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Between Tradition and Modernity: Serialized Fiction and Narrative Transformation in Kaytâzzâde Mehmet Nâzım's Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet (The Remnant of Love)

Gelenek ile Modernite Arasında: Kaytâzzâde Mehmet Nâzım'ın Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet'inde Tefrika Roman ve Anlatısal Dönüşüm

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Abstract

This article examines the role of serialized fiction in the transformation of narrative form and the emergence of literary modernity in late Ottoman Cyprus under British administration, focusing on Kaytâzzâde Mehmet Nâzım's *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet* (*The Remnant of Love*). Situating the novel within the late nineteenth-century print culture shaped by British rule, it briefly outlines the institutional conditions that enabled Ottoman Turkish publishing and approaches the text through a historical-literary and narratological framework as a transitional work between Eastern narrative traditions and the modern novel. The findings demonstrate that *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet* constructs a hybrid poetics: while drawing on conventional motifs and a meddah-like narrative voice, it simultaneously incorporates key features of modern narrative such as causality, chronological realism, epistolary structure, and scene-based representation. Rather than offering a descriptive summary, the analysis foregrounds how these formal elements reflect an ongoing process of narrative transformation, demonstrating that serialized fiction functioned as a crucial site of literary experimentation in which inherited narrative models were reconfigured within emerging forms. In this regard, the novel reflects not a delayed imitation of metropolitan literature, but a localized participation in a broader, multi-centered process of Ottoman modernity.

Keywords: Modern Turkish Literature, Turkish Cypriot Literature, serialized fiction, hybrid modernity, narrative transformation, *late Ottoman Cyprus under British administration*, Kaytâzzâde Mehmet Nâzım, *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet*

Öz

Bu makale, tefrika romanın anlatı formunun dönüşümünü incelemektedir. Ayrıca Geç Osmanlı döneminde, İngiliz yönetimi altındaki Kıbrıs'ta tefrika romanın edebî modernitenin ortaya çıkışındaki rolüne odaklanmaktadır ve bu inceleme özellikle Kaytâzzâde Mehmet Nâzım'ın *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet* adlı eseri üzerinden yürütülmektedir. Çalışma, romanı Britanya yönetimi tarafından şekillendirilmiş geç on dokuzuncu yüzyıl matbuat kültürü bağlamına yerleştirmektedir; bu bağlamda Osmanlı Türkçesiyle yayıncılığı mümkün kılan kurumsal koşulları kısaca ortaya koymakta ve metni Doğu anlatı gelenekleri ile modern roman arasında konumlanmış geçişsel bir eser olarak, tarihsel-edebî ve anlatıbilimsel bir çerçeve aracılığıyla analiz etmektedir. Bulgular, *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet*'in hibrit bir poetika oluşturduğunu göstermektedir: metin, geleneksel motifler ve meddahı andıran bir anlatıcı sesinden yararlanırken, aynı zamanda nedensellik, kronolojik gerçekçilik, epistolar yapı ve sahne temelli temsil gibi modern anlatının başlıca özelliklerini bünyesinde barındırmaktadır. Betimleyici bir özet sunmak yerine bu analiz, söz konusu biçimsel unsurların süreklilik arz eden bir anlatı dönüşümü sürecini nasıl yansıttığını ortaya koymakta ve Geç Osmanlı döneminde, İngiliz yönetimi altındaki Kıbrıs'ta tefrika romanın önemli bir edebî deney alanı olarak işlev gördüğünü göstermektedir; bu bağlamda miras alınan anlatı modellerinin yeni formlar içinde yeniden yapılandırıldığını vurgulamaktadır. Bu bakımdan roman, merkez edebiyatların gecikmiş bir taklidi değildir; aksine Osmanlı modernitesinin daha geniş ve çok merkezli sürecine yerel bir katılımı temsil etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yeni Türk Edebiyatı, Kıbrıs Türk Edebiyatı, tefrika roman, hibrit modernite, anlatısal dönüşüm, Geç Osmanlı döneminde İngiliz yönetimi altındaki Kıbrıs, Kaytâzzâde Mehmet Nâzım, *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet*

Introduction

To begin with, the second half of the nineteenth century marked a period of profound transformation for the Ottoman Empire, which was on the brink of collapse. During this time, Western colonial powers—particularly the British Empire—actively sought opportunities to expand their influence over Ottoman territories. In this regard, the Ottoman defeat in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 provided Britain with a strategic advantage. Under the pretext of protecting the Ottomans from Russia, Britain negotiated the Cyprus Convention, signed in Berlin on June 4, 1878, which transferred the administration of Cyprus from the Ottomans to Britain (Clark, 2020, p. 26; Hatay, 2021, p. 9; see also Orr, 2013, pp. 35–45). At this juncture, it is essential to emphasize the strategic significance of Cyprus. By the late nineteenth century, Britain had already secured Gibraltar, the Ionian Islands, Malta, and Aden. Furthermore, following the opening of the Suez Canal by France in 1869, Cyprus—located along the maritime route to India—gained immense importance for British imperial interests (Uçarol, 1978, pp. 32–33). Leasing Cyprus, albeit under the guise of a temporary arrangement, allowed Britain to consolidate its control over a critical point on the route to its colonies.

From a narratological perspective, as Peter Brooks (1984) argues, narrative meaning emerges through the organization of plot and the temporal unfolding of events—a perspective that proves particularly useful in the present context for analyzing transitional narrative forms situated between established traditions and emerging novelistic structures.

