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YAŞAR KEMAL'S YAĞMURCUK KUŞU [SALMAN THE SOLITARY]: A FAMILY SAGA AND TRAUMA

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YAŞAR KEMAL'İN YAĞMURCUK KUŞU ROMANI: BİR AİLE SAGASI VE TRAVMA

Öz

Psikolojik derinlik ve otobiyografik derinlik, Yaşar Kemal'in romanlarının dokusunu ve mimarisini derinden şekillendiren birbirinden ayrılmaz iki ana özelliktir. Bu gözlemi dayanak noktası yapan bu makale, Tasavvufi bir kavramsal çerçeve ışığında Yaşar Kemal'in Yağmuncuk Kuşu romanını, onun bu romanda psikolojik derinlik oluşturmak için kullandığı kurgusal enstrümanları mercek altına alarak analiz etmektedir. Sufizm'e göre insan, derin iç yolculuklar yaparak iç huzura erebilir, ruhsal olarak olgunlaşabilir ve yaşadığı travmalardan ve diğer psikolojik problemlerden kurtulabilir. Yağmuncuk Kuşu dahil, romanlarındaki kahramanların çoğu, tıpkı Yaşar Kemal gibi derin travma ve acılar yaşamış ve derin iç yolculukları yoluyla bir tür kendi kendine psikoterapi uygulamaya çalışan bireylerdir. Metinsel kanıtlar, Yaşar Kemal'in aslında kendisini karakterlerinin ruhunda ve hayatında gizlediğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu bağlamda Yağmuncuk Kuşu, diğer romanlarının çoğunda olduğu gibi, Yaşar Kemal'in derin iç yolculuklarından birini yansıtmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Psikolojik derinlik, otobiyografik derinlik, travma, ruhsal yücelme, kendi kendine psikoterapi.

Abstract

Psychological depth and autobiographical depth are two inseparable foundations of Yaşar Kemal's work that have profoundly shaped the texture and architecture of his novels. Basing itself on this premise and using a conceptual framework from Sufism, this paper analyzes Kemal's novel Yağmuncuk Kuşu [Salman the Solitary] by focusing on the fictional instruments he uses in it to construct psychological depth. According to Sufism, a person may find inner peace, mature spiritually, and recover from traumas and other psychological problems by having deep inner journeys. Like Kemal himself, most of the main characters in his novels are deeply traumatized and suffering individuals who experience a sort of

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self-psychotherapy through deep inner journeys. Textual evidence indicates that Kemal actually hides himself in the psyches and lives of his characters. In this regard, like most of his other novels *Salman the Solitary* projects one of Yaşar Kemal's deep inner journeys.

Keywords: Psychological depth, autobiographical depth, trauma, spiritual elevation, self-psychotherapy.

1. Introduction

Yaşar Kemal, a renowned writer of Turkish and world literature, considers psychological depth as the yardstick of great literature (Kabacalı 1992: 82). For him, “The most important aspect of the novel is human psychology” (Çiftlikçi 1997: 393), and “the novelist’s job is to reach the deepest part of human psychology” (Yaşar Kemal 2005: 286). Quoting the famous aphorism “There is a deeper me inside me” of the thirteenth-century Turkish Sufi poet Yunus Emre, Kemal implies that in his fiction he focuses on this deeper inner self: “And I say that there is a deeper reality inside realities. There is a deeper charm inside charms” (Yaşar Kemal 1994: 192). In his novels, he delves into the deepest layers of his characters’ inner selves in order to reveal their deep feelings, and while doing this he discloses his own deep psychology as well. Thus Kemal is “after a deeper reality,” and because of that he even often violates the realist novel’s principle of plausibility by constructing his novels as realms where there are many “extraordinary events” and where “the reality and the legend, the ordinary and the fantastic intertwine” (Moran 2011: 140-41, 151).

Evidently, psychological depth and autobiographical depth are two inseparable foundations of Yaşar Kemal’s novels, and in this paper I intend to demonstrate this by analyzing his novel *Yağmurcuk Kuşu* [*Salman the Solitary*], the first and only volume of the *Kimsecik* trilogy that has been translated into English.¹ My analysis will focus on the fictional instruments Yaşar Kemal uses in order to construct psychological depth as well as on his autobiographical elements. Some of these instruments are love, myths, hopes, dreams, daydreams, flashbacks,

¹ *Yağmurcuk Kuşu* [The Little Rainbird] was first published in 1980, and its English translation, *Salman the Solitary*, by Yaşar Kemal’s late wife Thilda Kemal, was first published in 1997. I use both the Turkish and the English texts in my analysis, and all the quotations I provide below are from this English translation. The translations of all quotes from other Turkish sources are mine unless stated otherwise.

hallucinations, fear, shock, trauma, humor, irony, madness, inner monologues, stream of consciousness, social and psychological pressure in the form of gossip and chorus-like elements, laments, lament-like elements, epic and legendary elements, symbols, supernatural elements, extreme self-consciousness, self-doubt, self-questioning, inner-conflicts, psychological crises, extreme idealization and de-idealization, exaggeration, and mystification.

In my analysis I use a Sufi conceptual framework. According to Sufism, a person may find inner peace and mature spiritually by having deep inner journeys, which may also help a person recover from traumas and other psychological problems. Like Kemal himself, most of the main characters in his novels are deeply traumatized and suffering individuals who endeavor to have a sort of self-psychotherapy through deep inner journeys. Textual evidence indicates that Kemal actually hides himself in the psyches and lives of his characters. His novels project his own inner journeys, which enable him to have a sort of spiritual elevation and inner peace. Apparently Kemal, who loves watching the world in fascination, watches his soul in the mirror of his characters.

“Spiritual elevation,” which is almost synonymous with psychotherapy in Kemal’s fiction, is a key Sufi concept I use in my analysis. The process of journeying toward that “deeper me inside me” is at the same time an upward movement. In other words, the more you approach the deepest layer of your inner self, the more you become spiritually elevated. As Psychiatrist Mustafa Merter states in his book *Dokuz Yüz Katlı İnsan: Tasavvuf ve Benötesi Psikolojisi* [Nine-hundred Layered Man: Sufism and Transpersonal Psychology], in Sufism the *nefs* (self) has a hierarchical and multilayered structure, like “a skyscraper of nine-hundred floors” (Merter 2007: 431, 238).² Since spiritual elevation is “ontological” for us as human beings, “we feel a sort of illumination, relief, calm, peace, and ease in our heart when we move up to an upper level of the *nefs*” (Merter 2007: 181). And since all human beings “unknowingly yearn to go up to an upper floor in all of their quests and deeds,” not being able to move up to a higher level of the *nefs* causes us to lose our peace of mind, and we hear a voice whispering to us, “This is not your place” (Merter 2007: 185, 388). In fact, psychological problems mostly arise from the depression caused by having “horizontal quests at the same *nefs* level” and “not being

² The phrase “nine-hundred floors” refers to Rumi’s following aphorism: “Oh, dear friend, you are not just a single ordinary man. You are a world, a deep sea. Your great being is perhaps nine-hundred layers, a sea with no bottom and no shore; hundreds of worlds dive into that sea and are submerged by it.” (Rumi)

able to ascend to an upper level” (Merter 2007: 386). According to Merter, “In Sufism, the resident of the top floors is that ‘deeper me inside me,’” that is, a “perfect human being,” which potentially exists in every person (Merter 2007: 217).

