

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Distinctive Features of Character Portraiture in Literary Works

Aminova Lolakhon Alimovna

Associate Professor at the Higher School of Turkic Studies, Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies, Uzbekistan

VOLUME: Vol.06 Issue03 2026

PAGE: 19-22

Copyright © 2026 European International Journal of Philological Sciences, this is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License. Licensed under Creative Commons License a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

## Abstract

This article is devoted to the problem of the plot in artistic text, particular in the works of well – known Turkish prose-writer Yashar Kamol. As the construction of plot line is one of the most important signitures of creative style and artistic mastery, the attempt to define this writer’s skill through the analysis of the plots which are especially typical for him is given in this article.

## KEY WORDS

Character portraiture, literary characterization, artistic depiction, narrative techniques, psychological portrayal, authorial style, descriptive imagery, character development, literary analysis, artistic representation.

## INTRODUCTION

In assessing a writer’s artistic mastery, particular importance is attached to the uniqueness with which they create the portrait of a literary character. This is because the portrait fashioned by the writer serves as the primary point of reference for forming an initial perception of the character. In some literary works, authors depict a character’s actions and physical appearance before revealing their name, occupation, purpose, or place of residence. Prior to narrating the main events of the work, the reader is introduced to a character through a specific image or outward form. The emotional impact and appeal of a literary character depend, first and foremost, on their appearance and visual presence—that is, on the portrait drawn by the author.

In his novels and novellas, the Turkish writer Yaşar Kemal presents character portraits in great detail, relying on distinctive and carefully selected elements. Moreover, the characters in his works differ markedly from those in the writings of other authors, particularly in terms of their unique and striking external features.

As noted above, a writer’s creative mastery is manifested

прежде всего in the images of the characters they create. For instance, when the name of the Uzbek writer Abdulla Qodiriy is mentioned, characters such as Otabek, Kumush, Homid, Anvar, and Ra’no inevitably come to mind. Similarly, when speaking of Oybek, one immediately recalls his characters Navoi, Yulchi, and Gulnor. This is because these writers succeeded in presenting vivid and compelling character portrayals in their literary works.

The Turkish writer Yaşar Kemal authored numerous novellas, novels, and short stories, creating a wide range of memorable characters. Each of these characters attracts the reader’s attention through a distinctive appearance and a unique life experience. Among them, however, İnce Memed stands out as one of the most vivid and iconic figures in Yaşar Kemal’s oeuvre. The author even titles his novel after this character.

İnce Memed is not engaged in any productive or socially beneficial creative activity; he is a bandit. Yet he is not portrayed as a towering, broad-shouldered, invincible hero of epic strength capable of crushing mountains like the legendary warriors celebrated in folklore. In the opening sections of the

novel, İnce Memed is introduced as a helpless and impoverished boy who flees the oppression of a village elder. The writer describes the character's appearance as follows: "He was a plump, round-faced boy with sheep-like eyes; his sun-bleached hair fell in thick locks onto his forehead. His body had darkened under the sun; he was about eleven years old, his torn trousers rolled up to his knees, barefoot, his legs scratched and bloodied by thorns."

İnce Memed is an ordinary adolescent who suffers from injustice, oppression, and poverty. The writer chooses this boy as the protagonist of the novel and depicts his experiences in accordance with the realities of life. In order to make his characters appear lifelike, Yaşar Kemal strives to draw their portraits with the precision and expressiveness of a painter. One of the defining features of his creative method is that he provides a portrait of every character mentioned in his works. Through these portraits, the characters' temperament and worldview become clearly discernible. The author also conveys their emotional states and psychological conditions through their behavior in specific situations and through subtle changes in facial expression.

At the same time, the portraits of Yaşar Kemal's characters unmistakably reveal their Turkish identity. Both the appearance of İnce Memed and that of the landowner Abdi Ağa clearly reflect their ethnic background. For example, wealthy Turks in the early twentieth century often wore hats made of camel hair. Such details are also found in the character portraits of works by Turkish writers such as Halid Ziya Uşaklıgil, Halide Edib Adivar, and Reşat Nuri Güntekin. In the novel *İnce Memed*, in accordance with the ideological intent of the work, the portrait of Abdi Ağa is drawn as follows: "Abdi Ağa sat cross-legged on the raised platform beside the hearth. His hat, sewn from reed-patterned fabric, was tilted down over his left ear. In fact, he always dressed this way even in public, wishing thereby to display his ostentatious self-assurance."