Consequently, the arrival of the British administration triggered contrasting reactions among the island's two major communities. The Orthodox Greek population welcomed the change, anticipating that Britain would eventually facilitate the union of Cyprus with Greece—a goal they openly expressed to British officials. Conversely, the Muslim Turkish community faced deep uncertainty and disappointment, fearing marginalization and a loss of status. With limited support from the Ottoman government, which was preoccupied with internal and external crises, Turkish Cypriots experienced growing anxiety about their future (Fedai & An, 2012, p. 4). As a result, these developments intensified political polarization between the two communities. Greek Cypriots, seeking to advance their Enosis (union with Greece) agenda both locally and internationally, began publishing newspapers to promote their cause. In parallel, the British authorities, aiming to disseminate administrative regulations and legitimize their rule, established an official gazette. In this context, the first printing press—Henry S. King and Co.—was set up in Larnaca in 1878.

The early development of the press soon led to the emergence of Ottoman Turkish-language publications. Among the first initiatives was the newspaper *Ümid (Hope)*, published in Larnaca in 1879. The paper was edited by Aleksan Sarafian and published through Henry S. King and Co. Although short-lived, *Ümid* represents one of the earliest attempts to establish a Turkish-language press on the island. Sarafian later continued his publishing activities with another newspaper, *Dik-el-Şark (The Rooster of the East)*, launched in 1889.

Following these early experiments, *Saded (The Issue)*, published in 1889 by Ahmet Emin Efendi, holds particular importance as the first Turkish-language newspaper produced by a Muslim Turkish Cypriot. Its emergence marks a transition from externally driven initiatives to locally grounded journalistic activity.

During this period, the first local newspaper, *Kipros/Cyprus*, a bilingual publication in Greek and English, appeared, followed by other Greek newspapers such as *Neon Kition (New Kition)*, *Stasinós (Station)*, *Enosis (Union)*, *Horkatis (Peasant)*, and *Neon Ethnos ("New Nation")* (Ünlü, 1981, p. 10; Hadjiprodomou, 1990, p. 11). Notably, the choice of titles like *Enosis* and *Neon Ethnos* clearly reflected the ideological alignment of these publications with Greek nationalism. For nearly two decades, Larnaca remained the center of press activity before it shifted to Nicosia. However, the emergence of Ottoman Turkish newspapers in Cyprus took longer, primarily due to technical limitations: the absence of typesetting systems for Arabic script. This challenge was eventually overcome by importing the necessary equipment from Cairo and bringing in skilled personnel, including the Armenian master printer Minas Gregorian and three Turkish apprentices, to train local staff at the Government Printing Office (Colonial Office, 1888, pp. 132, 136, 138).

A more stable phase in this development was marked by the publication of *Zaman (Time)* in Nicosia in 1891, which demonstrated greater continuity than earlier newspapers and played a more sustained role in shaping both public discourse and literary practices. Thus, these efforts paved the way for the emergence of Ottoman Turkish press on the island, which would soon become a platform for serialized fiction and the beginnings of modern Turkish-Cypriot literature (Yıkık, 2020). In this regard, print culture not only enabled the circulation of information but also created the conditions for new literary forms—particularly serialized fiction—to reach readers and reshape narrative practices.

Within this developing print culture, serialized fiction emerged as a significant medium through which new narrative forms were introduced to readers. One of the most remarkable examples of this process is Kaytâzzâde Mehmet Nâzım's *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet (The Remnant of Love)*, widely regarded as the first novel written by a Turkish Cypriot author. The work was initially published in serialized form in local newspapers before being issued as a book, reflecting the close relationship between print culture and literary production in the period. Beyond its historical significance, the novel occupies a distinctive

position as a transitional text: while it draws on established Eastern narrative conventions, it also incorporates narrative techniques associated with the modern novel. This dual structure makes *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet* a particularly valuable work for examining how narrative forms were reshaped in the context of late Ottoman literary transformation.

Although *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet* has been recognized as a significant work in the history of Turkish Cypriot literature, existing scholarship has primarily focused on its historical position and bibliographic importance rather than its formal and narratological features. Studies by Fedai (2005, p. 209), Atun (2011, pp. 31–32; 2010, pp. 86–87), and Aylanç (2017, pp. 18–20) have provided valuable insights into the novel's place within the development of the Turkish Cypriot novel and have documented its publication history and thematic structure. However, the work has not been sufficiently examined in terms of its narrative form, its relationship to serialized fiction, and its role in the transformation of literary conventions. In particular, its hybrid structure and its position within the broader framework of Ottoman literary modernity remain underexplored. This article seeks to address this gap by analyzing the novel through a narratological and historical-literary lens, focusing on its formal features and its contribution to processes of narrative transformation.

Building on this framework, this article aims to examine *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet* in terms of its narrative form and its role in the transformation of literary conventions in Ottoman Cyprus. In doing so, it addresses the following research questions: How did serialized fiction contribute to the transformation of narrative form in Ottoman Cyprus? In what ways does *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet* negotiate between Eastern narrative traditions and modern novelistic techniques? To what extent can the novel be situated within a broader, multi-centered process of Ottoman modernity? Methodologically, the study adopts a historical-literary and narratological approach, combining close textual analysis with contextual examination of late nineteenth-century print culture. Rather than offering a descriptive reading, it focuses on the formal structures of the text in order to explore how narrative transformation operates within the work.

