

## THE RE-MATERIALIZATION OF YAŞAR KEMAL'S *TENEKE* AT THE CROSSROADS OF GENRES

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### ABSTRACT\*

Yaşar Kemal (1923-2015) is a leading author of Turkish literature with worldwide acclaim, whose oeuvre is regarded as the incarnation of Anatolian culture. *Teneke*, one of his early works, was written in 1954 and published in installments in a newspaper the very same year. Although the text appeared as a book as early as 1955, it is apparent that an indecision regarding its genre was present. *Teneke*, translated into English as *The Drumming-Out*, was addressed as a "short novel or a long novelette" on the book cover of the second edition dating from 1959. Besides, it was included in the collected short stories of the author published in 1967; however, it was excluded from the 4<sup>th</sup> edition in 1972. Therefore, this year onwards, it came into being as a separate book. But more was yet to come: In 1965, Yaşar Kemal adapted the text into a play, which was staged both in Turkey and abroad. Yet this version of the text was not published for years to come. 1978 onwards, *The Drumming-Out* was published as a book with novel and play versions together; and since then, this format has been preserved. Its publishing history proves that, Yaşar Kemal was continuously occupied with issues regarding the intersection of literary genres. The text's being fictionalized as a novel, short story, and play gradually; and it's finally being materialized as a novel and play simultaneously invites a comparative analysis. In this paper, different versions of the text are analyzed so as to discuss the author's perceptions and assumptions on genres and their reading public. For this purpose, the dissociation of contents and employment of diverse techniques specific to certain genres are investigated. As a result, the boundaries between genres and corresponding production/consumption strategies are scrutinized by examining the materialization of the same text in different forms.

**Keywords:** Yaşar Kemal, *Teneke*, literary genres, narrative strategies.

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## TÜRLERİN KAVŞAĞINDA YAŞAR KEMAL'İN *TENEKE* ADLI YAPITININ YENİDEN KURGULANMASI

### ÖZ

Dünya çapında tanınan ve Türk edebiyatının önde gelen yazarlarından olan Yaşar Kemal'in (1923-2015) eserleri, Anadolu kültürünün dışavurumu addedilir. Yazarın erken dönem yapıtlarından biri olan *Teneke*, 1954 yılında yazılmış ve aynı yıl gazetede tefrika edilmiştir. Metin hemen 1955 yılında kitaplaşsa da, edebî tür olarak nerede durduğuna ilişkin bir kararsızlığın söz konusu olduğunu düşündürür. İngilizceye *The Drumming-Out* olarak çevrilen *Teneke*'nin, 1959 tarihli ikinci baskısının kapağında "kısa roman veya uzun hikâye" olarak nitelendiği görülür. Ayrıca 1967 yılında yazarın öykülerinin toplandığı kitaba da girer; ancak 1972'deki dördüncü basımında yer almaz. Dolayısıyla o tarihten sonra *Teneke*, tek başına bir kitap halini alır. Ancak bu kadarla da kalmaz; Yaşar Kemal 1965 yılında metni oyunlaştırır. Yurt içi ve yurt dışında çeşitli yerlerde sahnelenen oyunun metni ise hemen yayımlanmaz. 1978'de *Teneke*'nin roman ve oyun versiyonları bir arada basılır; sonraki tüm baskılarda da bu özellik korunur. Metnin tarihçesine ilişkin bu olgular, Yaşar Kemal'in edebî türler arasındaki kesişimler üzerine düşündüğünü kanıtlar. Metnin, önce roman, sonra hikâye, ardından oyun olarak kurgulanmış olması ve nihayet roman ile oyun versiyonlarının bir arada sunulması, karşılaştırmalı bir incelemeyi gerektirir. Bu makalede, yazarın edebî türler ve onların okurlarına ilişkin anlayış ve varsayımlarını ortaya koymak üzere metnin farklı versiyonları çözümlenmiştir. Bu amaçla, farklı türler üzerinden, olay örgülerindeki ayrışma ve muhtelif tekniklerin kullanımı incelenmiştir. Sonuç olarak, Yaşar Kemal'in aynı metni farklı formlarda nasıl kurgulandığının araştırılmasıyla, edebî türler arasındaki sınırlar ve bunlara karşılık gelen üretim/tüketim stratejileri ortaya konmuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Yaşar Kemal, *Teneke*, edebî türler, anlatısal stratejiler.