Using this conceptual framework, we can observe that there are many things that cause spiritual elevation and function like psychotherapy in the realm of Yaşar Kemal’s fiction. For instance, creating, performing, or being exposed to all kinds of art, including epics, laments, legends, poems, tales, *türkü*s, paintings, *kilims*, etc., all elevate his characters to a higher spiritual level and help them recover from psychological problems. In a word, art is almost a sacred thing in Kemal’s work and almost always functions like a sort of psychotherapy for his characters, who, like himself, are deeply suffering individuals that have experienced big traumas. Moreover, dreaming, daydreaming, thinking deeply, watching creatures in nature such as ants, bees, snakes, beetles, hornets, and all other kinds of insects, surrendering to the exuberance of language, defying fear, looking at the world through the eyes of a child, reading, and writing all generally bring about spiritual elevation and relief. Evidently, all of these have a deep autobiographical dimension. Just as singing folk songs, reciting epics, and telling stories healed Kemal’s stutter when he was a child, his writing has also apparently helped him recover from the traumas and other psychological problems he experienced in his childhood and his later life. For Kemal writing is a matter of existence, a natural and indispensable need, a sort of perpetual spiritual elevation, and a therapy for his psyche. Perhaps that is why he has declared: “I don’t write about issues, I don’t write for an audience, I don’t even write for myself. I just write” (Birch 2008).

Yaşar Kemal’s *Kimsecik* trilogy, consisting of over 1500 pages, is his most explicit autobiographical novel, and its psychological depth is of the highest level. Kemal himself declares that *Kimsecik* is based on his own life along with that of his family (Çiftlikçi 1997: 392-93; Andaç 2002: 14). However, at the same time he stresses that for him the novel, which “consists of only creation,” is more important and more real than autobiography, and that *Kimsecik* is a trilogy “benefitting from the life of his family” (Çiftlikçi 1997: 392-93). In other words, Kemal constructed this novel as a saga about his family as he himself has stated (Gürsel 2000: 51).

The dominant feeling that profoundly characterizes the *Kimsecik* trilogy is fear. Kemal himself states that “the son of man is at the same time the son of fear” and that *Kimsecik* is a novel about fear (Yaşar Kemal 2012: 71-

72, 84; Andaç 2002: 19). He thinks that “confronting fear is the greatest tenet of man” and “perhaps a [sort of] spiritual elevation” (Yaşar Kemal 2012: 72, 84). Like Yaşar Kemal, almost all the main characters in *Kimsecik* have experienced deep traumas and suffer from psychological problems. Their behavior embodies their efforts to cope with these problems. In this respect, how the characters recover is a significant question in the novel. The psychological depth in *Kimsecik* and Yaşar Kemal’s other novels deserves the attention of psychologists and psychiatrists.

Since even the narrative structure of Kemal’s novels serves his central aim of deepening the psychological aspect of his fiction, I must remark on it. As in many of his novels, in *Salman the Solitary* Kemal uses epic devices such as

in medias res, which in practical terms means not ‘into the midst of things’ but starting almost at the end, with previous events presented through flashbacks or recapitulations that allow the author to combine broad epic sweep with psychological intensity[;] and *paradeigma*, the use of parables or interpolated tales to reflect on and provide a context for the action and character of the central story. (Tharaud 1999: 295)

The ten chapters of *Salman the Solitary* have the following chronological order: 3, 4, 7, 5, 9, 1, 2, 6, 8, 10. Accordingly, its first two chapters are “the *in medias res* beginning” mentioned above, and chapters 3-4 are “the beginning of the long flashback or recapitulation that takes up most of the book” (Tharaud 1999: 295). This flashback relates the story of İsmail Ağa and his family in 1915-1923, a period during which they fled from war, migrated to and settled in the Çukurova, and saw Mustafa’s birth and the foundation of the Turkish Republic (both in 1923).³ The novel “is narrated in the third person” and through “five major perspectives”:

³ Yaşar Kemal’s real name is Mustafa Kemal Sadık Gökçeli (or Göğçeli). It was the Kozan MP Ali Saip (Ursavaş) Bey, a close friend of his father, who named him “Mustafa Kemal” in honor of the founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. However, the name “Mustafa” fell into oblivion in the course of time and only Kemal remained (Çiftlikçi 1997: 404). He took the pen name Yaşar Kemal after he started working for the İstanbul-based daily *Cumhuriyet* in 1951. Kemal’s family, originally from the village of Ernis (also called Günseli) on the shore of Lake Van in eastern Turkey, had to leave their village and migrate southward after the Russian army occupied Van during the First World War. Their painful journey from Van to the Çukurova took one and a half years.

Mustafa, who represents Kemal as a child (chapters 1-2, 6); the Kurd, İsmail Ağa, who is father to Mustafa and the adopted Salman (chapters 3-4); Halil Zalımoğlu, a peasant-worker who leaves his mountain village of Doruk to labor in the Çukurova Plain (chapters 7 and 9, with scattered allusions in Chapter 1 and elsewhere); the collective point of view of the people, whose envy and malice are embodied in vicious gossip that contributes to the murder of İsmail Ağa ([throughout the novel]); and Salman, the adopted son who loves his adoptive father more than anything else in the world, but who kills him (chapters 5, [8], and 10) (Tharaud 1999: 295).

As in Kemal's other novels, there are many *paradeigmas* in *Salman the Solitary*. Each time Kemal introduces a new character, event, place, or thing, he tells us a tale about its background. One of the significant *paradeigmas* in *Salman the Solitary* is that of Zalımoğlu Halil, whose story is interwoven with that of İsmail Ağa's family as a main narrative thread. The main story line of the novel is like "a river," and the parts relating the stories of the newly introduced characters, events, places, or things are connected to that river like its "branches," which is a technique commonly used in "tales, folk stories, and epics" (Çiftlikçi 1997: 517).

Since Mustafa, born in 1923, is seven years old, and Salman is twenty at the beginning of the novel, the present time in the novel is the "beginning of 1930," the year İsmail Ağa was murdered by Salman (Çiftlikçi 1997: 401-2).⁴ Thus the *Kimsecik* trilogy covers a period of 15 years, which Kemal has fashioned "in the form of intertwined circles" so as to interconnect events that happened at different times, "to increase the tension of the novel," and "to engross the reader" (Çiftlikçi 1997: 402).

2. Psychological and Autobiographical Analysis

Obviously, "Much of *Salman the Solitary* [and the whole *Kimsecik* trilogy] is a transformation of events from the author's early childhood" (Tharaud 1999: 294). Moreover, the story related in *Kimsecik* mostly matches and reflects the autobiographical and familial details that Yaşar Kemal himself has revealed in his memoirs and interviews, and almost all the important characters in the novel represent people from Yaşar Kemal's real life. For instance, the protagonist Mustafa is Kemal himself as a child;

⁴ At the age of five, Kemal witnessed his father's murder at the village mosque during evening prayers. The murderer was his adopted brother Yusuf, who stabbed their father in the heart.

the second main character Salman stands for Yusuf, Kemal's adopted brother who killed his father; İsmail Ağa represents Kemal's father Sadık Efendi; Zero stands for Kemal's mother Nigâr Hanım; Hasan Ağa is Kemal's paternal uncle Tahir Ağa; Zalımoğlu Halil is based on Zalanın oğlu, a guard of Kemal's father who later became a bandit (Yaşar Kemal 1994: 36); Bird Memet stands for Kemal's closest childhood friend Mehmet (Yaşar Kemal 1994: 35); Ali Çavuş represents Mehmet's father, hunter İsmail Ağa, who was a neighbor and partner of Kemal's family (Yaşar Kemal 1994: 35); Master Lame Abbas stands for Carpenter Lame İbrahim whom Kemal considers "a great friend of [his] childhood" and mentions as a great artisan and artist who made beautiful things such as "figures and statues" from wood (Yaşar Kemal 1994: 49); Arif Saim Bey is based on MP Ali Saip (Ursavaş) Bey, a close friend of Sadık Efendi who named Kemal "Mustafa Kemal" after his birth (Çiftlikçi 1997: 404-5); and Haşmet Bey stands for Hurşit Bey, the bey of the town of Pazarcık (Yaşar Kemal 1994: 27).