Methodology

This study adopts a historical-literary and narratological approach to examine the transformation of narrative form in Kaytâzzâde Mehmet Nâzım's *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet*. The analysis is grounded in close reading, focusing on formal aspects such as plot construction, temporality, narrative voice, and modes of representation, while situating these features within the broader context of late nineteenth-century Ottoman print culture, where serialized fiction played a crucial role in shaping literary practices. In line with narratological approaches that emphasize the interpretive significance of plot and temporal structuring (Brooks, 1984), the study examines how narrative coherence and meaning are produced through causal and chronological organization.

Drawing on key narratological concepts such as causality, mimesis, and narrative structure, the analysis identifies elements associated with modern novelistic form and considers them in relation to features inherited from Eastern narrative traditions, including motif-based storytelling and an interventionist narrative voice. The selection of *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet* as a case study is informed by its status as one of the earliest examples of Turkish Cypriot prose fiction and its initial publication in serialized form, which makes it particularly suitable for examining the intersection of print culture and narrative transformation. Through this integrated framework, the study aims to demonstrate how the novel reflects a hybrid mode of narrative construction within an ongoing process of literary change in the late Ottoman context.

1. The Early Period of the Ottoman Turkish Press in Cyprus (1879–1900)

At the outset, the first Ottoman Turkish newspaper in Cyprus was launched in 1879 by Aleksan Sarafian, an Armenian Ottoman subject who had fled Istanbul—fearing arrest for his pro-constitutional stance against Sultan Abdulhamid II (1876–1909)—first to Cairo and then to Larnaca. There he published *Ümid* (Hope). Nevertheless, the paper quickly encountered political headwinds: in its fourth issue Sarrafyan criticized Sultan Abdülhamid for transferring Cyprus to Britain, alleging that the Sultan, out

of fear of Russia, had effectively “bribed” the British with the island. As a consequence, the Sultan demanded that the British Administration suppress the paper, and *Ümid*—of which no copies survive—was closed after only four issues (Sophocleous, 2008, pp. 31–32). Taken together, this episode illustrates the pervasive censorship pressures faced by Ottoman Turkish newspapers in Cyprus during Abdulhamid’s reign.

By contrast, the earliest surviving Ottoman Turkish newspaper produced by a local Turkish Cypriot was *Zaman* (Time). To appreciate its emergence, one must consider the period’s acute socio-political anxieties. Turkish Cypriot intellectuals founded the paper to counter the vigorous Enosis (union with Greece) propaganda sustained by Greek Cypriot newspapers. Recognizing this urgency, they confronted substantial obstacles: a lack of printing infrastructure, limited journalistic experience, and scarce financial resources. In response, regulars of the *Osmanlı Kiraathanesi* (Ottoman Coffeehouse), a civic association, organized a community-wide fundraising campaign among Muslim islanders and invited Muzafferredin Galib, a young journalist from Istanbul, to guide the initiative.

Subsequently, the first Turkish printing house in Cyprus—*Zaman Matbaası*—was established in the Laleli district of Nicosia, and the inaugural issue of *Zaman* appeared on 21 December 1891. The proprietor was Hacı Derviş Efendi, a prominent local notable, and the editor-in-chief was Muzafferredin Galib. Under Galib’s editorial leadership, the newspaper urged the island’s Muslims to act in unity and address shared problems collectively. In addition, it reported on local affairs, kept readers informed about developments in the Ottoman and Islamic worlds, and disseminated information on Western commercial, scientific, and technological advances—thereby helping to lay the groundwork for modernization. Concurrently, *Zaman* engaged polemically with Greek Cypriot newspapers advocating Enosis, asserting that Cyprus was Ottoman property and ought to be returned by Britain. Through these interventions, Turkish Cypriots encountered systematic political discourse in print and began to articulate a shared communal identity—though, notably, they still referred to themselves primarily as “Muslims,” not “Turks,” in this period (Yıkık, 2019, pp. 136–139).

Crucially, *Zaman* featured a literary section that published both classical Ottoman poetry and prose, alongside works shaped by Tanzimat literary currents. Some pieces came from renowned Istanbul-based authors, while others were original contributions by Muzafferredin Galib and local writers. Above all, this section marked a milestone in Cypriot literary history by introducing the first novel to local readers: *Bir Bakış* (A Glance) by Muzafferredin Galib. The narrative—set among Istanbul’s elite—opens with two young protagonists who meet by chance at the gate of a Bosphorus mansion and fall in love at first sight. Yet, the novel remained unfinished when Galib left the island, compelled by his longing for Istanbul (Yıkık, 2021, pp. 25, 26, 73).

In terms of continuity, *Zaman* sustained publication for nearly nine years, reaching its 423rd issue on 2 September 1900—an exceptional longevity compared to contemporaneous titles (Ünlü, 1981, pp. 33–34; Yıkık, 2019). By comparison, other Ottoman Turkish newspapers of the era—*Yeni Zaman* (New Time), *Kıbrıs* (Cyprus), *Kokonoz* (a satirical title; untranslatable as a single English word), *Akbaba* (Vulture), *Feryat* (Cry/Wail), *Sada-yı Kıbrıs* (The Voice of Cyprus), and *Maabir* (Crossings)—were short-lived due to financial constraints and censorship. Overall, during this formative phase of the Ottoman Turkish press in Cyprus (1879–1900), a total of eleven newspapers were published (Ünlü, 1981, pp. 33–34; Akcansoy et al., 2012, pp. 19–36). This development illustrates how early Ottoman Turkish newspapers in Cyprus not only functioned as vehicles of political communication but also served as platforms for the introduction of narrative forms that would later evolve through serialized fiction.