In the novel *İnce Memed*, Yaşar Kemal pays particular attention to depicting how the unjust oppression exercised by figures such as Abdi Ağa affects the consciousness of ordinary villagers. To this end, he directs the reader's attention to the transformations in *İnce Memed's* appearance brought about by Abdi Ağa's tyranny: "His face had turned pale as paper, his thin lips had become tightly drawn. His features were faded, his body lifeless, as if he had turned into a statue. His large eyes, in which his entire life, hatred and love, anxiety and

strength seemed to be reflected, flashed with anger. Those eyes resembled the eyes of a tiger poised to pounce."

Through these changes in physical appearance, Yaşar Kemal conveys his protagonist's transformation from a state of inner tension into one of deep resentment, while simultaneously revealing the intensification of İnce Memed's hatred toward Abdi Ağa.

In his works, the writer portrays female characters with particular charm and sensitivity. In these depictions, one can clearly sense the author's special affection toward women characters. For example: "İraz had wrapped a white muslin scarf around her head. She was dark-complexioned, with deep blue, almond-shaped eyes that shone brightly. Her arched eyebrows lent a certain grace to her face. A round face, a delicate chin, a broad forehead, from which a small lock of curly hair hung down. Overcome by grief, her features had faded, her cheeks had darkened and become hollow, and from constant weeping the whites of her eyes had turned bloodshot. Her chin seemed to have shrunk, her lips appeared withered. Only the white scarf on her head remained spotless, like porcelain."

Yaşar Kemal repeatedly emphasizes in his works that wherever injustice, oppression, and ignorance prevail, people—and women in particular—are subjected to suffering.

The writer does not confine himself to openly expressing his attitude toward negative characters; throughout the narrative, he also reveals their negative traits. To this end, he makes effective use of portrait description. For instance, Abdi Ağa's cunning is depicted as follows: "Whenever Abdi Ağa wished to recount the events of the night when the bandits' house was set on fire, he would assume a pitiful, sorrowful expression, adopting the habit of moistening his eyes."

The details Yaşar Kemal employs in depicting his characters' portraits are also of significant importance in terms of reflecting historical realities. The writer provides precise portrayals of individuals who, for various reasons, have turned to a life of banditry. This enables readers to form a clear impression of the clothing, appearance, and behavior of these outlaws. He describes the general appearance of the bandits as follows: "All the bandits wore red fes on their heads. Wearing a red fes in the mountains had become customary. One could recognize a bandit by the red fes he wore. After the law mandating hats was enacted, it is unclear who resumed wearing the fes. Perhaps the bandits roaming the mountains

at that time had not yet heard of the new law. In any case, for everyone who chose the path of banditry, wearing a fes was a symbol of identity.”

These passages further underscore the fact that the work is devoted specifically to the life of the Turkish people, as the fes represents a traditional Turkish headgear and a marker of national identity.

In *İnce Memed*, Yaşar Kemal depicts the typical appearance of a ruthless, plundering, and murderous bandit through the portrait of Qalaycı Osman: “Qalaycı Osman was short in stature, with deep blue eyes that stared like those of a dead calf. The solitary, patchy beard on his sallow face resembled the bristle of a needle. Although his shoulders were broad, his neck appeared unusually thin and twisted from exposure to the sun. He wore trousers of a light-colored fabric, with red stitching along the edges of the pockets. From head to toe, Qalaycı was armed with a gun. Around his neck he carried binoculars. Beneath a dark red fes, a small tuft of hair fell onto his forehead.”

The details in this portrait—such as the light-colored trousers and the fes—indicate his Turkish identity. The author emphasizes the bandit’s cruelty through the description of his eyes: “His deep blue eyes, like those of a dead calf,” clearly convey Qalaycı Osman’s merciless nature.

Another distinctive feature of Yaşar Kemal’s approach to character portraiture is his tendency to depict negative characters briefly and concisely, while providing more detailed and extensive descriptions of poor and helpless characters. In doing so, the author also aims to represent the general social and historical landscape of the period he is portraying, using the appearances of disadvantaged individuals to convey authenticity. This aspect contributes to the realistic depiction of life in Turkish villages in the early twentieth century.