### INTRODUCTION

Yaşar Kemal, born as Kemal Sadık Gökçeli, is one of Turkey's leading writers and outspoken intellectuals. He was born in 1923 in Hemite, now called Gökçedam, in South Anatolia. Being as old as the Republic of Turkey, he witnessed all the hardship that the country went through, together with the cultural prosperity that Anatolia provided. His family had moved from the shores of Lake Van due to foreign occupation during World War I, and he had a difficult childhood as well: First he lost his right eye in an accident, and then he witnessed his father being stabbed to death. Yaşar Kemal did not complete his formal education, but worked in numerous jobs at factories, cotton plantations, and rice fields. Earning his living at a public library and a village school for a while, he became first a letter-writer, then a journalist, and finally a writer. His first book *Ağtlar* ("Ballads") was published as early as 1943, which was a compilation of folkloric material. Then in 1952 came *Sarı Sıcak* ("Yellow Heat"), his collection of short stories, which was followed by *İnce Memed* ("Memed, My Hawk") in 1955 that brought international acclaim. Since then, Yaşar Kemal gives voice not only to the toils, but also to the hopes of people from Çukurova region with his oeuvre that spans more than eight decades. Having his work translated

into more than forty languages, he received numerous awards and distinctions, final one being “Grand Officier de la Légion d’Honneur de France” in 2011.

*Teneke*, one of Yaşar Kemal’s early works, was written in 1954 and published in installments in *Cumhuriyet*, a daily newspaper, the very same year. Translated into English as “The Drumming-Out”, it is the story of a young and idealist mayor, and his struggle with the landowners (*aghas*) in favour of villagers working on rice plantations in Çukurova region. The text was published in book form in 1955; yet the transformation that it had undergone makes it inevitable to scrutinize the conventions forming genres. *The Drumming-Out* was addressed as a “short novel or a long novelette” on the book cover of the first, second, and third editions dating from 1955, 1959, and 1963 respectively. Besides, it was included in the collected short stories of the author published in 1967; however it was excluded from a later edition in 1972. Therefore, this year onwards, it came into being as a separate book, as a novel. Then in 1965, Yaşar Kemal adapted the text into a two act play, which was staged both in Turkey and abroad. It even brought the first prize at the International Nancy Theatre Festival in 1966. *The Drumming-Out* was adapted into an opera as well, which premiered at La Scala of Milan in 2007. The play version of the text was not published until 1978. This date onwards, it was published as a book with novel and play versions together; and since then, this format is preserved. First published as a serialized literary work, then materialized as a story, novel, and finally a play, publication history of *The Drumming-Out* invites a comparative analysis on the boundaries of genres.

Genre theory, owing much to the foundations that Aristotle had laid long ago, evolved considerably in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, deconstruction being the strongest influence. French philosopher Jacques Derrida, in his trail blazing article entitled “The Law of Genre” which was published in 1980, argues that individual texts do not belong to certain genres, but they rather participate in them: “[T]here is no genreless text; there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging” (1980: 65). This approach is appropriate for the case of *The Drumming-Out*, as it is a text that emerges at the crossroads of different genres. On the other hand, the major characteristic of a genre is that it defies any classification according to Derrida. As he puts into words, “at the very moment that a genre or a literature is broached, at that very moment, degenerescence has begun, the end begins” (1980: 66). Despite this historical intervention, the indispensability of categorization to a certain extent is beyond any dispute. Poetics is a must for literary scholarship to fulfil its purpose, since it enables to attain a repertory of distinction and interrelation.

A much earlier study based on a comparison between genres belongs to Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin. In his paper entitled “Epic and Novel”, which originally dates from 1941, but became well known after being re-published in the 1970s, he attempts to introduce a theory of the novel. In this paper, Bakhtin emphasizes that literary genres’ defining features are “considerably older than written language and the book”, whereas the novel is the sole genre that keeps on developing (1981: 3). From that point of view, the boundaries mentioned above, in the context of *The Drumming-Out*,

vanish the moment they are set. But yet it must be possible to talk about certain features determining literary genres. For instance, one may well argue that the novel parodies other genres. Whereupon it possesses an amorphous structure, that is reminiscent of other genres. This characteristic has a significant outcome which was stated by Bakhtin as follows: "In an era when the novel reigns supreme, almost all the remaining genres are to a greater or lesser extent 'novelized'" (1981: 5). There is no doubt that the "novelization" of literary genres brings about the dissociation of the solid and rigid qualities assigned to them. Novelization implies the liberation of genres "from all that serves as a brake on their unique development, from all that would change them along with the novel into some sort of stylization of forms that have outlived themselves" (1981: 39). However, in the case of *The Drumming-Out*, drama still preserves its qualities as the oldest form of literature.