2. Authorial Context and the Formation of Narrative Practice

Kaytâzzâde Mehmet Nâzım (1857–1927) was one of the earliest literary figures to emerge from the developing Turkish Cypriot print culture of the late nineteenth century. After receiving his education at a local Rüştiye, he served as a civil servant in various administrative centers of the Ottoman Empire, including Chios, Adana, İzmir, Bursa, and Istanbul, before returning to Cyprus (Karakartal, 2019, p. 4; Kıbrıs Türk Edebiyatı, 1989, p. 41; Yılmaz & Okumuş, 1992, p. 39). His engagement with both provincial and imperial cultural environments played a significant role in shaping his literary outlook.

Nâzım first gained recognition through his contributions to the literary section of *Zaman*, where he published both classical Ottoman poetry and prose alongside Tanzimat-influenced works. Over time, his writings appeared in various periodicals and encompassed a wide range of genres, including poetry, prose, essays, plays, and serialized fiction (Efendi, 1993, pp. XI–XXXVII; Karakartal, 2019, pp. 41–43). This generic diversity reflects a transitional literary practice situated between established Ottoman forms and emerging modern genres. The circulation of Turkish-language newspapers beyond the island—to cities such as Istanbul, Cairo, London, and Paris—further suggests that Nâzım’s work was embedded within a broader transregional literary network (Colonial Office, 1884, p. 296).

A key step in this process can be observed in his serialized prose work *Adem-i İhtiyât* (*Lack of Caution*), published in *Yeni Zaman* in 1892. Structurally and thematically, the text remains closely aligned with Eastern narrative traditions, emphasizing moral instruction and motif-based storytelling. At the same time, its narrative construction and didactic framing reveal an emerging engagement with prose fiction as a literary form. In this respect, *Adem-i İhtiyât* can be seen as a transitional experiment that precedes Nâzım’s shift toward novelistic writing in *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet* (Wullschlager, 2000, pp. 16–17; Irwin, 2004, pp. 100–101; Yıkık, 2022).

This trajectory culminates in *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet*, first published in serialized form and later as a book, marking a decisive moment in the development of Turkish Cypriot prose. Rather than viewing this work solely in terms of its “first novel” status, it is more productive to understand it as part of an evolving narrative practice in which inherited storytelling conventions are reconfigured through the material and formal conditions of print culture (Fedai, 2005, pp. 269–279; Kaytâzzâde, 2004a; Atun, 2010, pp. 86–87).

3. Main Features of *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet*

When examining Nâzım’s first novel, one is immediately struck by the author’s technical competence—remarkable for a debut work. At first glance, the text might be categorized as a conventional late-Tanzimat romantic novel. Yet such a reading would overlook its hybridity. Written during a moment when Turkish literature was gradually distancing itself from Eastern narrative structures and adopting Western forms, *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet* embodies a subtle synthesis.

To begin with, it should be noted that the publication of newspapers—especially privately owned ones, which proliferated between 1861 and 1973—played a crucial role in bringing the first examples of the novel, a genre introduced into Ottoman Turkish literature from the West, to readers in serialized form (Tanpınar, 1988, pp. 249, 251; Ercilasun, 2013, pp. 13–15). According to Okay (2020, p. 71), the themes explored in these early novels predominantly revolve around love affairs, women, marriage, slavery, and education, indicating a literary field preoccupied with the sociocultural tensions of the period. As Finn (2003) notes, Near Eastern narrative traditions—most visibly in works like *The Thousand and One Nights* and in classical Islamic romances such as *Layla and Majnun* or *Khusrev and Shirin*—deeply shaped the earliest Turkish novels. These traditions often present characters, time, and space as indistinct or secondary; lovers dissolve into the identity of the beloved; action and causality remain muted; and truth emerges as a universal principle valid “always and everywhere.” The influence of Ottoman Divan literature is also evident in its emphasis on emotional intensification and heightened sensibility. As Finn observes, narratives frequently unfold through speeches and interior monologues, with little descriptive detail; characters resemble fixed figures of the Karagöz shadow play, more emblematic than psychologically developed (pp. 2–3; 116–117).

Similarly, Tanpınar (2016) underscores that features of Eastern narrative poetics are evident in the earliest Turkish novels. In particular, he argues that early novelists lacked a developed sense of imagination (*muhayyile*)—not as fabrication, but as the capacity to render fictional worlds experientially real (p. 58). Accordingly, the novelist must practice authorial self-effacement, avoiding intrusive commentary so that readers encounter events as if they unfold in real time. Nevertheless, because early writers approached the novel as an instrument of moral instruction, this mimetic effect was curtailed—a tendency discernible in Kaytâzzâde Mehmet Nâzım’s work under discussion as well. Moreover, Tanpınar diagnoses a further deficiency in Eastern storytelling, namely the paucity of psychological inquiry: introspection is largely neglected; narratives are organized around discrete incidents and do not

