

How A Means Of Equality, Hegemony And State Of Belonging Can Be Formed In The Existence Of Different Identities?: A Comparative Study between Yaşar Kemal's *Ince Memed* and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*

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Özet

Sosyal değişim sürecinde bireyin toplumsal hegemonyaya karşı gösterdiği başkaldırının etik temeli, farklı kimliklerin var olduğu toplumlardaki eşitliğin, hegemonyanın ve aidiyetin nasıl kurulduğunun incelenmesiyle anlaşılabilir. Bireylerin, eşitlik ve farklı toplumsal kimlik arayışı *Muhteşem Gatsby* ve *Ince Memed* romanlarının Tönnies'in *Cemaat ve Cemiyet (Gemeinschaft und Gessellschaft) Kuramıyla* incelenmesinde yarar vardır.

Anahtar Sözcükler

kimlik; eşitlik; hegemonya; aidiyet; cemaat; cemiyet; etik.

Abstract

During the process of social change, searching for ethics and ethical basis of individual rebellion against hegemonic societies can be understood best with examining how a means of equality, hegemony and state of belonging is formed in such societies where different identities exist. The search for equality and alternative communities is exemplified best in the novels *The Great Gatsby* and *Ince Memed* by studying them under the scope of Tönnies's *Community and Society (Gemeinschaft und Gessellschaft) Theory*.

Key Words

identity; equality; hegemony; state of belonging; community; society; ethics.

Introduction

In the beginning of the 20th century, literary pieces started to concentrate on at what level individuals protected their identity with the guidance or regardless of the society. In these texts it was conveyed that individuals were working hard to accomplish the roles and sanctions given them by the society for most of their lives and in the remained time they were trying to evaluate their own identity.

David Daiches in his book "A Critical History of English Literature" asks, "How is love possible when we are all, whether we know it or not, the prisoners of our private selves? How is even communication possible?"(Daiches, 1968, p. 1130) as he talks about the 20th century literature. He emphasizes the fact that communication between individuals becomes difficult as identities are guided by the society and contradicting within themselves. As Daiches tries to find answer to his question, he finally states that, "To those who raised this question in this way, society as a whole seemed to provide simply a collection of empty gestures and institutions which had no real meaning and could provide no real basis for communication between individuals."(İbid., p1131) Thus, formation of a means of equality, hegemony and state of belonging where different identities exist turns out to be a problem before, while or after formation. Paul Ricour brings a solution to this problem by considering commonly accepted ethics.(Changeux, 2000, p.9)

As the authorities may change in different societies, the understanding of ethics will convey differences as well. A genuine judgement over human behaviour cannot be obtained by considering the social psychology only as it is claimed by the social sciences that ethics must be considered in the term of "norms". Norms usually consist of individuals' behaviours. However, in some cultures ethics is parallel to the moral rules

which determine the interactive behaviours of individuals. This brings about the term of “voluntary norms”(voluntarily accepted norms) most of which are concerned with the identifying the social group and the protection of the social identity.

Individuals’ relationships with the others are determined by the formal equality and reciprocal norms. As influential norms are social and institutional, individuals in a way ratify the human rights with their behaviours to others. Thus, because human beings are creatures that can exist within their relations, their ability to think and capacity to share their thoughts with others establishes the fundamentals of social life. However, the limiting or expanding of thought and emotional relations would change individual’s life style and may even give way to isolation.

This brings about the terms Tönnies uses to identify the two human wills: the essential will, which is the underlying, organic or instinctive force in which membership is self-fulfilling and is part of community; and arbitrary will, which is deliberative, purposive and future (goal) oriented in which is sustained by some instrumental goal or definite end and is part of society. In each of the two, the individual in the social order, characteristic form of wealth, type of law, ordering of institutions and the type of social control differ from each other. As to this, while studying literary pieces, aside from concentrating on the norms that take part in the formation of equality, hegemony and state of belonging, the type of social structure should be considered as well.