In this paper, Yaşar Kemal's perception of textual codes and conventions regarding different versions of the text will be investigated, aiming to specify certain technical distinctions. To this end, not only the content—that is the differences regarding characters and plot—, but also the form will be examined. As a result of this, a comprehensive analysis of the materialization of the same text in different forms will be done, as well as corresponding production and consumption strategies.

### DISSOCIATION OF CHARACTERS

The difference between the novel and play versions of *The Drumming-Out* may initially be observed in the characters. There are numerous characters that do exist in the novel, while absent in the play version. This is because many characters present in the novel do not have a vital role in the story. They either appear only as a name, or just in a few sentences. Besides, sometimes even more pronounced characters appear to be loosely depicted in the play. For instance, Kör Cemal ("Cemal the blind") and Pehlivan Usta ("Wrestler master") are punished in the novel for standing up to landowners. These characters symbolize the villagers' revolt against rice plantation owners, but they do appear and disappear spontaneously in the seventh chapter of the novel.

In the novel there are almost thirty characters, some of which are principal while the rest are secondary in the plot, or totally invisible to the reader. On the other hand, the number of characters in the play version decreases by one-third. This transformation crystallizes Yaşar Kemal's perception of textual codes relating to corresponding genres. Briefly, the wide group of characters present in the novel must have seemed inappropriate to transfer into the play version. The ones lacking a significant role in the plot were left aside, since they could have only been non-functional characters in the play. On the other hand, some new characters are introduced to the play considering the "action" element of the dramatic arc. As it is observed that the writer highlights the actions in the text, he must have re-materialized the text with careful consideration of the enactment of the play. Several elements which are absent in the novel but present in the play all affirm this finding.

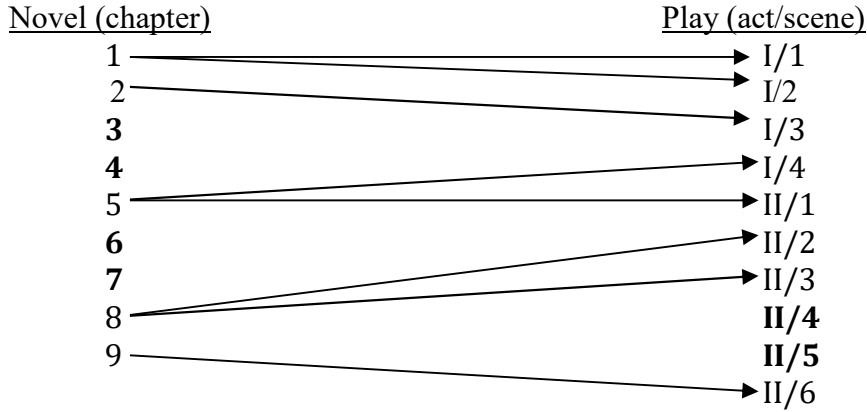
Another point regarding the characters is differences between two versions of *The Drumming-Out*. Some characters appear with the same name, despite having certain

dissimilarities. Those may well be regarded as two separate characters of two different texts, but there also exists a few contradictions between two versions. For instance, “Kaymakam” (the mayor) is introduced as being twenty four (2004: 23) and twenty six years old (2004: 28) in succeeding pages of the novel; whereas he is “about twenty three” (2004: 84) in the play. A much more remarkable difference is about “Zeyno Karı”’s age. As she is portrayed as an old and bold woman inciting the rebellion in the novel; she seems to owe her tenacity and determination to her age. Being “over sixty” (2004: 61) in the novel, she turns out to be “about forty” (2004: 84) in the play. Another contradiction is about the names of the characters. For instance, “Tevfik Ali Bey” of the novel turns out to be “Tevfik Ağa” in the play. Keeping in mind the considerable difference between being a “bey” (mister) and an “ağa” (agha), one starts to question the motivation behind this alteration. An even more striking change is about “Kürt Memed Ali” (Memed Ali the Kurd) of the novel. He is depicted as a courageous man who is wholly void of fear, and who dares to resist the landowners all alone. His ethnic origin and his distinctive personality are interwoven in the novel, whereas his Kurdishness disappears and he becomes only “Memed Ali” in the play. This reaction of the writer might have been due to his overrating of the role of theatre audience. One may conclude that, according to him, the text as a book is a way more independent medium of expression than a text put on stage. As the collective reception of dramatic texts influences the production of it, Yaşar Kemal must have hesitated to highlight an ethnic remark. At this point, the historical period in which the text was produced as a play should also be kept in mind which is probably the reason of that self-censor.