I said the character Salman represents Yusuf, but he is also based on another real person whose story Yaşar Kemal heard from a beggar. In his memoirs, Kemal tells us that one of the main sources of the details he relates about the First World War and the long journey of his family from Van to the Çukurova in 1915-1917 is a Kurdish blind beggar he met in 1938 in front of a mosque in Adana (Yaşar Kemal 1994: 22). This beggar, whose name was Kotey, turned out to be a boy from the village of Kemal's family. When in 1915 the whole village began to flee from the Russian army southward, Kotey was with them as an eight- or nine-year-old boy. On the way, he was lost in a big fire (Yaşar Kemal 1994: 23-24). In Southern and Eastern Anatolia, there were many large groups of starving children who had lost their parents in the war along with large packs of dogs who had lost their owners and herds (Yaşar Kemal 1994: 21). The children and the dogs separately or together plundered villages and towns for food, and the starving Kotey had to join one of these groups of children.

Armed horsemen killed many of these children and massacred many Yezidis (Yaşar Kemal 1994: 22). Kotey could never forget a scene he had seen. Arab horsemen had gathered hundreds of young and old Yezidis on a hill in the desert, drawn a circle around them, and left them alone. Kotey and his friends were watching them from behind a dune. None of the Yezidis on the hill attempted to cross the circle and flee because crossing a circle drawn around them was against their faith (Yaşar Kemal 1994: 22). After a while, the Arab horsemen arrived and began to massacre them

with their swords. After the horsemen left at noon, Kotey and his friends heard the moans of a boy from the hill and ran toward the sound. When they arrived, they found a ten-year old boy moaning under the dead body of his mother. He was the only survivor of the massacre. They pulled him out and took him with them. On the way, they found some medicine to heal his wounds, and after the boy recovered, he became the leader of the band of children. Under his command were more than 500 boys who never disobeyed him (Yaşar Kemal 1994: 23). Textual evidence in *Kimsecik* clearly indicates that Yaşar Kemal has based Salman not only on Yusuf but also on this Yezidi boy.

As I mentioned above, Zalımoğlu Halil is a character inspired by Zalanın oğlu, a guard who worked for Kemal's father. Kemal tells us that "Zalanın oğlu became a famous bandit in the Toros Mountains after my father died" (Yaşar Kemal 1994: 36). After becoming a bandit, he sometimes visited Kemal's family at night with his men and gave Kemal gifts. Like Zalımoğlu Halil in the last volume of *Kimsecik*, he helped the family financially. When he was killed by the gendarmes in a skirmish in the Toros Mountains, Kemal sang a long lament for him (Yaşar Kemal 1994: 36). In *Kimsecik*, Kemal constructed Zalımoğlu Halil as a committed man rebelling against injustice and "a noble bandit [...] like Koroğlu, Çakırcalı Efe, and İnce Memed" (Çiftlikçi 1997: 405). Since I refer to other autobiographical and familial details as I proceed with my discussion, I will cut it short here and continue with my analysis of the psychological aspect of the novel.

İsmail Ağa and all the members of his family, including his adopted son Salman, have experienced the horrible trauma of the First World War, and Kemal has constructed them as characters still suffering from the effects of this trauma. Mustafa, though born after the war, is directly traumatized by Salman, but indirectly by the horror and trauma the war has caused in Salman, İsmail Ağa, his family, and the people of Turkey. Salman's murdering his father at the end of *Salman the Solitary* is, of course, another great trauma that turns life into hell for Mustafa, but much before that Mustafa has already become a boy suffering from deep fears and psychological problems.

From the first page of *Salman the Solitary* we observe that fear has captured the souls of all the village children. Among them Mustafa is the one whose fear is the deepest. His mind is perpetually preoccupied with deep fears, and he sees hallucinations, which he makes others believe are real. For instance, at the beginning of the novel we learn through Mustafa's consciousness that three great sources of fear for all the

children of the village are Salman, Memik Ağa's charred mulberry tree, and the Narrow Pass. Every night the charred tree bleeds, and on some nights it moans until morning, "like a baby being strangled," or it howls "like a wounded wolf" (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 14). It is Mustafa who saw this hallucination and then made all the villagers believe in the myth growing around the charred mulberry tree (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 14, 21).

Through flashbacks that Mustafa experiences, we enter his inner world and learn why the Narrow Pass and the charred tree are so horrifying for him and the other children of the village. To illustrate, while the children are playing hidie-hole, a sort of hide-and-seek game, on a night full of moonlight, Mustafa and Memet run around the village to find a good hiding place, but when they come close to the charred tree, the Narrow Pass, or the spot where Salman is standing guard, they "shake in all [their] limbs" and breathe with difficulty (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 9). Once when they approach the Narrow Pass and stand at the head of the dark and deep precipice, Mustafa, in a flashback, recollects how hundreds of eagles, vultures, and other birds of prey attacked the dead body of Long Osman at the bottom of the pit of the Narrow Pass and devoured it in a short time, leaving behind only his bones (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 9-10).

On the same night when Mustafa and Memet stand in front of the charred tree, trembling in fear, Mustafa has another flashback through which the narrator tells us the brief story of the charred tree like a close witness. We learn that Zalımoğlu Halil and his men raided Memik Ağa's house and asked him to get out of the house and surrender; if not, they would burn the mansion down with all the people inside. When Memik Ağa refuses and his men begin to shoot at Halil, a violent gunfight starts. In the end, Zalımoğlu and his men set fire to the mansion and kill all the people in the house, including Memik Ağa and his whole family, except a little son. They wait until the whole house burns down, and then they leave in the morning. After that, the villagers (including Mustafa and Memet) who witnessed the terrible event quickly run to the house. The scene they see is bloodcurdling: "A mulberry tree near the house was smouldering too and clinging fast to it, clawing at the trunk, was Memik Ağa's negro Arab, bleeding from a bullet wound" (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 13). Some men plucked him from the tree with much difficulty and effort. If not, "he would have been burned to ashes" (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 13). After a short while, he died. These two terrifying flashbacks reveal how Mustafa's subconscious is preoccupied with the fear of death.

In another flashback on another day, Mustafa recalls in detail the day he saw Salman making love to a bay filly⁵ in the stable of the house. While reflecting deeply on this shocking event, weird thoughts pass through his mind:

What if Salman had a child by the bay filly? A foal... What would Salman do with it? Maybe the bay filly would give birth not to a foal but to a baby. A baby that looked like Salman... Maybe the baby would be half horse, half human, with the head of a horse on a human body... Then, when it cried would it neigh like a horse? Or suppose it had a human head on the body of a horse? [...] Mustafa imagined the foal with the human head growing up and himself riding it and he started to laugh, then stopped short in dismay. Would Salman ever let Mustafa ride a child of his? Never mind, the foal might turn out to be a girl, and just as ugly as Salman! [...] Maybe it would take after the bay filly, with eyes like hers, huge and sad and wondering, as she turned again and again to look at Salman. (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 18-19)

These strange thoughts show Kemal's creativity in putting boundless ideas in the minds of his characters so as to expand the psychological depth in his novel. And if the character is a child, an author can put any kind of thoughts in his mind, which is what Kemal does dexterously. An interesting thing here is that even in the thoughts of a child one can find allusions to mythology. Let us just remember the half-human, half-horse monsters called centaurs in Greek mythology. And after all, Kemal himself declares that myths and dreams are two foundations of his novels (Yaşar Kemal 2011: 205).

Salman the Solitary and the other two volumes of the *Kimsecik* trilogy are full of flashbacks, dreams, daydreams, instances of stream of consciousness, and deep feelings and thoughts. These psychological experiences, which are almost entirely about deep fears, mostly belong to Mustafa and Salman. Mustafa's subconscious is preoccupied with his extreme fear of Salman, who tormented and traumatized him at every

⁵ In his memoirs, Yaşar Kemal relates that as a child he loved a bay filly the most from among the few purebred foals his family owned after his father's death. When this bay filly was three years old, his uncle sold it because the family was poor and needed money (Yaşar Kemal 1994: 47).

opportunity. Like Kemal the child, Mustafa is lost in daydreams day and night and the description of these dreams is given in long passages that last pages. Interestingly, in his dreams and daydreams Mustafa sees many things before they happen. For example, he often sees Fair Emine in his dreams before meeting her. He dreams about Salman's killing his father before he really does it. Especially when İsmail Ağa and Salman are away on a business trip, Mustafa every night sees nightmares in which Salman kills his father in various horrible ways (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 199).

