.

60. Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2009, 12.

61. Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 14.

about, historical trauma".[62] Accordingly, the characters never dispute the reality of the tree, nor does the narrator or any other hint within the text relativize it. Nothing indicates something special about an age-old tree striking the unruly with paralysis or, as they learn from Cennet, packing up its roots and walking away in sadness and anger (*HNA* 58; *GB* 71-72) – images characteristic of magical realism, which mainly depends on the focalization of the text, that is, on a character's believing in what he or she sees, as opposed to an omniscient narrator.[63] Kemal thus manages to visualize the myth-based scripts into which the friends relapse when dealing with their traumatic experiences in the face of continuous inhumanity and deprivation.

At first the hardest to convince of the magic tree, Hösük ultimately turns out to believe in it the most: "'It will come', Hösük was sure, 'even if it left full of anger and grudge, it will come anyway...'" (*HNA* 59; *GB* 72).[64] As Fischer argues, one of the most persistent illusions of the human psyche is the assumption that it is the active centre of a controllable world.[65] Consequently, the turn to an alternative guiding script enables the friends to cling on to this illusion because they can re-interpret their struggle with reality and their unavoidable helplessness (as characteristic of a traumatic experience) in terms of an active control of their environment – which is the reason that Hösük clings on to his belief in the tree so vehemently. As a new guiding script, this idea thus becomes a kind of "traumakompensatorisches Schema",[66] a scheme or script enacted to compensate for traumatic experiences. Kemal narrates not the traumatic experience itself, but that which it has been replaced with by the characters – an alternative, felt reality, showing the modified guiding script that they use to cope with their situation.

5. Searching for the pomegranate

Although convinced of the tree and its capacities, Memet attempts once again to ask for work during the journey leading to it. As long as they wander in search of the tree, everything seems fine: "the summits of the mountains brightened, soon the sun would be rising; the peak of mount Düldül already shone like a crystal" (*HNA* 60; *GB* 74).[67] Upon **re**turning to the village, however – the argument being that "'as we decided to search for the tree... maybe the holy tree will do us a favour just because of that'" – Yusuf faces another fit, tractors and trucks appear in sight, and a gusty wind arises, whirling up loads of dust until "stumbling and staggering they finally reached the poplar in the centre of the village, where a red pump was standing. Immediately, Yusuf fell and began to writhe in the dust" (*HNA* 61; *GB* 77).[68] Again, the landscape is paralleled with the characters' social and economic surroundings. In the afternoon, they encounter the anonymous "Bey" (Mr.), apparently the landlord of the village,

62. Eugene L. Arva, *The Traumatic Imagination*, 13.

63. Amaryll Beatrice Chanady, *Magical Realism and the Fantastic. Resolved versus unresolved antinomy,* New York, Garland, 1985, 35-36 and 102-106.

64. "'Gelir', dedi Hösük. 'Eğer küsüp gitmişse de, gene gelir.'"

65. Gottfried Fischer, "Psychoanalyse und Psychotraumatologie", 19.

66. Gottfried Fischer, "Psychoanalyse und Psychotraumatologie", 21.

67. "Dağların başı ışık içinde kalmış, az sonra güneş doğacaktı. Düldül dağını doruğu bir sırça parçasıymış gibi ipil ipil yanıyordu daha şimdiden, göz kamaştırıyordu."

68. "Yordamlaya savrula köyün ortasındaki kavağa varabildiler sonunda. Kavağın altında gene kırmızı boyalı bir tulumba vardı. Yusuf oraya varınca kendini tozların içine attı, inleyerek debelenmeye, yuvarlanmaya başladı."

who humiliates and insults them, and ultimately chases them away: "'Thank god we've got tractors and harvesters! We don't have to endure the bad breath of these noble Beyefendis [gentlemen, FS] anymore! [...] Long live Marshall Marshall!"' (*HNA* 64; *GB* 81).[69] The disappointing experience with Bey turns out to be the friends' last attempt at relying on humanity for help and relief; after that, their guiding script has changed from an established mode of getting into contact with people to a sole focus on the tree as the promise of salvation. Henceforth, they never again question their need to find the pomegranate. Sadly, they are unable to let go of this idea even when they finally encounter Samanoğlu Ahmet, the friendly guardian of a melon field; instead of staying with him and accepting his friendship, they plan to steal away overnight:

> 'Tomorrow morning we'll have to leave', Ali the Bard said, stopping and firmly looking at his friends. 'This guardian won't let us go... we could stay here all summer without lifting a finger, and he would go mad with joy, poor guy.' 'He took us into his heart', Memet said. 'How can we escape this good man?' Ali laughed. 'What do we tell him?' 'Let's just go', Hösük replied. 'Tell him we're busy, we need to reach the pomegranate.' 'The pomegranate', Memet nodded. (*HNA* 77-78; *GB* 100)[70]