One final remark regarding the differences between two versions of the text in terms of characters is the introduction of new names such as “Döne Karı”, “Hürü”, “Ziraatçı” (agriculturist), “Posta Müdürü” (postmaster), and “Tellal” (hawker). The addition of Döne Karı and Hürü is probably to neutralize the male dominant structure of the story, since Zeyno Karı mentioned above is the only female character in the novel. Leaving the agriculturist and postmaster aside, let us mention the function of the hawker. He definitely serves just as the narrator in the novel: The hawker not only narrates and summarizes, but also comments on the story. He often criticizes too, while observing and participating in the action as well.

### DISSOCIATION OF PLOT

The difference between the novel and play versions of *The Drumming-Out* may be observed in the plot as well. For this purpose, the parts that are present in the novel but missing in the play are determined, and the underlying reason for this choice is examined. The novel consists of nine chapters, four of which do not exist in the play; whereas the play consists of two acts and ten scenes. Below is a scheme that illustrates how the plot of the novel is transposed into the play:



**Figure 1** Plot of the Text

In line with the above scheme, third, fourth, sixth and seventh chapters of the novel are excluded from the play. On the other hand, fourth and fifth scenes of the second act of the play are added to the text. Examining the contents of these parts will help us to figure out the writer's perception of textual conventions regarding different genres.

The plot of the third chapter of the novel can be summarized as follows: "Okçuoğlu", a local notable, leaves the village with threats as he faces the resistance of Memed Ali the Kurd against the evacuation. Whereas in the play, Okçuoğlu is portrayed as a far less intimidating person who avoids conflict with villagers and tries to solve problems by making use of his relations. In the novel, as Okçuoğlu gets angry at Memed Ali the Kurd, he frames such phrases and sentences: "Kurdish mentality!" (2004: 32); "Ignorants, you came to Çukurova with goat skin on your back... Now you've become human. You've come out of your caves, and settled in houses" (2004: 33). In the same chapter, also the narrator uses similar expressions as such: "Villagers are terrible, damned people, especially Kurds" (2004: 28); "This ignorant Kurd is also a damned one" (2004: 28). On the other hand, this accent on ethnic identity is quite softened in the play. Likewise, Memed Ali the Kurd is depicted as a hero for once being a bandit in the novel, which becomes totally invisible in the play.

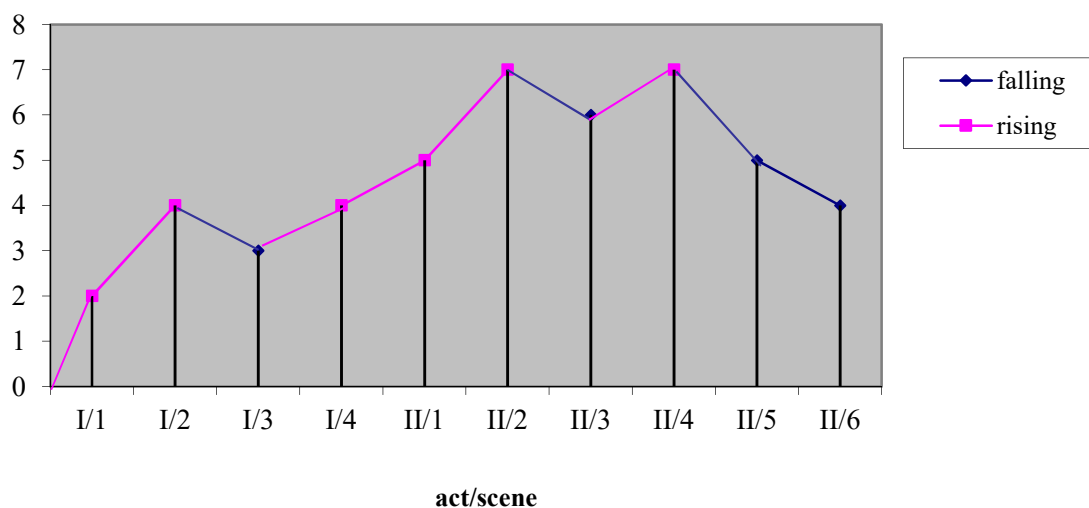
The plot of the fourth chapter of the novel is not transferred into the play. Mainly composed of dialogues between the office secretary "Resul Efendi" and the mayor about unlawful acts of the landowners, this part is quite stagnant in nature. This chapter's being ignored while rewriting the text as a play may be due to the scarcity of action in this part. The landowners are challenged by the mayor's fidelity to law in the novel, whereas the solidarity of the villagers is emphasized in the play. That scene is dramatized in such a way that, Zeyno forces her way through the crowd and lays hold of the mayor (2004: 124). By that action oriented approach, the writer achieves to create a striking scene compared to the novel.

