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**Tradition of Serial Novels in  
Ottoman/Turkish Literature**

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## Tradition of Serial Novels in Ottoman/Turkish Literature

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### Abstract

The Novel as a genre was established during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in Ottoman/Turkish society, and unlike the birth of the novel in western literature, was published and spread through serials in periodicals. Serial is a name given to the publication of literary works, which are printed as episodes or chapters in periodicals such as newspapers and journals. Although, at present, novels are not being published in newspapers and/or periodicals, serial novels had a significant role in the history of Turkish literature. The first Ottoman/Turkish play (“Şair Evlenmesi” [Poet’s Marriage], 1860), the first novel (*Taaşuk-u Talat ve Fitnat* [Love of Talat and Fitnat], 1872) were encountered by readers as serials published in newspapers. Moreover, the numbers of serials were not only limited to the first publications, throughout the history of Turkish literature, categorized such as Tanzimat, Meşrutiyet and Millî Edebiyat periods, and up to 1923 almost all novels before being published in book format were first published as serials in periodicals. As a matter of fact, we can conclude that there is a strong and rich tradition of Ottoman/Turkish serial novels.

In this study the significance of serial novels in Ottoman Turkish literature, and their historical development will be examined. In Europe, where the novel has a deep-seated history, in order to increase newspaper sales, around the 1830’s novels were also serialized in newspapers. As a result of this, the Feuilleton style was inaugurated. However the characteristics and effects of these two traditions seem to be completely different and the sources of this difference will also be explored in this study. Nearly all the Ottoman/Turkish wo/man of letters were also journalists; in this respect the relationship between press and literature will also be surveyed. Additionally the effects of the serial novel tradition on literary texts will be taken into consideration. It can be argued that there is a strong relationship between literary style and serial tradition, and this shaped the form of the Ottoman/Turkish novel.

**Keywords:** Serial (Feuilleton) novel, relationship between literature and press, Turkish literary history.

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## **Introduction: Modernization, Literature and Serials**

Although the initial stages of Ottoman/Turkish modernization started in military and political spheres, the press and literature played a significant role in terms of diffusion and materialization of the modernization process. In fact, the role of press and literature in the formation of public sphere—thereby modernization—in western societies has also been emphasized by different scholars (Anderson, 2006; Habermas, 1991). So it can be argued that the relationship between modernization, formation of public sphere and literature and press is not unique to Ottoman/Turkish society. What was unique in Ottoman society within the context of literature is that modern, new genres began to develop and spread via the press. The *weltanschauung*, and norms of modernization were reflected in literature, in our case in novels, and those reflections disseminated through newly established mediums, namely the newspapers. In this study the significance of serial novels in Ottoman/ Turkish literature, its historical development, basic aspects of this tradition and its effects on the form of Ottoman/Turkish novel will be examined.

In western literature new genres like theatre plays and novels emerged independently from press. Although there is no agreement about the issue of when and by whom the first serial was published, the first examples of serials appeared in 18<sup>th</sup> century in England. Graham Law (2000) stated that newspapers and magazines began to publish serials, but those were reprinted, abridged or translated works (p. 6). For example, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* or Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* were reprinted and serialized in magazines (Law, 2000, p. 3). So, in the period in which novel as a genre was established, there were no original novels serialized in press in England. The first successful and let's say "original" serial in English literature was Charles Dickens's *Pickwick Papers*, and Graham Law's (2000) comment on Dickens's serial is compatible with our argument that the novel tradition in England was not dependent on press, and precedes serials: "Thus novels in numbers had a history at least a hundred years before Dickens's *Pickwick Papers* began to appear in April 1836." (p. 4).

While in French literature, novels begun to be published in newspapers and magazines in order to raise the circulation of periodicals around 1830-1840, and those works were called "roman feuilleton". In other words owners of newspapers utilize the popularity of fiction, and publish the works of popular men of letters like Alexandre Dumas, père, and Victor Hugo. For example, Eugène Sue's novel *Mystere de Paris*, raised the circulation of *Le Constitutionnelle* from 3.600 to 20.000 (Benjamin, 2001, p. 125). Whereas in Ottoman society newspapers were the medium of the birth of the new genre, and utilization of novel as an instrument of raising the circulation was soon to come.

In American literature there was also a tradition of "serialization" of novels, especially between 1850-1900 (Lund, 1993). In sum, the facts of serialization are evident in 19<sup>th</sup> century western literature. And, after the 1860's, serialization was also seen in Ottoman literature. The difference

between Ottoman and western literature is that: when the serialization started, western literature had at least a hundred years of novel tradition, but in Ottoman case, readers' first encounter with modern genres like theatre and novel was realized through newspapers. And before reading Ottoman writers' novels, readers were introduced to these new genres by translations published in newspapers. In other words Ottoman readers and writers learn the conventions of novel from the translated works of western literature.