Despite the obvious benefits of their stay with Ahmet, the friends remain fixated on their idea of finding the pomegranate and even talk about attempting an "escape" from the melon field. Their repetitive mentioning of "the pomegranate" further shows their obsession, which becomes even more obvious in talking with Ahmet and his friend Hasan, a skilled herbalist:

> 'There is no such holy tree in the Çukurova. Would there be one!' 'It exists', Ali the Bard objected, 'It exists!' 'It exists!', Memet said. 'It exists!', Yusuf said. 'And why not?', Hösük said. 'Just because you don't know where it is, you deny its existence.' 'It doesn't exist', the herbalist repeated stubbornly. 'Don't you think I knew where, if it existed?' 'It exists', Ali the Bard said. 'It exists!' Hösük screamed. [....] 'They are gone', [Ahmet] said. 'I wish I had had work for them!' 'Well, they seemed to be under some stress, with their pomegranate tree...'(*HNA* 85, 86-87; *GB* 111, 114)[71]

The friends completely fail to see that Ahmet, a "good man" who offers them food and shelter amidst the cruel environment of the Çukurova, is who they were searching for – because "'to be traumatized [...] is precisely to be possessed by an image or event"',[72] just as the friends are possessed by their search for the tree. Although Ahmet offers them kindness and hospitality, the friends are unable to recognize the reality of Ahmet's offer because to them the tree and its promise is

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69. "'Ulan yaşasın şu traktör, şu biçerdöver! Ulan ağız kokusunu çekmiyoruz artık bu soylu Beyefendilerin! [...] Ulan yaşasın Maraşal Marşal...'" Referring to the Marshall Plan; Ramazan Çiftlikçi, *Yaşar Kemal*, 231-232.

70. "'Yarın sabah yola çıkmalıyız', diye durarak, arkadaşlarının yüzüne bakarak konuştu Âşık Ali. 'Bu bostancı bizim gitmemizi hiç istemiyor ya... Burada bütün yaz hiçbir şey yapmadan onun yanında kalsak sevincinden deli olacak fikara.' 'Bizi sevdi', dedi Memet. Âşık Ali güldü: 'Elinden nasıl kurtulacağız bu iyi adamın, ne söyleyeceğiz?' 'Gideriz', dedi Hösük. 'Bizim işimiz var. Nar ağacına gideceğiz.' 'Nar ağacına›, dedi Memet."

71. "'Çukurovada böyle kutsal bir ağaç yok', dedi. 'Olsaydı ah...› diye de ekledi. 'Var', dedi kesin bir sesle Âşık Ali. 'Var!' Memet: 'Var!' Yusuf: 'Var!' Hösük: 'Olmaz olur mu? Sen bilmiyorsun yerini, bir de bizim ağacımıza yok diyorsun!' 'Yok', dedi inatla otçu Hasan. 'Olsa ben yerini bilmez miyim?' ‹Bilemezsin›, dedi Âşık Ali. 'Bilemezsin', diye gürledi Hösük. […] Gittiler', dedi. 'Aaah, bir işim yoktu ki... Onlara verecek bir işim yoktu.' Otçu Hasan: 'Çok sıkışmışlar da, o nar...'"

72. Cathy Caruth and Georges Bataille, *Trauma. Explorations in Memory*, 4f.; Eugene L. Arva, *The Traumatic Imagination*, 30.

not only real, but has also become a coping strategy which "continue[s] to influence [their] behaviour long after the initial impact",[73] thus replacing the former failed strategy of relying on humanity.

6. End of Novel – End of Story?

During the last part of their journey, the peasants shun every village and hardly ask for the tree any more (*HNA* 87-88; *GB* 114-116). Finally, they reach the tree – only to find that just the roots and a burst stump remain of it. While the adults rejoice and are ready to accept this as *pars pro toto*, for Memet the Kid "this tree died of its own hand. It couldn't help itself, how should it help us..." (*HNA* 92; *GB* 121-122).[74] After noting the suicide of the tree, Memet the Kid vanishes, taking Hösük's knife with him, and it can be inferred that he intends to return to the village where Bey insulted them, and take revenge (*HNA* 66-67, 75, 77; *GB* 84, 91, 97-99). For the others staying at the stump, however, one of the promised wonders does indeed come true: relief from the ghastly flies (although brought about by a strong wind, not the tree; *HNA* 92; *GB* 122). After noticing the departure of Memet the Kid, the friends finally return home. The ending of the story is bleak, not only because of Memet the Kid but also because it becomes obvious that ultimately their search seems to have been in vain, despite their ready acceptance of the stump as part of the miraculous tree:

> Around noon they had reached Dikenli and taken the way to Karatepe. They began to smell the high plain, the pennyroyal and the fir trees. With several long strides, Memet had taken the lead. Eventually he paused, inhaled deeply for some time and shouted: 'Hey, Ali the Bard, as a sacrifice they killed my yellow oxen. When we parted, he turned and turned his head, and he cried, just like a human!' Ali the Bard couldn't manage a single word. They walked on. (*HNA* 93; *GB* 124)[75]