Interestingly, not only Mustafa, but all the village children see Salman in their dreams, which they tell each other in the morning as soon as they wake up "without ever mentioning Salman's name" (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 27). In chapter 2 of *Salman the Solitary*, the narrator combines these dreams and describes them in the shape of a single coherent dream as though they were all the same or complemented each other. This is a long dream that takes up almost five pages (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 27-31). I will mention only the parts I find important for my analysis. Let us start with the interesting beginning of the description of the dream:

In these dreams Salman would be astride the bay filly driving her straight at the children and trampling them, most of all Mustafa, who would be mangled to bits. And just as the children were picking up the pieces of his body from the dust and dung, Mustafa would wake up screaming in anguish... Then the bay filly would speed to the top of the crags and on to Anavarza, riding through the skies, and Salman would jump off and, clinging to her rump, quivering, his legs dangling in the air, he would mount her while they glided between a seething mass of horned rattlesnakes, and the snakes would sail alongside, flame-red, coiling and uncoiling in long ribbons, and the bay filly would open her legs wide, her rump crimpling, fainting with pleasure... But Salman withdraws his penis, a huge thing, large as a horse's, and the bay filly turns again and again, her eyes sad, questioning, and suddenly she snaps at Salman's penis and tears it off. Blood rains down, all the villagers rush out to watch the blood streaming from Salman's severed penis, very black in the bay filly's jaws. The people and houses, the mosque, the white castle ruins on the purple crags, the flowing river, all are steeped in blood. (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 27)

Since almost all the children have seen Salman's making love to the bay filly, which is a shocking event that has occupied an important place in their subconscious, they cannot help dreaming or making up dreams about it all together simultaneously. The bay filly's tearing off Salman's penis

could be interpreted as children's wish fulfillment, but the way it is described also sounds mythical. What comes to my mind is the Greek myth about the Titan Cronus's cutting his father Uranus's genitals with a sickle, shedding his blood like rain.

Then, in the dream, Salman throws his bloody dagger at İsmail Ağa who is standing in the courtyard of his house. İsmail Ağa tries to run away, but "the long long dagger whistles after him" and then a thousand daggers fly after him, cutting off heads of thousands of roosters and "slash[ing] through [a] cloud of bees" (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 29). İsmail Ağa constantly runs away and cries for help, but in the end Salman's "flaming" dagger "pierces his heart":

Again and again the dagger stabs him. İsmail Ağa shrieks, he tries to escape with the flaming dagger still stuck in his chest, but the mountains block his way, he turns back, he collapses at the foot of the cactus bush, dead, and his blood spurts out, green over the cactus leaves, while the flowery flanks of the mountains close in around him. And Salman bursts into İsmail Ağa's house, he stabs the inmates, one after the other they fall down beside İsmail Ağa's corpse in the last agonies of death. Salman rushes out again, mad with rage. (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 30)

Salman finds Mustafa beside his father's dead body and attacks him, but Mustafa "shakes himself free and runs for his life" (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 30). Salman throws "his daggers after him," but Mustafa runs away and "hides behind a rock, but the daggers [...] surround him," and he cannot move or even "breathe" (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 30-31). Seeing this, Salman "laughs" and "dances" merrily, and then "starts shooting, a hail of flaming bullets" (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 31). This is how the dream ends.

As these dreams also indicate, Salman is the greatest source of fear for Mustafa and the other children of the village. As a result of being constantly tyrannized and tormented by Salman, Mustafa becomes increasingly reserved and suffers from deep psychological problems. One day when Salman forces him to enter a fearsome cave full of bats, Mustafa for the first time resists, "scratching and kicking" him, and runs away (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 125). From that day on, whenever Salman calls Mustafa to spend time together, he does not respond in any way and constantly keeps away from him. Through Mustafa's consciousness, we realize how Salman's tormenting him has made the cave another source of fear for him:

Swarms of bats inhabited it, hanging by their feet, upside down, and at night; it was well known, if they caught a child they would bleed him white. [...] Mustafa, and all the other children too, were terrified of this lowering cave that panted like a giant, shaking the crags and the ruins. Whenever he passed along on his way to the fields, he would close his eyes and run for his life and never stop until he reached the fields, his heart in his mouth, bathed in sweat, trembling in all his limbs. [...] Like Mustafa, like all the children, the grown-ups too shivered as they walked along the path beneath the cave, only they were careful not to show their fear. (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 22)

As this quote also indicates, Mustafa's fear is so deep and he has become so sensitive about fear that he thinks everyone is awfully afraid of Salman. In his stream of consciousness, he thinks that even "the bandit Zalimoğlu" fears Salman, and "so does his father's enemy, the one Salman lies in wait for, should he come to kill Ismail Agha, the one who rides in a motorcar... Mustafa has seen it... Well, even that man fears Salman. Everyone does..." (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 25). Thus with his sharpened sense of fear Mustafa can intuitively feel and "see" that people are scared. He can feel that Arif Saim Bey, who is the man riding in a motorcar, is his father's enemy and intends to kill him. He also senses that Salman, too, is aware of Arif Saim Bey's evil intentions. Moreover, Mustafa can understand when his father is afraid: "people thought him fearless, but Mustafa knew better. He knew it when his father was afraid and a pang of fear would shoot through his heart. A shadow would pass over Ismail Agha's face, over his eyes, his hands, and Mustafa would shiver with alarm" (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 21).

To avoid Salman and to cope with his fears, Mustafa every day spends hours gazing at the *kilims* on the walls and floors of the house, "the thousand and one scintillating colours in the shaft of sunlight that fell through the window" onto the *kilims*, as well as swallows, swallow chicks, and bees, especially when they are "trapped in a shaft of sunlight" (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 16, 20, 144). When he watches the bees trapped in a shaft of sunlight, he is overjoyed and so absorbed that he forgets everything, "his father, Salman, Osman devoured by the eagles, Zalimoğlu, the bleeding, ever-bleeding mulberry tree... But when he came to, the terror would return, the hellish dread, the trembling" (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 21). When he spends time with his father on the crags near the village, he usually watches and plays with bees, various other insects, and swallows, and he sings *türkü*s for hours while his father performs his *namaz* prayers. Sometimes they watch the beautiful scenery together, and sometimes his

father sings Kurdish songs for hours. When Mustafa sings, he invents songs about eagles, swallows and their chicks, snakes, “the half-burnt mulberry tree that spurted blood, the bat-infested cave, [and] the saint’s shrine on the mountain top...” (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 23). We learn that Mustafa imitates the bard Aşık Rahmi⁶ when “he improvise[s] his songs” (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 23). Mustafa’s singing songs and watching *kilims*, sunbeams, birds, insects, and nature all elevate him spiritually and make him feel “relief, calm, peace, and ease in [his] heart” (Merter 2007: 181). In fact, not only Mustafa, but Salman, İsmail Ağa, and Hasan Ağa all often sing *türkü*s through which they feel spiritually elevated and psychologically cured. Needless to say, praying may, above all else, enable one to have spiritual elevation.