The relations of hegemony, state of belonging, equality and isolation in the existence of different identities can be best studied under the normative and community-society light in detail in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s “The Great Gatsby” and Yaşar Kemal’s “İnce Memed”. These two novels are being compared with each other as they significantly stand out as examples of global and local identity construction as they are similar to each other with in their starting point of rebelling to the existing order and periodical backgrounds (period between WWI - 1930) and their characters’ struggle to have a better socio-economic status. However, they also differ from each other as to where the events take place and the type of existing order as *The Great Gatsby* reflects the decaying order of society and *Ince Memed*, the reformation of community order.

Both novels are conveying the social changes of the first decades of the 20th century post World War I period although their plots are located in different parts of the world. Moreover, in the two books the idea of rural and urban are mentioned many times – East and West Eggs in *The Great Gatsby* and Çukurova and the villages in *Ince Memed* – to reflect the norms of each place in order to be able to reflect the differences between the community and society as to where state of equality, hegemony and state of belonging are formed or are tried to be formed. Furthermore, before encountering both novels in the phase of society and community, the socio-ethical backgrounds that affected the formation of the two novel themes - the Jazz Age and the American Dream in *The Great Gatsby* and the new formed Turkish Republic after the long reign of the Ottoman Empire in *Ince Memed* - must be examined.

1. Comparing *The Great Gatsby* and *İnce Memed* as to How the Means of Equality, Hegemony and State of Belonging can be Formed in the Existence of Different Identities

The American Dream describes an attitude of hope and faith that looks forward to the fulfilment of human wishes and desires. What these wishes are, were expressed in

Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence of 1776, where it was stated: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." [Allen, 1969, p. 4]

This search for freedom and happiness actually goes back to the very beginning of American civilization, to the time of the first settlers, puritan Fathers, who were religious refugees that were driven to the New World by persecution. To these people, America represented a new life of freedom, holding a promise of spiritual and material happiness. For those settlers who were not so religiously inclined, America was still a fairyland, a land of great possibilities. As Puritans and Quakers like the other settlers approved of industry and material development, material prosperity and progress kept pace with religious and spiritual goals. However, the material aspect of the American Dream was too easily and quickly achieved, with the result that it soon outpaced and even obliterated the early spiritual ideals. So there emerged a state of material well-being but lacking in spiritual life or purpose. Despite all democratic principles, there still existed poverty, discrimination and exploitation. As for the values and morality, there are also hypocrisy, corruption and suppression. [Ping, 1990, pp. 11-12] In a way *The Great Gatsby* is a comment on this condition of society's destroying itself although it modelled no doubt the writers own faith in life, he created a character who represented an early American in whom the dream was still very much alive but in an ethically corrupted society.

The other factor that played an important part in the creation of the novel *The Great Gatsby* is the Jazz Age which is the 1920's, the period just after the First World War. This period is usually identified with money and gaiety as it was the time of jazz music, the Charleston and the motor car. As the period came just after the war, the high living and merrymaking are usually seen as a reaction to recent suffering. Gatsby's flashy cars, his lavish parties, the reckless conduct of his guests and the carelessness of the Buchanans are all part of this atmosphere of Jazz Age. Organised crime, the way Gatsby obtained his wealth from rises again in this period together with illegal gambling and bootlegging. This background of crime and illegal events leads to the corruption of society and prevails in the novel. [Ibid, pp. 9-10]

Similarly, *Ince Memed*'s plot is set in the same period as after the First World War many social changes took place worldwide. 1920's was the period of great change in the Turkish history as the social structure changed from monarchy to republic. Before the Turkish War of Independence, the Ottoman state was Muslim, dynastic and medieval in its organizing principles. Its government was based on Muslim-religious law, which was supplemented by royal ordinance and customary law, and stretched sometimes beyond reason, to cover the day-by-day requirements. Everybody had a master (Aga or the landlord as in *Ince Memed*) who was personally responsible for the behaviour of his charges. Small pyramids made up the large pyramids of the Ottoman state, headed by the Sultan or sovereign. He reigned absolute and maintained justice defined as perfect balance in the constituent elements of the state. [Mango, 1999, p. 4]