At the very end of the novel, the leitmotif of the sacrificed oxen reappears; apparently, both Memet the Kid and Memet the grown-up continue to be haunted by their painful traumatic memories, despite their acceptance of the unreal pomegranate as real. Thus, Kemal does not establish a hierarchy, neither according to the reality status nor according to its helpfulness in dealing with the world. He does not moralize or give a conservative vote for folklore instead of modernity,[76] just as he refrains from a simple victim-perpetrator dichotomy; the unreal ways of coming to terms with reality have their downsides, just as modernization itself has. The reader is therefore left behind with a threefold uncertainty: What is 'real' and 'non-real'? Which ontological level is preferable? And what has finally become of it all? This uncertainty on part of the reader corresponds to the ultimate unnarratability of traumatic experiences; they cannot be related; they cannot be understood; they can only be felt – and, as shown in the end by

73. Kirby Farrell, *Post-traumatic Culture*, 11.

74. "'Kendisi ölmüş bu ağacın. Zaten kendine hayretmemiş ki bize...'"

75. "Öğleye doğru Dikenliyi tutmuşlar, Karatepeye doğru yol almışlardı bile. Burunlarına yayla, yarpuz, çam kokusu geliyordu. Memet öne geçmiş, uzun adımlarla ilerliyordu. Bir ara durdu, derin derin soluklandıktan sonra: 'Benim sarı öküzü kurban kesmişler, hey Âşık Ali', dedi. 'Ben ondan ayrılırken arkasında döndü döndü de ağladıydı, tipki insan gibi...' Âşık Ali bir söze varmadı. Yürümelerini sürdürdüler."

76. As has been noted before; see as the probably most prominent example Günter Grass, *Laudatio*, 15-17.

the reappearance of the yellow ox, they can never really be overcome. The reader is left with the same feeling of thorough destabilization that the characters in the novel have experienced in their search for a way of coping with their ominously changing reality.

Nevertheless, Kemal manages at least to express the friends' traumatic situation. Thus, he becomes "a spokesman for a people who had no voice".[77] He represents not the memory but the experience of trauma, together with all its characteristics: the crisis of truth, the dissociation of consciousness, the shattering of reality and the search for stable, reliable guiding scripts of behaviour. Instead of introducing a narrator reflecting on, remembering and retelling his traumatic experiences, Kemal leads the reader directly into the traumatic situation itself.[78] He thus gives a voice for the first time to those who have had none so far. As Neil Smelser argues, what is perceived as traumatic highly depends on the social and historical context surrounding it – "trauma is not for everyone".[79] Consequently, I venture to believe that through Yaşar Kemal's works and his narrativization of the traumatic experiences of the Çukurova peasants, their voices have become heard in Turkey for the first time in history, and that by and through his texts the social and economic changes in the country have raised public awareness of their traumatizing effects. In giving a voice to the peasants, Kemal adds to the political process of re-diversifying 'purified' Turkish culture, as he did by being the first to introduce dialects and oral elements in Turkish literature. It is a central feature of magical realism "to provide perspectives on the past which had previously been either marginalized or ignored",[80] which Kemal's novel does by narrativizing the traumatic effects of the peasant's struggle in coping with the social changes in the Çukurova. Bearing witness to traumatic experiences, as Kemal does in his novels, can become a revolutionary political act in showing resistance to "any attempt to appropriate the experience of the traumatized".[81] Read in this manner, Kemal's narratives of the traumatic reality of the changing Çukurova become political acts not only in the context of village literature and social realism, but also in the context of a history of trauma and a continued expression of the suppressed voice of the Other.

Franziska Stürmer

Universität Würzburg
franziska.stuermer@uni-wuerzburg.de

77. Elia Kazan, cited in Tayfun Demir (ed.), *Türkische Literatur in deutscher Sprache (1800-2008)*, Duisburg, Dialog Edition, 2008, 95.

78. The novel is dialogical in large parts; the narrator, although heterodiegetic and adopting zero-focalization, seems partial towards the peasants. See Ramazan Çiftlikçi, *Yaşar Kemal*, 232.

79. Neil Smelser, "Psychological Trauma and Cultural Trauma", in: Jeffrey C. Alexander (ed.), *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity,* Berkeley, University of California Press, 2004, 31-59; See Geoffrey Hartman, "Trauma within the Limits of Literature", in: *European Journal of English Studies*, Ortwin de Graef and Vivian Liska (eds.), *The Instance of Trauma*, 3, 7, 2003, 257-274, here 260; Quote from Maurice Stevens, "Ephemeral Traces. Enigmatic Signification, Race and the Sciences of Memory", in: Maria Holmgren Troy and Elisabeth Wennö (eds.), *Memory, Haunting, Discourse*, Karlstad, Karlstad University Press, 2005, 275-289, here 275, 277.

80. Kenneth S. Reeds, *What Is Magical Realism?*, 16.

81. Eugene L. Arva, *The Traumatic Imagination*, 36.