Some of the translated and serialized novels which were published before the publication of first Ottoman/Turkish novel can be listed as such: in 1862 Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, was translated and published in *Ruzname-i Ceride-i Havadis* as *Mağdurun Hikâyesi (Sefiller)*; in 1869, François-René de Chateaubriand's *Atala* was translated and published in *Hakayikül Vekayi*; in 1870 Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's, *Paul et Virginie* was translated and published in *Mümeyyiz*; in 1871 Alexandre Dumas's (père), *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo* was translated and published in *Diyojen*. What is striking is that Hugo's *Les Misérables* was translated into Turkish, in serialized format in an Ottoman newspaper, in the same year it was published. Considering the period the speed of perception, selection and translation of text seems to have been amazing.

Before moving to the relationship between press and literature in the Ottoman context, we should clarify the usage and scope of concepts we have mentioned when giving examples from western literature. In American, English, and French literatures different concepts have chosen for identifying serialization. In order to define that a novel is not published as a book but rather published independently as installments or as a supplement of a periodical or as a part of a periodical (printed in the pages of that periodical) different concepts are being used. Hence sometimes those concepts (serial novel, roman feuilleton) are used interchangeably. For example, Dickens's *Pickwick Papers* defined as "serial" (Law, 2000; Coolidge Jr., 1967) however in fact Dickens's novel published and sold independently as monthly installments (Coolidge Jr., 1967, p. 46). In French literature, novels published as a part of or as a supplement of newspapers are also called roman feuilleton. For example in J. A. Cuddon's (1999) *Literary Terms and Literary Theory* "roman feuilleton" is defined as "A novel published in instalments in a daily paper." (p. 764) and "serial" is defined as "a story occurring in sections in a magazine" (p. 810). So the difference between these two concepts can only be attributed to differentiation of literatures: the same fact called "feuilleton" in French, "serial" in English. We rather choose to identify a novel which is published independently as installments or as a supplement of a periodical as roman feuilleton, and a novel which is published as a part of a periodical (printed in the pages of that periodical) as a serial novel.

Many texts from different genres have been serialized, and we will touch upon theatre plays and short stories, however in this study we mainly focus on novels. Another limitation of our study is about the language. Ottoman society is a multicultural and multilingual society, so different alphabets were used, and many novels published and serialized in different languages, likewise

many newspapers published in different languages. We restrict our study with Turkish newspapers published in Arabic alphabet.

### Newspaper and Literature

The first printing press created by the Ottoman Empire was established in 1727, which—compared to Europe—was a belated date due to the social resistances for various reasons. As a result, circulation of printed books also began in a much later period. This latency can also be observed in the establishment of periodicals. The first newspaper published in Turkish, which was also the official newsletter of Ottoman Empire, *Takvim-i Vekayi* was established in 1831<sup>1</sup>. However the first newspaper which gave space for texts related to literature, like critiques and summaries of theatre plays, was *Ceride-i Havadis*, which is the semi-official second newspaper established in 1840. The first private newspaper *Tercüman-ı Ahval* which was established in 1860 was the first periodical which gave space for literary texts. And this was not surprising at all, because one of the owners of the newspaper was Şinasi, who was a man of letters (the other owner was Agâh Efendi). As a matter of fact in the fourth issue of newspaper *Şair Evlenmesi* (Poet's Marriage) (1860), the first play written in Turkish literature by Şinasi was serialized. The first translated novels were also published in this newspaper. Up to 1872, newspapers published translated serials. In 1872, Şemsettin Sami's *Taaşuk-ı Talat ve Fitnat*<sup>2</sup> (Love of Talat and Fitnat), was published, which, by many academic circles, is accepted as the first Turkish novel. In some sources it is claimed that novel was published and serialized in *Hadika* newspaper (Kılıç, 2005, p. 7). However only the announcement of novel was printed in *Hadika*, beginning in 18<sup>th</sup> November 1872, and continued 13 days. In this announcement, it was declared that the novel would be circulated as installments, and the names of the places where those installments sold were indicated.

We do not have the exact number of installments, in some sources it is claimed that there were three installments (Kudret, 1998, p. 77), however what we are certain about is that *Taaşuk-ı Talat ve Fitnat* was not serialized as a supplement of a newspaper, and publishes and circulated independently, like Dickens's *Pickwick Papers*, and can be counted as the first roman feuilleton of Turkish literature (and may be the last, because we do not see any examples like that, oncoming novels were going to be serialized in periodicals).