The plot of the sixth and seventh chapters of the novel, which do not exist in the play, can be summarized as follows: First, mufti attempts to bribe the mayor, and then landowners send telegrams so as to complain about the mayor. Cemal the blind and

Wrestler master resist against the landowners, which results in one of them being shot and the other's property being damaged. Since these characters do not appear in the play version, the resistance is limited to actions of Zeyno and Memed Ali in the play. Another remarkable difference between the versions of the text is gendarmes' accepting a bribe, which is skipped in the play. As above mentioned chapters are secondary in terms of the main climax, they are excluded from the play.

There are also some parts which do not exist in the novel, but are introduced to the play. Analyzing the contents of the fourth and fifth scenes of the second act, it is possible to figure out the elements that Yaşar Kemal thought to be indispensable for the dramatic structure and the effect he aimed to create by the play. The fourth scene is built around a new rising action, which is a trap set by the landowners against the mayor. As his room is filled with scorpions, the audience is intrigued by this scene. By that, the writer achieves to increase the tempo until the very end of the scene when a mysterious scream is heard. With the addition of this scene, the text is strengthened by a minor rising and falling action. The fifth scene is built around the landowners' attempts to get rid of the mayor by organizing a decree of appointment. In the novel these attempts are being realized by telegrams; whereas in the play the writer chooses to employ much more concrete actions. Yet in both cases, the mayor receives his letter of appointment thanks to the efforts of landowners. At the end of this scene, as the hawker announces the new appointment of the mayor, the resolution is reached.

The novel version of *The Drumming-Out* possesses a much loose structure compared to the play version, which is probably due to the amorphous nature of the novel as a literary genre. As a result of this, the novel lacks the rhythm by which the play encapsulates the audience. While re-materializing the text, Yaşar Kemal's main concern seems to be the curiosity effect. To ensure this effect, the play is composed of several rising and falling actions. The major climax, leading up to the moment of highest tension, is definitely the mayor's situation which remains unresolved until the very end. Besides, almost every scene creates a minor climax which will be resolved in the following scene. This technique provides a rhythm that guarantees to keep the curiosity alive all through the play. The dramatic structure of the play, excluding the exposition and resolution, can be shown in such a scheme:



**Figure 2** Rising/Falling Actions of the Play

Rising and falling actions essential to the scheme are as follows: First act starts with the question whether Resul Efendi will resign or not, and then whether he will sign the permits or not. Second scene continues with the mystery regarding the hawker's cup, and with the tension regarding the arrival of the mayor: Will he be able to arrive on time, or will Resul Efendi bow to pressure? Third scene involves falling actions such as the mayor's arrival and signing the approval in favor of rice plantation owners. Fourth scene ends with a rising action, the growing resistance against the landowners, which functions as a way to vitalize the attention of the audience.

Second act starts with the question how the mayor will act; as he decides to drain the fields a solution is achieved. Next scene involves two separate rising actions: Will the village be evacuated so that it is flooded for planting, and whether Memed Ali's wound is severe or not. Third scene gives an answer to the condition of the village, as well as to the success of the trap against the mayor. As the hawker announces that the mayor is appointed elsewhere, another solution is reached. The final scene is the dénouement in which the mystery of the hawker's cup is resolved: That precious cup once belonged to the commander-in-chief, Mustafa Kemal; therefore it was treasured by the hawker. This final remark intensifies the impression that Yaşar Kemal could not stand becoming a prey of populism as he transformed the text into visual form.