During the reign of Abdülhamid II, the last Ottoman sultan to exercise autocratic power, great amount of land was lost in the wars, a culture of violence, that was the product of European straits, spread throughout Ottoman state, Muslim population was backward from the new European learning and in poverty which came with the

backwardness and with this came the social ignorance. In the phase of a social, political and economic decline before and after the World War I, Mustafa Kemal had brought the ideology of the republic state and to recover the Turkish land, to overthrow the autocratic power and establish the republic Turkish War of Independence took place. Later, although people were newly out of the Turkish War of Independence and in poverty, they were intertwined with each other and had faith in the new system and values together with great expectations.

In contrast to the formation of America as a means of industry, newly formed Turkish republic was made out of peasants in great percentage. 87% of the peasants families were farming little or medium size lands and as the farm land was shared by a number of peasants the product was not enough for each family. Furthermore, 65% of the product was collected by the landlords and rich farmers due to traditional feudal system. [Gülöksüz, 1983, p. 1242-43] As a result just after each harvest the farmers, who were not aware of their rights or even if they were aware who would not rebel to their landlords as to the community traditions, had gone through rough time of poverty until the next plantation.

It is this period that *Ince Memed's* plot is set and his purpose is to awaken the peasants of their rights after he sees Çukurova, the city which symbolises newly formed capitalist structure where there is no landlords (or Agas) and everyone works for his own welfare. Although there is capitalist system in Çukurova, Agas, who feared the brigands inhabited here, still existed and exploited the lands they have acquired from the peasants with contracts. While in the city, Memed had realised that although the system in his own village was semi-feudal as the farmlands were under contract and actually Aga did not have much power on them, as the ignorance of the state laws and the functioning community mores of the villagers disabled them to dispose the feudal side and get adapted to the new capitalist republic system. This is what lead Memed to become an outlaw, not against the state but against the feudal community structure.

As an outcome, in contrast to Tönnies's idea of society (*gesellschaft*) where the corrupted capitalist system seeks refuge in the community as in *The Great Gatsby*, the individuals belonging to community, who had experienced the capitalist welfare, tries to outlimit the feudal structure of community (*Gemeinschaft*) as in *Ince Memed*. Tönnies says, "In the same way as the individual natural will evolves into pure thinking and rational will, which tends to dissolve and subjugate its predecessors, the original collective forms of *Gemeinschaft* have developed into *Gesellschaft* (society) and the rational will of the *Gesellschaft*. In the course of history, folk culture has given rise to the civilization of the state." [Tönnies, 1957, p. 223]

If we are to focus on hegemony, Gramsci's term must be mentioned as the predominance of one social class over others. This represents not only political and economic control, but also the ability of the dominant class to project its own way of seeing the world so that those who are subordinated by it accept it as 'common sense' and 'natural' [Chandler, 2002, p. 1] and this involves willing and active consent, which is also mentioned in Tönnies as essential will and arbitrary will constructed as a theory under a consentaneous approach in contrast to Gramsci. This contrast is due to Gramsci's background of Marxist theory of social class contradictions in which the social structure is considered as the battle field of dominant and dependent social classes.

The hegemony in both of the novels is capitalist ideology as who ever has the money has the power and is the patron just as the Agas in *Ince Memed* and as the rich people in *Gatsby*, who form their own communities in the society and when it comes to a crisis, they stand together against all others.[Ping 1980; p. 33] We can give the collaboration of the two landlords in Çukurova, who were used to exploiting the lands of the peasants, against the brigand Ince Memed who aimed to undo their hegemony over the village, and Daisy's get by with the murder of Myrtle, Tom's mistress, as he lies to Myrtle's husband and blames Gatsby of the accident which results with the killing of Gatsby by her husband as examples of the hegemony of the capital system.