Like Mustafa, Salman has deep fears as well. He constantly sees nightmares at night and has horrible flashbacks from his painful and traumatic past during the day. His psychological balance is extremely disrupted, and like Mustafa, he has a sharpened sense of fear: “For Salman the world was a place of fear. Everyone, every creature in the world felt fear, even the bees and birds and butterflies... The grasshoppers and ants, even the eagles on high...” (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 116). In a stream-of-consciousness flashback in Chapter 5 of *Salman the Solitary*, we read how in a massacre Salman’s family and many Yezidis were killed, how he survived that massacre, and how he was found by İsmail Ağa and cured by İsmail Ağa’s mother with an ointment she made from the mountain and forest herbs:

...he saw again the tapering narrow knife, red, slashing, sparkling, swishing like rainfall, its redness flaring and fading, sprinkling down, crystalline... The smoke, a yellow stream, a swamp... A scream... And again the flashing crimson pinpoints... And rows of black black eyes closing in death... At the Mardin Gate, below the ramparts of Diyarbakir town white-cowled women are rocking from side to side, keening for their dead. Smoke lies over the plain. [...] Some men drag a boy from under the dead. They look at him, pursing their lips and say something in a strange tongue. Darkness falls like a shroud over the land. Hoofbeats pound through the blackness raising the echoes, sounding even louder in the damp heavy night. The anguished neighing... Scorpions, big as a hand, glistening

⁶ Aşık Rahmi is a famous Çukurova bard who praised Aşık Kemal as a student in the last year of primary school and proposed working together as wandering bards in Anatolia (Yaşar Kemal 1994: 38). Needless to say, this is a significant autobiographical detail of Yaşar Kemal.

blackly on the walls, like burning amber. [...] The keening resounding from the mountain beyond... Then total silence... The dank large bush... The weakness that drained even the fear of death out of you... The stench, the retching... Death among the odour of violets and fresh grass... Darkness. A voice... A face, smiling, a face from out of the past, forgotten... The fumes of an odorous ointment, laden with mountain scents... (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 119)

The allusions in this quote are immensely implicit because no names are given. However, combining Kotey's story in Yaşar Kemal's memoirs with the textual clues in the quote, we understand that the boy they drag from under the dead is Salman, and the people massacred are Yezidis. Moreover, the deadly weak person in "the dank large bush" waiting for his death and stinking with a terrible stench is again Salman. The voice Salman hears and the smiling face he sees belong to İsmail Ağa, who found him in the extremely damp and dark bush. The "ointment, laden with mountain scents" is the ointment İsmail Ağa's mother made to cure Salman's wounds.

In the last chapter of *Salman the Solitary*, through his own consciousness we read Salman's sad history full of suffering and traumas for pages. In a more explicit stream-of-consciousness flashback, we are shown his Yezidi background, how his mother and many Yezidis were killed, how he survived those massacres, and what he experienced with herds of starving children and dogs in the desert (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 273). Except for an affair between Salman's mother and a man with red hair, both of whom Salman's father killed, most of the details in the flashback match the details related in the blind beggar Kotey's story in Yaşar Kemal's memoirs (Yaşar Kemal 1994: 22-25).

In the remaining parts of the flashback, Salman joins a pack of dogs, which he later brings together with the band of children he joined previously. Together the gang of children and dogs raid and plunder many villages and towns for food. In one of these raids, they are ambushed by the people of a town, and many dogs and children are shot dead or wounded: "The dogs dropped by the dozen, writhing, they fled, blood spurting from their wounds. The children fell over the dead dogs, dying, and the slaughter went on all morning" (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 278-79). Salman manages to run away into the forest "holding a goat leg and a huge loaf of bread," but he is badly wounded (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 279). At the end of the flashback, we read his thoughts in a stream of consciousness:

For how long, how many days, years, had Salman roamed like this in the desert with children, with dogs... What destruction had he not seen, what bloodshed, what savagery. It had all seemed quite normal to him. One thing he remembered very clearly. All through that time he was with the children and the dogs, he would greet the rising sun, kneeling and kissing the ground three times. He would murmur a prayer that would turn into a chant. [...] This mode of worship spread not only to the children of Salman's band, but to all the vagrant children on the Mesopotamian plain. It was a distinctive thing about them, a special ritual. As for Salman he steadfastly kept up the ritual to this day, sometimes secretly, sometimes quite openly.

"Ah father, if only you knew who I am, if only you knew the real Salman... How many times he's been through fortune's wheel..."

In all this huge Chukurova no one knew who he was. Not even in the village did anyone know him. There were times when Salman could not help himself from hinting at some incident from his past that he remembered, but that was nothing to show the real Salman. He was doomed to remain a sealed book for everyone, even for himself, to the end of his life. (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 279)

Thus, Salman is alone in the world. As the word "kimsecik" [little nobody] in the Turkish title of the trilogy also hints, he is a little nobody. He is "doomed to remain a sealed book for everyone, even for himself," because "the humiliation" and "human misery that Salman has witnessed and experienced is so deep that even to share it with another human being is a humiliation" (Tharaud 1999: 296-97). This "fear of humiliation" is the reason behind "Salman's violent feelings [that] often appear obscure and inexplicable" (Tharaud 1999: 297). It is also because of his "severe humiliation as an orphan" that he developed a feeling of hatred for himself (Tharaud 1999: 302). As the quote also implies, perhaps the little nobody Salman is afraid to reveal his Yezidi identity and past. Having seen the killing of so many Yezidis, including his own family, only because they were Yezidi, he feels that he has to keep his Yezidi identity secret forever because they may kill him as well, or at least humiliate and oppress him. After all, it must not be easy for a Yezidi to reveal his identity in 1915-1930.

A significant event that shatters Salman's psychology is Mustafa's birth at the end of Chapter 4. From the day of Mustafa's birth, the amount of attention paid to Salman by his adoptive parents begins to decrease, and as

Mustafa grows, no one cares about Salman anymore: “It was as though he did not exist” (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 110). We read in detail Salman’s feelings and behavior in the face of this new situation. Seeing that everybody has forgotten him and is paying attention only to Mustafa, Salman grows extremely jealous of Mustafa and stops talking to anyone. He leaves the house early in the morning and returns late at night without showing himself to anyone. One day he catches a partridge chick, and treating it as his only friend, he “lavished all his love on it. He talked and played and slept with it” (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 110). The partridge chick “seems to be a projection of Salman, who lavishes the love and affection on it that he desires for himself from [İsmail Ağa and Zero as] his parents” (Tharaud 1999: 298). The emotional vacuum in him causes him to experience psychological crises and depression.

Once, while Salman is playing with his bird in the courtyard, he sees İsmail Ağa and Mustafa watching them from the balcony and laughing happily. He gets furious and suddenly severs the partridge’s head from its body. Both İsmail Ağa and Mustafa are shocked: “Mustafa’s eyes, wide with horror, were riveted on the dead bird and Ismail Agha’s laughter had frozen on his lips” (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 116). Salman walks out of the courtyard and goes down to the riverside, “a shivering joy, akin to fear, rising within him” (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 116). Then he walks to a nearby ravine and puts his head on a rock and falls asleep instantly. When he wakes up, it is past midnight. Terrified, he runs home as fast as he can. On the way, he reflects on what he did to the partridge, and once again we witness his deep fear of death:

As he was tearing apart the partridge’s head, that very instant, they had come eye to eye. The partridge had veiled its eyes not to see death coming, but it had died too soon, and its eyes had remained half-veiled. As he thought of the partridge, his brain stopped working, his throat went dry, his body twitched and jerked just like that of the dying partridge. (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 116-17)

The love İsmail Ağa and Salman feel for each other is a significant psychological element that Yaşar Kemal foregrounds by revealing their inner worlds. For instance, in Chapter 5, when İsmail Ağa witnesses Salman’s pressure on Mustafa and Mustafa’s violent reactions to Salman, he interferes angrily: “Salman, [...] you must have done something very bad to this child. Don’t ever come near him again or...” (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 126). Hearing these words from his father, Salman feels offended and humiliated and leaves right away. Feeling that he may have broken

Salman's heart, İsmail Ağa, in his stream of consciousness, reflects on the nature of the love Salman and Mustafa feel for their father and also on the love he himself feels for Salman:

Is it Salman who loves me more or is it Mustafa? Mustafa's love was instinctive, natural, his own flesh and blood, a thing of joy, flowing clear as a spring. With Salman it was quite different, an adoration, an infinite devotion. Salman's whole being was centred on him, whatever he did, his every move was for him. He lived and breathed only for him. Salman had no relatives, no roots, no god. İsmail Ağa was everything to him, he felt him in every drop of his blood. Maybe this was real love, to have eyes for only one thing in the world, to breathe for that one thing only. [...] Since the beginning Salman had been an exceptional source of happiness for İsmail Ağa. No one, not his mother, not his wife, not his brothers, not even Mustafa, no one had been so close to him, no one's friendship or love had ever filled him with such tremulous pleasure... If anything were to happen to him, Salman would never survive, whereas Mustafa would take it naturally, like any son losing his father, he would grieve a little, and then he would forget, just like he himself had his own father. Maybe he would name one of his sons after him, never even thinking of him when he called that son by his name. (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 127-28)

The love between İsmail Ağa and Salman is not based on a biological bond as in the love between İsmail Ağa and Mustafa. Apparently, Yaşar Kemal seems to foreground the idea that a love rooted in devotion, sacrifice, and shared experiences is much stronger than a love based on blood ties.