For example, in his novel *The Pillar of Support* (*Tayanch Üstünü*), the portrait of the village’s eldest and infirm resident, Khoja Halil, is described as follows: “He had wasted away, reduced to skin and bone. He could not move from the spot where he sat. His face, yellowed and elongated, bore deep wrinkles on the forehead that clearly revealed his illness. His head was completely bald. His sunken temples were prominent. His feet were bare and pitch-black, and his silk trousers were full of patches.”

As noted above, Yaşar Kemal occasionally openly expresses his attitude toward those who inflict unjust suffering on others

for personal gain. In his novel *The Pillar of Support* (*Tayanch Üstünü*), for instance, he likens Odil Efendi—who brings misfortune upon Ali’s family—to a dark cloud. Whenever the villagers see a dark cloud in the sky, they immediately associate it with Odil Efendi.

In this work, the author also portrays events with measured deliberation. He introduces the characters gradually, revealing their past experiences, hardships, and sorrows without rushing. Throughout the narration, particular attention is paid to reflecting the characters’ emotions and states through their external appearance, ensuring that their feelings and circumstances are vividly conveyed to the reader.

Through the portraits of his characters, Yaşar Kemal conveys the generalized appearance of specific social strata. For example, the depictions of *İnce Memed*, Duna, Turmushali, and Ali Cholok (in *İnce Memed*) realistically illustrate the conditions of the impoverished inhabitants of remote Turkish villages during the 1920s and 1930s. In contrast, the portraits of Abdi Ağa, Ali Safobey (*İnce Memed*), and Odil Efendi (*The Pillar of Support*) depict selfish and ruthless landowners who oppress ordinary people.

In this way, the author draws attention to the tragic consequences that arise in societies dominated by injustice and oppression. For these reasons, Yaşar Kemal’s novels and novellas are considered works that present the realities of their era in all their contradictions. This characteristic of his works has also been acknowledged by Turkish literary scholars.

In ancient literature, including Eastern epics, the depiction of characters’ portraits often relied on exaggeration. Both positive and negative characters were portrayed with amplified features. Over time, however, literary tradition shifted toward representing characters in ways that resembled real-life individuals. This realist approach eventually became a defining feature of such works. Turkish novelists like Yaşar Kemal were creatively influenced by these advanced literary trends that had emerged in world literature.

When depicting character portraits, authors pay particular attention to facial structure, especially the eyes, since a person’s inner world is most vividly reflected through them. Writers take this aspect of human nature into account to convey the realities of life convincingly. This approach is evident in Yaşar Kemal’s works as well. In portraying his characters’ eyes, he follows a consistent method: *İnce Memed* is described as having “sheep-like eyes,” Abdi Ağa’s eyes are

depicted as “glinting blue,” and Qalaycı Osman’s eyes are described as “deep blue, staring like those of a dead calf.”

The author’s technique of rendering positive characters with bright features and negative characters with darker tones corresponds closely to real-life observation. The eyes of innocent, benevolent people naturally appear pleasant and attractive, whereas the gaze of selfish, cruel, or violent individuals appears cold and menacing. In this way, writers like Yaşar Kemal base their character portraiture on authentic aspects of human nature and lived experience.

In literary works, characters are depicted in a variety of situations, and their experiences across different circumstances are conveyed to the reader. The narrative often spans multiple periods of a character’s life, naturally resulting in changes in their appearance over time. Drawing on this sense of realism, Yaşar Kemal portrays his characters’ portraits in diverse ways, paying close attention to distinctive details that highlight their unique traits. The meticulously rendered features allow readers to form a vivid and nuanced impression of each character.

The character portraits in Yaşar Kemal’s works demonstrate his creative assimilation of the Western literary tradition—particularly the French novelists’ method of vividly reflecting life in artistic form—from which he drew significant inspiration. At the same time, these portraits reveal the distinctive artistic mastery of the Turkish writer himself.

## **REFERENCES**

1. Камол Яшар. Инжа Мамад. Роман. – Т.: Адабиёт ва санъат, 1968.
2. Fethi Naci. Edebiyat yazilari. – Istanbul. 1990.
3. Yasar Kemal. Ortadirek. Adam yayinlari. – Istanbul. 2000.