venture beyond topical constraints to probe human nature or the external world in depth. Consequently, character assumes an emblematic, rather than interiorized, form, and the diegesis privileges affective intensities over analytical description. Within this framework, what Tanpınar (2016, pp. 60–61) calls the “old psychology” centers on *şevk* and *hicran*—*ardor* and *heartbreak*. In this respect, the same affective economy also appears to underwrite Kaytâzzâde Mehmet Nâzım's *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet*. Taken together, these observations converge with broader assessments of the late Tanzimat novel, which maintain that, while imitative of the European novel, it nonetheless incorporates elements inherited from the *meddah* (public storyteller) tradition and from folk and heroic storytelling; accordingly, in both content and style it remains derivative—even apprentice-like—the chief cause, it is argued, being the absence of a robust sociohistorical framework (Seyhan, 2014, pp. 34–35). Moreover, Gürbilek (2016, p. 98) identifies a contradictory duality in these early novels that reflects the impasse between imitation and the aspiration to an original national literature. As Koçak (1996) argues in “*Kaptırılmış İdeal*” [*The Captured Ideal*], when the Ottoman Turkish writer turns to the representation of everyday life—that is, when daily experience enters fiction—the writer becomes confined to a locality deprived of ideals. At this point, it should also be emphasized that the Tanzimat novel largely centers the city, the transformations observed in urban life, the dualities produced by these changes, and the traditions that no longer have a place in this new social order and must therefore be revised or abandoned (Küçük, 2025, p. 79). In short, although the early novels exhibit deficiencies in psychological depth, they nevertheless provide a broad social panorama and contain significant clues regarding the social background and the spirit of the age. Finally, as Esen (2012, p. 103) also observes, narration in Tanzimat novels is not dramatic/showing but rather transmissive/interpreting: the reader is not afforded the opportunity to follow events in the course of their own unfolding; instead, the author directly reports the events and subsequently interprets them. According to Enginün (2012, p. 188), this feature—particularly evident in the novels of Ahmet Mithat Efendi—derives from the influence of traditional storytelling practices, especially the *meddah* tradition, which foregrounds an overtly present and interventionist narrator. Akyüz (n.d., p. 68) further argues that this narrative mode constitutes a deliberate literary and publication strategy designed to acclimate readers to a new genre operating with unfamiliar techniques.

Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet unmistakably exhibits many of the narrative and structural features associated with early Ottoman-Turkish prose fiction. First serialized in the newspaper *Kıbrıs* and subsequently published in book form, the work participates in the broader tradition of nineteenth-century fiction disseminated through newspaper serialization. In terms of plot configuration, character construction, and thematic orientation, the novel maintains discernible continuities with Eastern narrative conventions, particularly in its reliance on motifs, emotional intensification, and a narrative voice reminiscent of the *meddah* tradition. Yet the text cannot be circumscribed within the parameters of a purely Eastern tale. Of particular significance is its incorporation of the principle of causality—arguably the constitutive logic of the modern Western novel—whereby events unfold according to recognizable chains of motivation and consequence. Nâzım further complicates this hybrid narrative structure by orchestrating an interplay between diegesis (classical narratio) and mimesis (classical imitatio), mobilizing summary, dialogue, and interior monologue in conjunction with a presenter-narrator figure that evokes older storytelling practices. By layering modern narratological techniques onto inherited modes of oral and manuscript-based narration, Nâzım produces a formally transitional yet aesthetically ambitious work that both engages with and reconfigures the literary horizons of its time. In sum, *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet* constructs a narrative texture that is simultaneously familiar—rooted in the expressive registers of traditional storytelling—and innovative in its adoption of emergent fictional strategies, making it a valuable site for examining the evolution of narrative form in late Ottoman and early modern Turkish literary culture.

3.1. Plot Structure and Narrative Configuration

Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet can be approached in terms of its narrative construction and the ways in which plot functions within a developing novelistic framework. The narrative unfolds in Istanbul in 1890 and centers on Mucib, a young bureaucrat whose disciplined and morally restrained character places him at odds with his social environment. His colleagues' attempt to lure him into a world of excess reflects a

familiar moralizing motif inherited from earlier narrative traditions; however, the plot departs from this conventional pattern by refusing to transform the protagonist into a figure of moral decline. Instead, Mucib's resistance foregrounds individual agency, a feature more closely aligned with modern narrative construction.

A decisive shift in the narrative occurs with the introduction of the photograph of Nevber, which functions as the central catalyst for the development of the plot. While the motif of falling in love through visual representation is well known in Eastern storytelling traditions, its mediation through photography introduces a distinctly modern dimension. This moment not only initiates the romantic storyline but also marks a transition from a relatively static narrative structure toward a more dynamic chain of causally connected events.

Following this encounter, the plot develops through a combination of letters, mediated communication, and carefully staged meetings, all of which contribute to a gradual intensification of emotional and narrative tension. The epistolary exchanges between Mucib and Nevber play a particularly important role, allowing for the articulation of interior states and thus introducing a degree of psychological depth that moves beyond the more schematic characterizations typical of earlier narrative forms.

At the same time, the trajectory of the plot remains structured around themes of separation, delay, and missed union, culminating in Mucib's illness and death. This tragic conclusion reinforces the affective dimensions of the narrative while maintaining a coherent causal structure, in which each development follows from preceding events. In this respect, the novel demonstrates an emerging commitment to chronological continuity and narrative coherence, features that signal a departure from the episodic and loosely connected structures characteristic of traditional storytelling.