When we return to the history of newspapers, after the publication of *Tercüman-ı Ahval*, what we observe is that there was a radical increase in the number of newspapers: "In Ottoman State, only four Turkish newspapers

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<sup>1</sup>In Ottoman Empire before 1831 there were newspapers published in foreign languages: *Belleten des Nouvelles* published by French embassy in Istanbul was established in 1794. *Gazette Française de Constantinople* (1796), *Smyrnen* (1824), *Le Spectateur Oriental* (1824) can be counted as other examples.

<sup>2</sup>In fact, *Akabi Hikâyesi* (Story of Akabi) written by Vartan Paşa in 1851, was the first Turkish novel, published in Armenian alphabet.

published in the first 31 year of press. Between 1860-66 17 new publications appeared which means 2,5 new publications per year. Between 1867-1878 there were 113 new publications appeared which means 10 new mediums emerged per year” (Koloğlu, 2013, p. 51).

The prominent newspapers and men of letters/journalists of that period can be counted as follows: *Tasvir-i Efkar* (Şinasi,1862); Terakki (1868, Rezaizade Ekrem, Ebuzziya Tevfik), Hadika (Namık Kemal, Şemsettin Sami, Ahmet Mithat, 1869); Basiret (Namık Kemal, Ahmet Mithat, 1869); İbret (Namık Kemal,1871); *Devir* (Ahmet Mithat, 1872); *Sabah*, (Şemsettin Sami, 1876); *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, (Ahmet Mithat,1878).

The boost of numbers of the newspapers emphasized by Koloğlu continued in the following decades. According to the bibliography edited by Hasan Duman (2000), the most comprehensive study in literature, up to 1928 in which Latin alphabet was used, 2526 periodicals were published. Of course serials were not published in all those periodicals. Some of those periodicals were specialized occupational periodicals (from veterinary to law, etc.), some of them were published in Arabic, Persian, French, etc., and some of them had been published less than 10 issues. Besides those restrictions, it can be argued that the number of periodicals potentially published serial novels were too abundant to be underestimated<sup>1</sup>.

However, what attracts us more is the increase of the number of serials published in periodicals rather than an increase in the number of periodicals. Following Şemsettin Sami, many writers began to publish novels in newspapers; and this prolific era proliferation can be viewed as the novel’s acceptance by Ottoman readers. In order to see the increase in the number of serials, a study on the newspaper *İkdam* which published daily between 1894-1928, can be taken as an example: “In a study which deals with the issues of *İkdam* between the years of 1894-1904, it is claimed that within the decade which is surveyed there were 302 short stories either translated or original, and 52 novels either translated or original had been published. And 20 of these serial novels were translations, 32 of them were original” (quoted by Çıkla, 2009, p. 45). To see the proliferation of serial novels in the context of a writer, a closer look at Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar will illuminate our perspective. Gürpınar is one of the most prolific writers in Turkish literature, he wrote 41 novels and nearly all of them were first serialized then published as books. From the year 1899 to the year 1928 in which the alphabet was changed, Gürpınar’s 29 novels were serialized. In this aforementioned period only 25 of these serials were published as books. The gap between the number of Gürpınar’s serials and books is important; it reflects the general tendency that all serials were not compulsorily published as books, and in the archives of newspapers we can find numerous unpublished serials of many famous / infamous / unknown Turkish writers. From this perspective it is not surprising

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<sup>1</sup>In our research related with our project we have detected the number of periodicals that are related with literature as around 350 and we are intended to cover at least 150 of those periodicals.

that last year, two unknown novels of Orhan Kemal<sup>1</sup>, who is one of the principal writers of Turkish literature, which had been serialized were discovered and published as a book.

Between 1872 (which is the publication date of the first Turkish novel) and 1928 (which is the date of alphabet change) there were 235 novels published in book format. Like Gürpınar's case, most of those novels were first serialized then printed as book. But we do not know the exact numbers of serials, or distribution of novels per years or for writers. There is no comprehensive study about these issues. That's the aim of our project, we try to fill this gap, and write a comprehensive serial novel history. We are in the initial stages of our project but, according to the surveys we have done so far, we can state that at least 150 of the aforementioned 235 novels were serialized in newspapers. At the end of our project we assume that we can add new novels which were serialized and not printed.