In the last chapter of the novel, Salman thinks about how much he loves his father İsmail Ağa:

Who else did he have in this world? His father was everything to him, his whole existence... If he were to die one day... The very thought made Salman tremble from top to toe. He longed for his father to know him well, to love him a little, just the thousandth part of the way he had loved him before Mustafa was born. He wanted his father to know that no one in this world loved him as much as he did, [...] And always when he thought of his father, from the first moment, he had seen him as he lay with his wounds festering, stinking, when everyone turned away from him holding their nose, when he was ready to sink with shame, he remembered how his father had caressed him with love, held him to his breast, and the very thought was

like a dream of paradise and lifted him out of this world in a wave of pride and bliss. (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 271)

As the streams of consciousness of both İsmail Ağa and Salman indicate, İsmail Ağa and Salman's feelings for each other are similar. Recollecting the way İsmail Ağa treated him with pure love on the day they found him in the forest is "like a dream of paradise" that elevates Salman "out of this world in a wave of pride and bliss." Salman, as a Yezidi orphan who always saw enmity and humiliation from other people, is aware that İsmail Ağa not only saved his life, but loved him as a son. Seeing that İsmail Ağa does not love him as much as he did before Mustafa's birth, Salman feels devastated. For him, losing his father's love is a horrible calamity.

He can never forget the way his father stared at him in a humiliating manner, "as though looking at some insect," when he did not reply to his father's question about why he fired bullets all over the village after the bay filly was sold (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 233). Salman's fear of losing his father's love and of being humiliated by his father is so great that he would "wish for a thousand deaths" instead of seeing his father staring at him with "a cold icy look, as though looking at a worm, as though looking at something that wasn't there" (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 306). Accordingly, one of the explanations as to why he murdered İsmail Ağa could be that he killed him the moment he was entirely convinced that his father did not love him any more.

In Chapter 3 of the novel, we read a tragic love story, which is based on the real story of Hüseyin Bey, the son of Sadık Efendi's paternal uncle. Yaşar Kemal relates Hüseyin Bey's story in his memoirs (Yaşar Kemal 1994: 15-17). In the novel, İsmail Ağa's cousin Hüseyin Bey is a student at the Military Academy in İstanbul. One day he returns from İstanbul permanently, isolates himself from the whole village, and begins to go to the side of Lake Van every day to watch the lake from morning till night. This lasts nearly six years. The narrator tells us that Hüseyin Bey fell in love with a fairy in İstanbul who told him to go to Van because she had a sister in Lake Van and she would go and join her there. Then she added: "I'll be [in the lake] where you can see me every day from dawn to nightfall. After the sun sets I must go back to my father, the Peri King who lives in Van Castle..." (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 41). Upon hearing this, Hüseyin Bey returns to the village and begins to visit the lake every day to watch his darling fairy from morning till night. Of course, only *he* can see the fairy in the lake.

When the Russian army occupies Van during the First World War and begins to destroy the village with cannonballs, killing and wounding many, people prepare quickly and leave the village to migrate southward. Hüseyin Bey's father asks İsmail Ağa to go and bring Hüseyin Bey from his usual place beside the lake. When İsmail Ağa arrives at the coast of the lake, he sees Hüseyin Bey's dead body lying on the water with his face down. He takes the body out of the lake, places it at the spot where Hüseyin Bey always sat, turns its face towards the lake, and leaves it in that position, setting out to catch the others. He tells his uncle and the others that Hüseyin Bey has already left: "Maybe he's already ahead of us. We'll meet him on the way" (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 44). My interpretation of this story is that Hüseyin Bey's mental balance is disrupted perhaps because of unrequited love. And perhaps he committed suicide in the lake in order not to be separated from his fairy love there.

As previously mentioned, the story related in *Kimsecik* mostly matches the autobiographical details that Yaşar Kemal has revealed in his memoirs and interviews. To mention the innumerable obvious autobiographical details in the person and life of Mustafa in *Kimsecik* is unnecessary; one can easily identify them by comparing them with the autobiographical details in Kemal's memoirs and interviews, which would take up a whole book. Therefore, instead of doing this, I will recount the autobiographical details that Kemal has hidden in the other characters of the novel, which is more meaningful and which demonstrates that the autobiographical depth in *Kimsecik* is not limited to Mustafa. We know that Kemal tends to make his main characters feel, think, speak, and behave like himself. In other words, he "expresses himself through his characters by appropriating both their discourses and psychologies" (Gürsel 2000: 139). In *Salman the Solitary*, Kemal projects his autobiographical details onto other characters such as İsmail Ağa, Salman, and Zalımoğlu Halil.

As an example I will mention only Zalımoğlu Halil. While working in blackthorn fields as a stumper, Halil feels sad because he has to destroy the spider webs "stretched taut across the bushes, [...] each one as large as a sheet," and when he sees "the spiders retreating into a corner of the web and watching with sad eyes their beautiful handiwork ruined," he feels sadder (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 175). There are also "a lot of bird nests and honeycombs [...] lodged in the bushes," and Halil takes great care to protect them:

Halil would not touch the bushes that harboured chicks or eggs, at least not until the winter, so that the wide fields were dotted with these nest-filled bushes, solitary mounds with birds

fluttering over them. As for the honeycombs, he toted them down to the riverside, painstakingly, his face and hands all swollen with the sting of bees, setting them carefully down on the blackberry bushes by the river. These bushes buzzed with angry bees that stung anyone passing by. But still Halil continued to bring them there, comb after comb, some of them large as a tray, with the bees swarming along. (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 175)

Evidently, like Yaşar Kemal, Halil is a merciful and sensitive person who loves the environment, nature, and art. Also Halil's seeing spiders "watching with sad eyes their beautiful handiwork ruined" must mirror Yaşar Kemal's sensitive perception. Who else can see spiders that watch with sad eyes their work of art destroyed?

Halil's interest in birds, bees, butterflies, ladybugs, and all kinds of insects is also exactly like Yaşar Kemal's. In the following quote, we see Halil and his fellow stumper and best friend Şahin watching birds and insects in fascination in a blackthorn field:

The bushes teemed with birds and bees and ants and hard-cased beetles which glistened, blue, and green, orange and yellow, and large, finely filigreed mauve and orange butterflies. There were cardoons too that housed thousands of ladybirds. And whenever he came upon such a nest, Halil would be transported with joy. "See this, Şahin?" he said as he caressed them with his eyes. "Everything I ask for will come true! Did you ever see so many of these lucky insects, Allah's own harbingers of good fortune?" He bent down, selected one of the larger ladybirds and watched as it crept through the black hairs and blisters and earth-filled furrows of his hand. "Fly away, fly away, pretty little insect," he urged. "If you fly now, everything I wish for will come true." His eyes fixed anxiously on the shiny black-specked red ladybird, his lips trembling, he repeated like an incantation "Fly, dainty little insect, fly away, do..." The ladybird struggled through the hairs, then up and down the fingers and, just as Halil, his heart in his mouth, was beginning to despair, it stopped at the tip of his thumb, the right position Halil knew from long experience, lifted its wings, ready to take flight, and suddenly, to Halil's delight, soared into the air. Halil would repeat this with another ladybird, and then another, and after the third ladybird had flown away, he would heave a sigh of relief. "Come, Şahin brother," he would say, "let's rest a little under that oak tree." And he would drift into a reverie with thousands of black-specked red ladybirds flitting to and fro, glittering in the sunlight. (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 177-78)

Halil's love for ladybirds is obviously identical with Kemal's love for them. In his memoirs Kemal himself states that his favorite beetle is the ladybird, that he was very curious about ladybirds in his youth, and that "a ladybird honors almost every novel of [his]" (Yaşar Kemal 1994: 130). Halil's "caressing" the ladybirds "with his eyes" and seeing "thousands" of them in his reverie also point to this autobiographical detail of Kemal. Textual evidence in this quote and in the rest of the novel indicates that Halil, with his naiveté and innocence, is also like a child despite the fact that he, like İnce Memed, rebelled against injustice and killed Memik Ağa and his family. Kemal's highly spiritual characters usually have features of children and watch things in fascination with childlike eyes. Apparently, watching and playing with ladybirds elevates Halil spiritually and makes him feel happy and hopeful, which is a sort of psychotherapy. By the way, the Turkish word for ladybird is *uğurböceği*, literally "luck bug," and as part of Turkish culture, people believe that if a ladybird flies away from your hand, this will bring you good luck.