Consequently, the plot of *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet* can be understood not simply as a sequence of romantic events, but as an organized narrative system in which inherited motifs are reconfigured through techniques associated with modern prose fiction. The interplay between these elements reveals a transitional mode of storytelling, situated between established narrative conventions and the formal demands of the novel as a modern literary form.

3.2. Characterization and the Limits of Modern Subjectivity

Characterization in *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet* reflects a transitional stage between established narrative conventions and emerging modern forms. Rather than presenting fully developed psychological individuals, the novel tends to construct its characters through clearly defined moral and social functions. In this respect, figures such as Mucib and Nevber are shaped less as complex subjects with internal conflicts and more as representatives of certain ethical and emotional positions.

Mucib, as the central figure of the narrative, embodies a tension between restraint and emotional transformation. At the beginning of the novel, he is defined by discipline, rationality, and a clear rejection of both pleasure and romantic attachment. However, following his encounter with Nevber, his character undergoes a shift that is less psychological than symbolic, moving from indifference to excessive emotional attachment. This transformation, while central to the plot, is not explored through detailed interior analysis, but rather presented as part of a moral trajectory.

Similarly, Nevber functions primarily as an idealized figure, whose beauty and virtue serve as catalysts for Mucib's emotional and narrative development. Her role within the plot is less that of an autonomous subject and more that of a narrative focal point around which desire and loss are organized. Other characters, such as Mediha and Mucib's colleagues, are constructed as functional figures that facilitate the progression of events rather than as individualized personalities.

In this regard, the novel's approach to characterization remains closely aligned with earlier narrative traditions, where figures often serve emblematic or didactic purposes. At the same time, the inclusion of letters and interpersonal exchanges introduces limited moments of interiority, suggesting an emerging interest in subjective experience. Nevertheless, these elements do not develop into a fully realized psychological depth characteristic of later modern novels.

Characterization in *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet* can be understood as part of a transitional narrative structure, in which the move toward modern subjectivity remains incomplete. This partial transformation reinforces the hybrid nature of the text, situating it between inherited modes of representation and the evolving conventions of the novel as a modern literary form.

3.3. Spatial Representation and the Limits of Narrative Realism

The novel's spatial imagination is framed initially by the author's prefatory reflections, in which Nâzım asserts that anyone seeking happiness should reside in Istanbul, the imperial capital. He extols the city's beauty and highlights Çamlıca and Kağıthane as the most delightful spring promenades where residents traditionally gather for leisure (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b). Yet, despite this effusive praise, the narrative itself does not mobilize these celebrated districts as meaningful settings. Neither Çamlıca nor Kağıthane appears within the plot, and the novel's spatial world remains strikingly restricted compared to the ambitious geographical imagery of the preface. This gap suggests that Nâzım's evaluation of Istanbul may owe more to literary influence—notably that of Namık Kemal (2005) and Recaizade Mahmut Ekrem (2004), both of whom famously wrote about Çamlıca—than to sustained lived experience.

Instead, the novel constructs its spatial field through a series of localized, function-specific urban nodes in which events unfold. For instance, characters occasionally traverse the more fashionable districts of the city: Mucib and his friend Necmi visit Beyoğlu, where they unexpectedly encounter Sadi and Neşet and spend time walking together, a scene that signals youthful sociability as well as the semi-public modernity associated with this cosmopolitan district (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 147). Beyoğlu here functions not as an intricately rendered topography but as a shorthand for metropolitan encounter and chance social contact.

Other districts serve more domestic or gender-coded roles. Kadıköy, for example, appears primarily as the site of female mobility: Mediha and her mother return from Kadıköy after paying a household visit to Nevber and her family, reflecting the gendered conventions of Ottoman social life in which women's movement and sociability were often tied to intra-domestic visiting practices (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 150). Spatially, Kadıköy thus operates as a node of respectable, feminized social circulation.

A considerable portion of the plot is anchored in the shared domestic sphere, especially the gardens and interior spaces of the protagonists. When Nevber and her mother visit Mucib's family home, Mucib and Nevber find a moment of semi-privacy in the corner of the garden, where he holds her hand (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 154) and later kisses her on the cheek (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 156). These scenes render the garden as an emotionally charged micro-space that enables intimacy within socially monitored boundaries. Similarly, after Nevber's departure to Bursa, Mucib wanders daily through the same garden, tracing the paths she once walked, a gesture that transforms the garden into a repository of memory and longing (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 163). In this respect, the garden functions as a topography of affect, mapping desire, absence, and recollection onto physical space.

Beyond Istanbul, Bursa emerges as a secondary spatial anchor: Nevber travels there with her parents three days after the family's decision (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 169). Her stay in Bursa activates a new spatial tension in the narrative, as Mucib anticipates her return, waiting anxiously for letters and news (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 181). Bursa thereby becomes the place of physical separation and deferred reunion—an off-stage location that shapes the emotional temporality of the plot without being directly depicted.

The novel also includes brief but symbolically charged spatial allusions. On one occasion, the narrator evokes "the air of Kaaba of worry", an allusion to the Kaaba that overlays psychological anxiety with sacred geography, thereby infusing a quotidian emotional state with religious resonance (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 165). This moment exemplifies how the narrative occasionally mobilizes symbolic or sacred space to elevate internal sentiment.