Hegemony shows itself in the system as social discrimination exists and the divisions among the classes cannot be overcome in both novels. For example, in *The Great Gatsby*, Myrtle's attempts to break into the group to which the Buchanans belong is doomed to fail. Taking advantage of her vivacity, her lively nature, she seeks to escape from her own class by entering into an affair with Tom and takes on his way of living. However, she only becomes vulgar and corrupt like the rich. She scorns her own class and loses all sense of morality, and for all her social ambition Myrtle never succeeds in her attempt to find a place for herself in Tom's class as his class does not allow any intrusion from lower class. Like Myrtle, Gatsby struggles to fit himself into another social group, but his attempt is more urgent because his whole faith in life is involved in it. Therefore, his failure is more terrible for him. His whole career, his confidence in himself and in life is totally shattered when he fails to win Daisy. His death is almost insignificant as with the collapse of his dream, Gatsby is already spiritually dead and unsuccessful in the duration in a higher social class than his own.[Ibid, p. 33]

In *Ince Memed*, the example of social discrimination and class divisions can be seen when Abdi Aga wants Hache, the girl Memed loves, to marry his nephew. Aga's nephew is considered as the biggest chance in the world to get married to due to his social rank and his relation to the Aga. Memed's desires, wishes and love for Hache is disregarded by the others as he is thought as an unimportant person. Even the people of his own class does not take him into account and say, "Memed is not worth anything. Abdi aga would tear him apart and feed him to dogs." [Kemal, 1982, p. 90] Another comment on this is that one villager says that Abdi Aga is an important person and has the state behind him.[Ibid.] Thus, the villagers voluntarily approves of the arranged marriage and ignore Memed all so easily as they accept the hegemony of Aga, which they think is the one of the state, instinctively in the feudal mores/traditions. So, in both books the hegemony of the capitalist system conditions the society and community as to rich men having what they desired as they have the power.

Shaping of state of belonging among different identities depends on the roles individuals adopt either instinctively or consciously. For Özcan Köknel, a leading Turkish psychiatrist, "Role is a general term that covers all types of behavior expected from an individual regarding his standing point. It encompasses all the behaviours other members expect from an individual who has a certain position and function in the same group." [Köknel, 1986, p. 166]

Meryl Neff cites from Follett (1919) that process is the interaction and socialization among the people in the community. Process may also be a shared interest or common endeavor. Neff than cites from Goode (1957) to identify eight

characteristics of the process in community: 1) Its members are bound by a sense of identity; 2) Once in it, few leave, so that is a terminal or continuing status for the most part; 3) Its members share values in common; 4) Its role definition vis-a-vis both members and non-members are agreed upon and are the same for all members; 5) Within the areas of communal action there is a common language, which is understood only partially by outsiders; 6) The community has power on its members; 7) Its social limits are reasonably clear; 8) Though it does not produce the next generation biologically, it does so socially.

[Neff, 1996, www.coe.ufl.edu/courses/EdTech/Vault/Folk/Community.htm]

With regard to Follett and Goode, Ince Memed and *The Great Gatsby* would be considered as characters soughting seeking? their own communities as in the case of *Gatsby* it is done with the lavish parties and in Memed's case with the formations of brigand groups. Because *Gatsby* needs others to prove himself that he belongs to certain social class and being anonymous would destroy him, as it is the case at the end of the novel when he loses his self made-up place in the society for a short time, he is destroyed by other individuals who are not members of his own community, he needs to form a community within the society to exist. On the other hand, Memed has to choose individuality to prove himself as he can exist in a legendary style in feudal system if he is to prove himself. Due to this, even at the end of the novel, although there is a governmental reprieve, he does not is not surrounded(?) as he is mentally forced by the villagers to kill the Aga who symbolises the feudal system, capital hegemony of autocratic power. With all his isolation Memed actually symbolises the new formed republic state that is controversy of the feudal, autocratic power. Thus, he can form his community out of brigands, who share same values or norms, outside the folk community he once belonged with instinct to be a part of it as a myth. Otherwise, if he had surrendered to and abandoned the community that he himself formed, that is brigandry, he would have lost his significance and become any other person in the village community. As a result, by constructing their own social circles or community, *Gatsby* and Memed are similar to each other in their search for a social belonging and identity.