A significant element that contributes to the psychological texture of Kemal's fiction is "The element of strangeness and humor [which] is a cornerstone of his works" (Dino 1998: 21). Irony is inseparable from this aspect. In Chapter 3 of *Salman the Solitary*, while waiting on a bridge for someone who could guide him to a village or town to get food and other necessities for his fatigued family, İsmail Ağa meets a military deserter and tobacco smuggler named Niyazi. The journey of İsmail Ağa and his family from Van to the Çukurova has taken one and a half years, and now the year is 1917. After a long friendly conversation, Niyazi takes İsmail Ağa to the Kurdish Haşmet Bey, the greatest Bey of those areas, who helps İsmail Ağa and his family. In another long conversation that Niyazi has with İsmail Ağa, we hear grotesque things:

"My father went off to fight in some war or other when I was still in my mother's womb and he never was seen again, the poor bloke. Who knows in what desert he fell and became food for the ants... Ants are particularly fond of human eyes. Who knows how many thousands of eyes they ate there along with my father's... [...] they feast on the eyeballs, never touching any other part of the corpse... [...] But tell me, you come from a cold climate, are there ants in the winter too, in the snow? Are they also partial to human eyeballs?"

"They are indeed!" İsmail Ağa laughed.

"Oh dear," Niyazi said. "Then it was a real feast the ants had at Sarikamish with our ninety thousand dead. Think of it, millions

of ants, long dark trains in the snow, swarming over a hundred and eighty thousand eyeballs, nibbling the eye sockets bare... [...] Every morning on waking, ever since I was a boy, my hand goes straight to my eyes. God, how happy I am to find them in their place! It's for fear my eyes would be devoured by ants that I deserted. But I know it, my eyes will be devoured by ants in the end. Just like my father's." (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 95)

Like Salman, Niyazi is an orphan and victim of war although he was in his mother's womb when his father was killed in some war before World War I. As an orphan he seems to have suffered a lot from being fatherless. Like Salman, he has deep fears. He is horrified of being killed in war like his father, and he has a weird phobia: that his eyes will be devoured by ants "just like [his] father's." Thus he ran away from the military because he feared that "[his] eyes would be devoured by ants" after he was killed in some war. Kemal puts his anti-war stance implicitly in the form of irony. Niyazi's statement, "Then it was a real feast the ants had at Sarıkamış with our ninety thousand dead," is full of irony about war and the tragedy of the Turkish army in the battle of Sarıkamış in 1915. The ghost of war, which is always a horrible trauma, damages people – for a long time – directly and indirectly.

Interestingly, Niyazi thinks and speaks like a child. Apparently, as with Zalımoğlu Halil, Kemal hides himself in the character of Niyazi as a child and makes him speak of strange things that only children can think of. It is crucial for Kemal as a writer to look at life through the perspective of a child, and he often hides himself in his characters and makes them think, speak, and behave like children. In this way we are shown some of the nine hundred layers of Kemal's soul. After all, a child and an anti-war person are at a higher spiritual level than a person who is neutral or pro-war.

A significant element that has a considerable impact on the psychological texture and architecture of the novel and on the psychological transformation of the characters, especially of Salman, is the common use of gossip through the anonymous voices of the villagers as in a Greek chorus. Throughout the novel, we read lots of rumors voiced by the choruses of villagers about any change in İsmail Ağa and his family's life and fortune. Sometimes we hear such absurd, weird, and nasty views from them that we feel as if we are reading some unfiltered thoughts in the subconscious of some individuals. Sometimes these views also sound like the naïve and unrestricted thoughts of a child. All this gossip poisons relations and makes people have unfriendly feelings for each other. For

instance, as a result of these rumors, Arif Saim Bey begins to think negatively about İsmail Ağa. Through his long stream of consciousness, we read that he has heard the gossip that İsmail Ağa is “determined to find a way of doing away with him,” that he is “planning to discredit him in the eyes of Mustafa Kemal Pasha,” that he plans “to appropriate the whole farm for himself,” and that he intends “to supplant Arif Saim Bey as member of Parliament” (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 265).

Among the rumors circulating around the village, there are many that are extremely annoying and provoking for Salman. For instance, the gossip that İsmail Ağa killed Salman’s mother, his first wife, and that he will kill Salman as well, or that he will have Salman kill Arif Saim Bey influences Salman immensely. In the end, he becomes almost addicted to the rumors. Every day he walks around the village from morning till night and does everything to hear them. Apparently, Salman’s psychological balance has been terribly disrupted, and the social and psychological pressure from the malicious gossip is a significant factor that causes his psychological health to deteriorate. Just to have an idea about the intensity of the gossip, I quote a short chunk below:

“Salman should take his mother’s revenge. Blood for blood...”

“How could he know, the poor innocent, that Ismail killed his mother [...]”

“Salman doesn’t even know that he’s Ismail’s own son.”

“They want us to believe they found him on the road...”

“Dying...”

“Who would swallow that?” (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 204)

At the end of the novel, we see Salman living an isolated life on the farm with a shattered psychology and an extremely confused mind. One morning Arif Saim Bey comes to the farm in his car and takes Salman to an unknown place. When Salman returns a few days later, we see him “preoccupied, unwilling to look [at] or talk to anyone” (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 303). There is a heavy burden on his mind and heart to the extent that he even forgets to eat. To cope with this psychological burden, he stays at Emine’s house for a while, but it is useless. Then he again walks through the village to listen to the vicious gossip of the villagers. His mood often changes, and he begins to behave like a mad man. Several days later, he begins to “go out into the mountain to shoot, aiming at every living thing he saw, never missing his mark however small” (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 303). He kills birds, hares, foxes, jackals, gazelles, etc., leaving

them behind “without another look at them” (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 304). Evidently, whatever is preoccupying his mind is causing him to behave in this way.

He does not know what to do with himself. Nothing helps him to get rid of his mental burden. For this reason, he cannot sleep at night; instead, “he either went galloping full speed along the plain or he rambled up on the crags or among the ancient ruins” (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 304). One night when it is raining heavily, he rides at full speed into the mountains. When he returns, he is soaked and shivering. He tells Müslüm Ağa, İsmail Ağa’s head steward in charge of the farm, “They’re going to kill me” (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 306). Müslüm Ağa tries to console him, but it is impossible. After some days, Salman this time tells Müslüm Ağa, “They’re going to kill my father” (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 307-8). He repeats this “quietly over and over again” (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 306). Then he quickly mounts his horse and leaves the farm instantly. On the way, while a strong wind is blowing, “whipping his face, booming, whistling,” he rides through “yellow fields of man-tall, heavy-eared wheat” and hears the “swishing” sound of the wind, the wheat, and of blood (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 308-9). Apparently, the sound of blood dominates the others, and along with a chain of stream-of-consciousness flashbacks, he repeats crying “They’re going to kill my father” like the refrain of a lament. Below I quote only a short part from the long passage in the novel:

Children and dogs, tongues lolling, rushing from village to village, from town to town, screaming. Flashing, swords, swish swish... Sandhills aswarm with huddled frightened people, horsemen galloping bareback, drawn swords plunging into soft flesh, in, out, in, out, blood spurting, denting the desert sand swish swish... A mauve expanse of thornbushes, teeming with snakes, children and dogs lying low... swish swish... [...] Mustafa’s eyes, wide with fear, widening, a face all eyes, swish swish... They’re going to kill my father... [...] The rain is coming. Spiked wheat spilling to the ground... Naked children, dogs, labourers, wheat spikes broken, engulfed, drowned in light, lost to sight, lost in the blowing light. Mustafa, swords, blood, İsmail Ağa, sad, hurt... swish swish. (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 309-10)

And let us remember that the title of the third volume of *Kimsecik* is *Kanın Sesi* [The Sound of Blood]. Apparently, blood is calling him.