Finally, the spatial itinerary culminates in a solemn public site: the funeral ceremony held in the Şehzadebaşı district (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 221). Unlike the novel's more intimate domestic scenes,

Şehzadebaşı functions as a civic and communal space, marking a transition from private emotional geographies to the shared rituals of collective life.

Viewed cumulatively, the novel's spatial strategies reveal a marked divergence between the expansive urban imaginary of the preface and the selective, functionally loaded, and often intimate spaces that shape the narrative itself. Rather than offering a panoramic or topographically detailed portrayal of Istanbul, the text privileges purpose-driven micro-environments—gardens that foster emotional revelation, districts that sustain sociability, and distant locales like Bursa that structure longing and deferred reunion. Through this prism, space emerges not merely as backdrop but as an active agent shaping affective experience, social custom, and narrative tempo. In this respect, *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet* constructs a spatiality less concerned with urban spectacle than with tracing the emotional and relational cartographies that define its characters' inner lives. Seen in this light, the spatial organization of the novel reflects a limited form of realism, in which locations function more as narrative devices than as fully developed environments.

3.4. Temporal Structuring and Chronological Realism

In the novel, temporal organization is constructed with a degree of realism that is usual for the more mature examples of late-nineteenth-century Ottoman fiction. From the very outset, the narrative anchors itself in a precisely dated historical moment—26 November 1890—a choice that immediately situates the events within a concrete present and underscores a commitment to chronological specificity (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 1). Moreover, the opening scene, depicting a snow-covered Istanbul morning beneath storm-heavy clouds, is enriched through a biblical intertextual reference likening the anticipated rainfall to a Noah-like flood, thereby integrating symbolic depth with temporal exactitude (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 1).

As the narrative progresses, temporal markers continue to appear with notable consistency, and together they sustain a clear linear chronology. The storyline unfolds over approximately five months, a duration that is repeatedly reinforced through explicit references made by the characters. For instance, Nevber's family is said to return from Bursa in one month, and it is further noted that six weeks have passed since their departure from Kadıköy (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 192). Similarly, the emotional trajectory between Mucib and Nevber is linked to her father's two-month stay in Manisa (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 191), while other moments record the elapse of eight days since the journey to Bursa (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 189) or the week-long wait for a letter (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 181). Additionally, temporal precision surfaces through shorter units of time—such as the three days before the journey to Bursa (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 169)—and through explicit weekday references like Thursday evening (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 153), Tuesday (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, pp. 66–67), Friday (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 53), and Sunday morning toward the novel's conclusion. These repeated specifications of days and weeks allow the reader to trace the narrative's internal chronology with clarity.

Furthermore, the novel's temporal structure is reinforced by its epistolary dimension. Letters, appearing at various intervals—some bearing dates, others not—nonetheless function as markers that segment emotional and narrative rhythms, signaling shifts in mood, expectation, or relational distance (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, pp. 136, 129, 122, 119, 89). At the same time, broader temporal frames are introduced through references to seasonal change, such as the arrival of spring (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 45), which situates the unfolding events against the backdrop of natural cycles.

In addition, temporal indicators remain closely intertwined with the routines of everyday life, including office conversations (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 22), visits to Bayezid Square (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, pp. 79–80), and movement across different urban neighborhoods. By embedding temporal cues within these ordinary activities, the narrative cultivates a sense of lived, experiential time rather than an abstract chronology. Consequently, through its cumulative deployment of dated events, intervals, weekdays, letters, and seasonal shifts, the novel constructs a coherent and continuous temporal framework that not only guides the reader through the progression of the plot but also contributes significantly to the work's broader realist aesthetic through this layering of modern narratological techniques. This emphasis on

chronological continuity reflects an emerging sense of modern temporality, in which events are organized within a coherent and measurable time framework.

3.5. Narrative Techniques and Hybrid Narrative Form

At the threshold of the text, the preface functions as a deliberate paratextual frame that not only signals the work's ideological orientation but also shapes the horizon of its anticipated reception. This framing is deeply embedded in the intellectual climate of the Tanzimat period, which—as Okay (2020, p. 27) underscores—was profoundly influenced by Western currents of thought; rationalist, positivist, and materialist doctrines increasingly informed both literary production and broader cultural discourse. It is within this milieu that Nâzım positions himself. From the outset, he extends blessings to Sultan Abdulhamid II (1876–1909), portraying him as a sovereign committed to the advancement of science and education, and in doing so, he aligns his narrative with an emergent epistemic culture radiating from the imperial center to the provinces. This gesture situates the text not merely as a literary artifact but as a participant in the evolving configuration of knowledge, authority, and modernization in the late Ottoman world.

On one level, this rhetoric serves as a tactical alignment with officially sanctioned discourse—an attempt to pre-empt censure in a period marked by vigilant press surveillance. On another, it reflects a recognizable Tanzimat-inflected synthesis that couples religious commitment with Western-inspired rationalism. This ideological constellation further suggests the influence of the Young Ottomans, particularly Namık Kemal, with whom Nâzım maintained personal acquaintance and correspondence. As Moran (2013, p. 16) observes, the Young Ottomans regarded liberty, equality, and science as indispensable tools for elevating the declining Ottoman Empire to the level of European prosperity. In this respect, Nâzım's emphasis—restricted in the preface almost exclusively to “science” (fen)—appears to be a strategic narrowing, likely motivated by concerns over censorship, while nonetheless preserving the broader reformist ethos associated with Kemal's intellectual vision. Thus, the preface not only aligns the narrative with a reformist lineage but also frames the forthcoming text as a negotiation between tradition and modernity, orthodoxy and rational inquiry, state-sanctioned loyalty and Young Ottoman reformist sensibility.