Before moving on to the relationship between form of the novel and serialization, we want to mention some of the serialized novels, which are seen as the constitutive works of Turkish literature canon:

Year	Newspaper	Serialized Novel	Writer
1877	Tercüman-ı Hakikat	Çengi	Ahmet Mithat
1879	Tercüman-ı Hakikat	Yeryüzünde Bir Melek	Ahmet Mithat
1881	Tercüman-ı Hakikat	Dürdane Hanım	Ahmet Mithat
1882	Tercüman-ı Hakikat	Acayib-i Âlem	Ahmet Mithat
1883	Tercüman-ı Hakikat	Esrar-ı Cinayat	Ahmet Mithat
1883-1884	Tercüman-ı Hakikat	Cellat	Ahmet Mithat
1885	Tercüman-ı Hakikat	Bir Tövbekâr	Ahmet Mithat
1885	Tercüman-ı Hakikat	Cinli Han	Ahmet Mithat
1885	Tercüman-ı Hakikat	Bahtiyarlık	Ahmet Mithat
1885	Ahmet Mithat	Obur	Ahmet Mithat
1885	Hizmet	Sefile	Halit Ziya
1885-1886	Tercüman-ı Hakikat	Hayret	Ahmet Mithat
1887	Hizmet	Nemide	Halit Ziya
1888	Tercüman-ı Hakikat	Şık	Hüseyin Rahmi
1891	Tercüman-ı Hakikat	Hayal ve Hakikat	Fatma Aliye ve Ahmet Mithat
1891	Tercüman-ı Hakikat	Müşahadat	Ahmet Mithat
1894	Hizmet	Ferdî ve Şürekâsı	Halit Ziya
1895	Servet-i Fünun	Zehra	Nabizâde Nazım
1895	İkdam	Mehcure	Vecihi
1896	Servet-i Fünun	Mai ve Siyah	Halit Ziya
1896	Servet-i Fünun	Araba Sevdası	Recaizade Mahmut Ekrem
1896	İkdam	İffet	Hüseyin Rahmi
1897	Servet-i Fünun	Ferdâ-yi Garam	Mehmet Rauf
1898	Servet-i Fünun	Hayal İçinde	Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın
1898	Servet-i Fünun	Salon Köşelerinde	Safveti Ziya
1898	Servet-i Fünun	Mai Düş	Ahmet İhsan
1899	İkdam	Udi	Fatma Aliye
1899	Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete	Münevver	Güzide Sabri
1899	İkdam	Mutallaka	Hüseyin Rahmi
1899	İkdam	Mürebbiye	Hüseyin Rahmi

<sup>1</sup>*Yüz Karası ve Uçurum. Yüz Karası*, was serialized in 1960 in *Son Saat*; *Uçurum* was serialized in 1961 in *Büyük Gazete*.



1899	İkdam	Bir Muadele-i Sevda	Hüseyin Rahmi
1899	Servet-i Fünun	Aşk-ı Memnu	Halit Ziya
1900	İkdam	Metres	Hüseyin Rahmi
1900	İkdam	Tesadüf	Hüseyin Rahmi
1900	Servet-i Fünun	Eylül	Mehmet Rauf

And just a post-script for the Republican period, up to the 1960's this aforementioned tradition continued alongside with the publication of novels in book format, while serials ceased to exist around 1980's. And most of the canonic novels of republican period were also serialized and then published as book: Peyami Safa, *9. Hariciye Koğuşu* (*Cumhuriyet*, 1929); Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *Huzur* (*Cumhuriyet* 1948); Orhan Kemal, *Murtaza* (*Vatan*, 1952); Yaşar Kemal, *İnce Memed* (*Cumhuriyet*, 1955); Tarık Buğra, *Küçük Ağa* (*Yeni İstanbul*, 1963).

### Serial Novels and Novel Form

As mentioned above, Ottoman/Turkish readers were, first of all, introduced to translated novels that were serialized in newspapers, and then they began to read original novels, written by Turkish writers and firstly published as independent installments, then serialized in newspapers. In this respect from the beginning, in the stage of formation of the Ottoman novel, the genre was closely connected with serial traditions. In other words, serialization determined the basic characteristics of the novel genre. It is important to differentiate between a novel first written and then serialized, and the novel first serialized and published in book format afterwards. This explains us how serialization had affected novel form. In Ottoman/Turkish case novel in the period of development, in the period of diffusion, and later in the period when it would become popular was always at first written for serialization.