Afterward, Salman goes to Fair Emine’s house and repeats the refrain that they will kill his father. Then, leaving his horse, weapons, and binoculars there, he takes only his dagger and rushes to İsmail Ağa’s mansion. Süllü

the groom is standing at the gate, and when Salman asks him his father's whereabouts, Süllü "pointed to the crags behind the pomegranate tree" (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 310). There İsmail Ağa is sitting among some villagers, waiting for the evening call to prayer and telling his prayer beads.

Salman walks toward his father, and on the way, he sees Mustafa "who was playing with some children under a cactus hedge, laughing and shouting with joy" (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 311). Salman is enraged and rushes toward İsmail Ağa. Seeing Salman standing before him, İsmail Ağa

smiled, Salman murmured something unintelligible. Father and son faced each other, but suddenly İsmail Ağa's eyes widened with astonishment. And in the same instant Salman was upon him, dagger drawn. With a grating of bones the double-edged Circassian dagger plunged three times straight into İsmail Ağa's heart. As Salman ran off into the crags still holding his bloody dagger, İsmail Ağa rose, his tall figure swaying, his hand clutching his collar, his eyes huge. Then he sank to the ground, his eyes still staring, aghast, frozen. (Yaşar Kemal 1998: 311)

Thus the novel ends with Salman the little nobody, the little rainbird, killing his adoptive father İsmail Ağa.

As a "symbolic motif," the rainbird in the Turkish title of *Kimsecik 1, Yağmurcuk Kuşu* [The Little Rainbird], seems to stand for Salman, whose "desperate, overwrought behavior just before the end of the [novel] symbolically reflects the Turkish title":

The rainbird, or cuckoo, is generally more vocal before a storm—in this case the storm of passion and violence that leads to parricide. The cuckoo is also notorious for laying its eggs in the nests of other birds, who hatch the cuckoo chicks along with their own, only to have the little cuckoo grow up to devour its siblings and the surrogate parents as well. [...] Ultimately, the little rainbird Salman murders İsmail Ağa, his surrogate parent. (Tharaud 1999: 297)

Perhaps such symbolism in *Salman the Solitary* provides us with an abstract interpretation for why Salman murdered İsmail Ağa, but this is only one explanation from among the uncertain many. In fact, in *Salman the Solitary* Yaşar Kemal "constructs a framework within which to understand such a man [as Salman]," and at the end of the novel, "we don't have a clear explanation for the murder, but rather a spectrum of

motivations—at times impressionistically conveyed through a mind distorted by fear and self-doubt” (Tharaud 1999: 294).

A simple explanation that comes to my mind is related to Salman’s Yezidi past. Perhaps the little nobody Salman is afraid to reveal his Yezidi identity. He has to keep it secret because he fears they may kill him. Perhaps Arif Saim Bey learned about Salman’s Yezidi background and threatened him with revealing his identity and informing on him to the Arab horsemen who killed so many Yezidis, including Salman’s family, during the First World War. Maybe Arif Saim Bey forced Salman to murder İsmail Ağa with such threats. And maybe that is why Salman tells Müslüm Ağa, “They’re going to kill me,” and then, “They’re going to kill my father.” Things may be so simple. After all, it was not easy in 1915-1930 to reveal your Yezidi identity. How could Salman reveal his identity after seeing the killing of so many Yezidis, including his own family? Thus *Salman the Solitary* and the whole *Kimsecik* trilogy could also be considered as the tragedy of a Yezidi orphan.⁷

3. Conclusion

To sum up, as my analysis of *Salman the Solitary* demonstrates, psychological depth and autobiographical depth are two inseparable foundations of Yaşar Kemal’s fiction. In other words, Yaşar Kemal exists in his novels explicitly or implicitly with many aspects of his outer and inner life. His novels project his own inner journeys, which enable him to have spiritual elevation and inner peace. In my analysis, by examining some of the fictional instruments he utilizes in order to create psychological depth and by using a conceptual framework from Sufism, I have shown that there are numerous elements that cause spiritual elevation and function like psychotherapy in his fiction. For instance, art in an all-encompassing sense, daydreaming, meditating, watching nature, challenging fear, feeling and behaving like a child, reading, writing, and the like all play a significant role in the self-psychotherapy of deeply traumatized and suffering characters like Kemal himself.

Among these elements, for instance, daydreaming plays a crucial role in the self-psychotherapy of Mustafa of *Kimsecik*. His daydreaming continues gradually throughout the trilogy until he fully recovers at the end. Interestingly, this is remarkably similar to Merter’s psychotherapy

⁷ Incidentally, in a talk I and Barry Tharaud had with Yaşar Kemal in 2012 he told us that his adopted brother Yusuf was not a Yezidi.

through active dreaming (Merter 2007: 377). Apparently, self-inspiration through daydreaming is a noteworthy method of psychotherapy, and there are some psychological lessons to be taken from this and other similar aspects of Yaşar Kemal's novels. We should remember that Kemal as a child loved daydreaming in which he could lose himself day and night (Yaşar Kemal 1994: 89).

In *Salman the Solitary*, Salman somehow cannot make a healthy inner journey and recover from the horrible traumas he experienced during World War I. He cannot have enough time or opportunity to travel into the depths of his soul to establish his inner peace, and at the end of the novel he goes mad and kills his father. In the rest of the *Kimsecik* trilogy, Salman's psychological health deteriorates, and he continues committing crimes until he is beheaded by a shepherd he humiliated. On the other hand, like Kemal, the protagonist Mustafa recovers from his psychological problems through a long process of deep inner journeys that enables him to have spiritual elevation. At that high level of the *nefs* (self), at the end of *Kimsecik*, he decides to realize his dream of reaching the heavenly Lake Van and its surroundings. Apparently, Mustafa's self-psychotherapy is a process of inner journeys through which he moves toward that "deeper me inside me," and as he stands for Kemal the child, this is also Yaşar Kemal's process of inner journeys to the depths of his soul.

Thus, by trying to move toward that "deeper me inside me" through Mustafa's consciousness, Yaşar Kemal reveals some of the nine hundred layers of his own psyche. In this way, he invites us to accompany him and to find ourselves in his novel. As he himself explains the reason of the attraction of his novels, "If you have written about yourself very deeply, that means you are deeply together with all humankind. And this is what it means to be a writer" (Yaşar Kemal 2009: 265).

All in all, by exploring psychological depth and autobiographical depth as two inseparable foundations of Yaşar Kemal's *Salman the Solitary* and of his fiction in general, my paper sheds light on his portrait as a contemporary novelist who has not been understood well and studied properly as he himself has complained: "I don't think my profile as an author has been drawn close to reality. Is this not a source of unhappiness for an author? They have paid no attention to what I really wanted to do and did in the novel" (Yaşar Kemal 1994: 160). What Kemal has really wanted to do and done in his fiction is to create a literature based on psychological depth, which he considers as the measure of great literature (Kabacalı 1992: 82). With such a portrait, he has demonstrated that he is a

great master of the psychological novel who has extended its boundaries through an original and innovative approach to it.

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