“Human beings shape their personalities and behaviours in accordance with their relation to other people. Thus, an individual's personality and behaviour can be evaluated regarding the community he belongs to and its aims, expectations, emotional background, idealism, demands, rules, mores, traditions and obligations. A person's existence in a group means acceptance of certain common behaviours and attitudes together with adopting them. Belonging to group constructs individual's emotionality and sociality.” [Köknel, 1986, pp. 159-160] When this idea is applied to the main characters of the novels, *Gatsby* is doomed to accept the community he confronts as he turns his back to his born identity and Ince Memed has to choose his community as he is seeking a new identity. Therefore, both characters are after a new means of belonging as they want to be a part of the system they choose to live in ideologically.

In social structures the formation of equality between different identities is a great puzzle with a missing part. German philosopher Leibniz had revised the ideas of Diogenes, Socrates and Plato and in his work “*Monadologie*” he stated that there are no two things equal to or distinguishable from each other. In the letters he addressed to Coste he said, “Universe cannot be divided into two equal or similar pieces. Thus, there

will never be a circumstance where two things will be equal with each other (Erdmann, 19.XII, 1707, s. 447).[Hanceroglu, 1989, p. 96] The idea of equality is the product of metaphysics and utopic ideology system. Thus, application of one certain law on different people - such as talented and untalented, lazy and industrious, married and celibate, with children and without children, etc. - brings about not equality but inequality. Due to this, equal right actually bases on inequality.[Ibid, p. 95]

The philosophers of the enlightenment period, such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke whose concept of "contract" was taken as the basis of Declaration of Independence in U.S.A. written about seventy years later, have all come to conclusion that equality is actually unattainable. The Swiss-French philosopher and political theorist Rousseau is one of the great figures of Enlightenment that influenced French revolutionists. Rousseau's most celebrated theory was that of the "natural man." In his Discourse on the Inequalities of Men (1754) and Social Contract (1762) he maintained that human beings were essentially good and equal in the state of nature but were corrupted by the introduction of property, agriculture, science, and commerce. People entered into Social Contract among themselves, establishing governments and educational systems to correct the inequalities brought the rise of civilisation.

Fundamentally, the Principle of Equality has to do with satisfaction and not with treatment, with what is done to and for people. It fundamentally although not exclusively has to do with what is called well-being or the equality of people's lives, or freedom, or happiness. Therefore, it can be said that, the principle of equality is directed, more particularly, to the satisfaction of fundamental categories of human desires which define human nature. These are: material means to subsistence; a satisfactory length of life; material goods in addition to those of necessity; certain freedoms and powers such as political, independence of profession; respect and self-respect which cannot be obtained if there is class-condescension or racism; satisfaction of personal and wider human relationships with family or with members of larger social groups in a society or communities in the society; goods of culture that is satisfaction of education. Thus, the principle of equality is concerned with extents to which these fundamental desires are satisfied. It is a recommendation with respect to the distribution of this satisfaction or well-being. Here comes the existence of two classes automatically, the well-off and the badly-off. As so, here again comes the question how equality can be achieved if there are apparently different groups.