### THEMATIC AND NARRATIVE STRATEGIES

After making a comparative analysis of two different versions of the same material in terms of characters and plot, a view from above necessitates to discuss thematic and narrative qualities that differ. First of all, *The Drumming-Out* is quite an unusual text in Yaşar Kemal's oeuvre, since there exist numerous references to contemporary political



issues such as the transformation of an agrarian country into an industrialized nation, and the adversities experienced due to this transition. Secondly, expressions present in both versions such as “motherland”, “Turkish nation”, “state”, “Ankara”, and “Atatürk” are much more common in the play. This preference might be explained in two ways: Either the writer aimed at engaging the audience with these expressions, or he felt the urge to include these due to the tense political climate of the period. Thirdly, references to soldiery and ethnicity are diminished in the play. The banditry and Kurdishness of Memed Ali of the novel becomes indistinct in the play. While he is the only one to arouse the villagers to revolt in the novel, a group of villagers undertake the task in the play. A similar change is observable in the mayor’s departure: While Memed Ali the Kurd is the only one to bid farewell to the mayor in the novel, a huge crowd gathers in the play. Obviously, the writer was well aware of the impacts of the theatre on society. Consequently, he did not hesitate to alter his original text.

On a comparative basis, two versions of the text can be analyzed in terms of extraneous references. “Beethoven” and “Picasso” are examples of these usages present in both texts, while much more is to be added to the play such as “Hitler” and “beatnik”. Somehow the writer has decided to introduce such references which seem quite incompatible with the Çukurova image created in readers’ imagination. Considering Yaşar Kemal’s novels, it is obvious that these usages are not typical. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that he perceives the inclusion of that kind of references as a tool specific to the play as a genre. Constructing the novel as a much diverse but closed genre, he regards the play as an action based and open genre. The writer prefers to compose the play with contemporary references employing a moderate discourse. The language of the text exhibits literary techniques such as irony and sarcasm in both versions; but there is a distinctive feature of the play which is the use of slang. As a result, one may conclude that, along with contemporary references, slang is regarded as a tool to pervade the audience.

The position of the narrator is another feature worth mentioning here. In the novel, there is a narrator who constantly explains and comments as a means of orienting and influencing the reader. Sometimes the narrator even criticizes the characters, identifying himself with them. He is replaced by the hawker in the play, who announces the course of events. The novel progresses by narration instead of dialogues, whereas the same material is transferred into the play partially by the function of the hawker, and then by the use of dialogues. Since the role of the hawker needed to be limited, dialogues sometimes became tediously long.

## CONCLUSION

*The Drumming-Out* was fictionalized as a novel, short story, and play gradually. It was finally materialized for consumption as a novel and play simultaneously, which necessitated a comparative analysis. In this paper, in order to be able to shed light on Yaşar Kemal’s perceptions and assumptions on literary genres and their reading public, two different versions of the text are examined in detail. As a result, it is determined that he preferred to highlight some characters and their characteristics while ignoring others.

Moreover, he introduced new actions to be able to keep up to the rhythm of the play. Parts lacking tangible action and embodying trivial details were excluded in the play. This attitude stems from the assumption that dominant element of a play is nothing but action.

It is found out that Yaşar Kemal hesitated to use expressions that have political connotations, and stuck to widely acknowledged terms like “nation” and “state” while transforming the text. This is quite a curious approach, keeping in mind that the first time he was arrested for his political beliefs was when he was only 17, and he never gave up speaking out loud even if he is charged with disseminating separatism. The use of contemporary references and slang proves that the audience profile he envisaged is considerably different than the reader profile he had in mind. By re-materializing *The Drumming-Out*, he not only experienced codes and conventions regarding literary genres, but also challenged their boundaries, as well as creating corresponding production and consumption strategies. Analyzing that process, contributes to comprehend his unique mastery of blending epic and modern styles of storytelling. Yaşar Kemal, referred to as “Homer of Anatolia” by the critics, has left an impressive oeuvre behind, embodying a distinct personal style.

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