The first effect of this kind of writing and publication process was that the reaction of readers to the text could be observed daily and upcoming of the text could be formed based on these reactions. So to speak according to the responses a writer should change the plot, characters, and even the finale of his/her novel; should extend a novel that was welcomed by readers or vice versa should curtail a novel that was found to be unpleasant by the readers. Needless to say that it is hard to demonstrate the changes of a writer's textual choices of which, if any, is based on readers' responses. As a matter of fact we are dealing with probabilities. However, for example, in the first serialized novel, Şemsettin Sami (2005) at the end of *Taaşuk-ı Talat ve Fitnat*, felt he should include an end note, titled "Reminder" saying that "It must be stated that in this book, orthographical rules of some of the originally Turkish words were undermined and written according to their pronunciations, and some of the Arabic words were intentionally written according to the speaker's manner" (p. 155). Theoretically this reminder can be interpreted as Şemsettin Sami's emphasis on "realism", however, it can also be inferred that as a result of

readers' responses on orthography he had felt a necessity to put an end note like that.

Responses and reactions may differ. For instance Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu's novel *Nur Baba*, which was also serialized in *Akşam* in 1921, had to stop due to readers' strong reactions on the grounds that the novel caused some discomfort on some religious issues (Gariper and Küçük Coşkun, 2008, p. 45). Here, we do not know whether the decision to suspend publication of the novel was made by Karaosmanoğlu, or the editorial board of newspaper. What we do know that sometimes censorship was applied by the government explicitly, and thus the serials stopped. For example, in the period of *İstibdat* (1876-1909), Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar's novel *Alafranga* ("Dandy") had been censored, and serialization was stopped. Gürpınar's censored novel re-serialized in 1909, but its name was changed to *Şıpsıvdi* ("Susceptible").

Needless to say that "interaction" is not limited to reader-writer, at the same time in this milieu of diffused serialization writers were also influenced by other works either translated or original. In one of his interviews, Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar explicitly stated that he had written *İffet* (1896), in order to replicate the style of Vecihi, who was another important man of letters of that milieu, and Gürpınar declared that he was so successful in his replica that in one of his dialogues with Vecihi, Vecihi admitted that when he read Gürpınar's novel he felt that he was reading one of his own novels (Gürpınar, 2006, p. 25).

Another significant characteristic of serials is that since they have a partial structure, "repetition" was an important feature of those novels, and in a sense these repetitions were also determined the construction of plot as well as formation of characters. Those repetitions can also be observed in the first Ottoman/Turkish serial novel, *Taaşuk-ı Talat ve Fitnat*. In this novel a narrator whom continuously reminds readers about the ongoing events is present. The high frequency level of those repetitions can be related to the anxiety of writers/editors who were trying to grasp a community of readers who were unfamiliar both to serialization and novel genre. For example, the protagonist of the novel, Talat, disguises, and becomes a woman Ragibe Hanım. Nearly in every scene in which Talat appears as Ragibe, narrator reminds reader, either by notes in parenthesis or by short summaries that she is actually Talat.

Another necessary issue about those repetitions is related to Turkish literary history and criticism. Those repetitions and inaccuracies in these novels are generally interpreted by well known critiques, such as Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Güzin Dino, Berna Moran, Robert F. Pinn, as writers' inexperience's, which also covertly means unskilled or amateurish, or in the last instance labeling those novels as "trial novels" (Başlı, 2010, p. 31). Yet those narrative actions should closely be related with genre's appearance within the tradition of serialization.

Finally, another dimension which must be taken into consideration is the spatiality or context of published serials. Michael Lund (1993), in his book *America's Continuing Story: An Introduction to Serial Fiction, 1850-1900*

emphasizes that a serial is not a text read independently. Generally a serial is published on a page where news pieces, columns and ads also took place, and perception of readers should be analyzed considering this holistic vision (p. 19). In addition to Lund's observations, it can be claimed that since serial novels were published on the same page/column where the "real" news appeared, readers' perception at that time could also be changed and they would begin to perceive novels as "real" and thus, "realism" of novels could be derived. In other words, in a society unfamiliar to fictional world, the function of newspapers, like informing and reflecting reality should lead to an illusion that novels were also "real".

In conclusion, Ottoman/Turkish novels and novel readers have arisen and developed in and through serial tradition. Therefore, serial tradition has determined both formal features of novels and perception of the readers. Unfortunately, there is not enough in-depth study in that period of serials that lasted almost a century between 1872-1980. There are still unpublished, unknown novels which are waiting to be discovered in the pages of periodicals. There is still a need for studies which are comparing the serial versions of novels with book editions, and set forth the differences between texts; in sum surveying the effects of serial tradition on Turkish novel.

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