Just in the beginning of the novel *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald verbalises the impossibility of the equality between different identities with Nicks, prejudicial introduction:

"In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since. 'Whenever you feel like criticising anyone,' he told me, 'just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had.'" [Fitzgerald, 1988, p. 7]

With these words, Nick Carraway, the narrator of the novel *The Great Gatsby*, builds up a wall between himself and the other characters of the novel, as to actually point out the social differences between him and his subjects. This quotation also points out the isolation of Carraway and he determines his own state of belonging to a community, his own town. However, it is with these words that he again positions himself to a superior place to the others in the novel. Thus, his failure to put himself in

the same place with the others opens the book with a great distinction between individuals. Moreover, how can a state of equality can be thought about when the whole book is based on inequalities between individual social groups or even between individuals themselves.

In Ince Memed the equality has been tried to be formed with material power which was followed by the gained respect. Hache's sock weaving and selling them to save money for Memed so that he would not be inferior to the Aga or the representatives of the exploiting class is. Her efforts of recovering Memed material wise is seeking for respect amongst the circles in the city of Çukurova as she is also the future owner of the position Memed is going to obtain as his wife. Similarly, Memed's distribution of the farm lands to his villagers when he thinks that his killing the Aga makes him respected by his villagers. He is no more the brigand that steals money but a Robin Hood who thinks the welfare of his community. However, when they learn that the Aga is not dead they are all so quick to waste him too which an action of communal mores as well that signals the still existing class distinction disabling the formation of equality. On the other hand, as Aga hears that his farmlands, which are actually villager's but used by him under contract as a way of feudal system, panics and becomes frantic, furious and scared. He is scared because he would die at the hands of Memed.

Ironically, Aga's death is as significant as Gatsby's as they both die metaphorically when they lose their property or material well being that strings them into the society they desire to belong to. They both die from the hands of people who belong to lower social classes. This may be said to be the justice but it does not help equality to be formed as the gap between the social classes is not destroyed but changed hands.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, as it is the case in *The Great Gatsby* and *Ince Memed*, wealth may be said to correspond to the degree of freedom possessed. The great and mighty, feeling free and independent, have always felt a strong inclination to break through the barriers of the folkways and mores as they have the power to bring about changes in their favour, and this is proof of individual arbitrary power. Both of the main characters of the novels have experienced this arbitrary will and power to change their lives.

The mechanism of money, under usual conditions and if working under high pressure, is means to overcome all resistance, to obtain everything wanted and desired, to eliminate all dangers and cure all evil. Consequently, Gatsby's money have put him amongst the social class he desired to achieve his arbitrary, conscious will, has protected him from the social contracts as he had the capital power and was one of the contract makers of his own community. This does not hold always; even if all controls of the community are eliminated, there are nevertheless controls in the society to which the free and independent individuals are subject. For the society (*Gesellschaft*), convention (that is contract) takes to a large degree the place of the folkways, mores and religion. It forbids much as detrimental to the common interest which the folkways, mores, and religion had condemned as evil in and of itself.[Tönnies 1957; pp. 223-231] Regarding this, Gatsby's own doing of evil in moral sense to achieve a place in the society where he actually does not belong and try to steal somebody else's wife have

been terminated by the social contract as he was a threat to the social norms. Although social contract in society judges Gatsby, in *Ince Memed* the case is not so very different. Aga's material power is shattered with the threat of Memed's mythical power but who also wants this power for an equal life style which means material power too.

By regarding equality as the effect of material power, the inequality between people would already been agreed on. Even when Memed, tries to bring equality between the villagers and the feudal power Aga, he situates himself over the villagers. Furthermore, instead of taking advantage of the government reprieve and becoming a common man, he chooses to stay a brigand and the power or myth by killing or in a way over throwing the existing power. In *The Great Gatsby*, Nick's returning to his own community and looking the life and ways of society in abhorrence makes him accept that he is morally superior to others but this does not change the fact that he has come to the city with great expectations. Nevertheless, Fitzgerald with his novel comments that materialism and personal prejudice have the power of threatening the overall society.[Ping 1990; pp. 34.35] Actually this fact is shared by Yaşar Kemal who also reflects his observation and worries on *Ince Memed*.

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