In the same breath, the preface adopts the conventional authorial modesty of nineteenth-century Ottoman letters: Nâzım solicits the reader's indulgence for possible shortcomings and dedicates the book to contemporary intellectuals as well as to future generations. Thus, the work presents itself as both humble and aspirational, inscribing a didactic, transgenerational horizon of address. Concurrently, the preface unfurls idealized tableaux of Istanbul—Çamlıca's slopes, Kağıthane's blossoms, a spring palette of sensory plenitude—renewing a canonical trope of the capital as the political and cultural heart of the empire. Yet, beneath the descriptive sheen one detects a tacit self-portrait: rather than bluntly declaring a desire to relocate to the imperial center, the author vents his longing obliquely, allowing readers to hear aspiration in the pauses between praise. In this sense, the preface speaks with a human voice—guarded yet palpable—where the desire for the city doubles as a desire for participation in its intellectual life (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b).

Turning to the narrative proper, the novel deftly recasts Eastern narrative topoi through modern techniques. The well-worn motif—familiar from *The Thousand and One Nights*—of the inexperienced heir seduced by ill-disposed companions reappears only to be strategically revised. Here, Mucib's colleagues, envious of his promotion and salary increase to 400 kuruş, conspire to compromise him, exploiting his father's absence in Manisa to lure him into drinking parties (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, pp. 52–53, 64, 191). Significantly, the plot refuses the classical arc of dissipation and ruin: Mucib resists, maintains moral agency, and thwarts their design. Here, ethical steadfastness—rather than cautionary collapse—becomes the moral fulcrum of this recast topos, aligning the novel's didactic charge with its modernizing ethos.

Equally telling, the text revisits the time-honored device of falling in love with an image, but channels it through technological mediation. In a pivotal scene, Mucib, rummaging through papers, encounters a photograph—“the picture of an extremely beautiful girl”—and feels “for the first time... a little

excitement in his heart” (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, pp. 52–53). As is well known, in Turkish folk romance, visual encounter often initiates love; for example, in *Elif ile Mahmut Hikâyesi* (*The Tale of Elif and Mahmut*), Mahmut becomes enamored upon discovering Elif’s portrait in a cave (Alptekin, 1997, p. 212). However, Nâzım contemporizes the topos by substituting a photograph for a painted portrait, thereby harmonizing inheritance with modern media at a moment when photography had begun to circulate widely in the Ottoman world after the 1850s (Gökçek, 2012, p. 89). Thus, the scene stages a double movement: it preserves a beloved narrative trigger and reframes it through a Western technology, rendering tradition legible within a modern optic.

Moreover, the novel sustains a poetic intertext that threads classical Ottoman verse through epistolary and dialogic moments, letting lyric cadences voice affect where prose might fall short. At a threshold of encounter and separation, Mucib recites a couplet by Nefî (1572–1635), rendered in the English translation as: “*The heart-captivating behaviour of the beautiful girls caught hold of the girl’s skirt, and the ill-wishers intervened; once again the eyelashes commenced fighting like daggers in a manner befitting a drunkard.*” (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 80). In effect, this insertion of verse softens the generic transition to the novel, thickening the emotional texture with the mnemonic force of classical poetry while integrating the familiar sounds of the canon into a modern narrative form.

At the level of scene construction, the narrative exhibits a confident command of Western realist craft. A third-person narrator establishes precise coordinates of time and place and ushers us into vivid, behavioral scenes: a carriage ride from Şehzadebaşı to the Bâb-ı Âli, routines of office life and collegial exchange, and itineraries across the city’s neighborhoods (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b). In dialogue, the narrator tactically recedes, permitting voices to unfold with minimal intrusion and creating the compelling illusion of overheard speech. In addition, letters occupy a significant structural and emotional function, allowing characters to articulate their inner worlds in the first person and to communicate psychological states that the third-person narrator only hints at indirectly (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b). The text repeatedly foregrounds the anticipation, absence, or reception of letters as crucial temporal indicators: a character has been waiting for a letter from Bursa for an entire week (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 181); “as arranged,” three days later they travelled to Bursa with his father (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 169); events occur “following the day of separation” (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 163) or “on Thursday evening” (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 153); and a brief allusion to the Kaaba (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 165) layers sacral temporality over quotidian time. Some letters appear without dates—such as Mucib’s undated message to Nevber (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 136) or Nevber’s similarly undated reply (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b, p. 129)—introducing intentional gaps that subtly destabilize chronological precision, while additional letters on pp. 119 and 122 reinforce the steady cadence of written communication. Through this interplay of epistolary media, temporal signals, and selective omissions, the novel orchestrates a dynamic rhythm of expectation and interiority that both structures chronology and deepens readerly empathy (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b).

Taken together, these techniques point to a hybrid narrative form in which traditional storytelling devices coexist with emerging features of modern prose fiction. The novel combines inherited motifs with practices such as scene construction, epistolary communication, and a more controlled narrative perspective. In this sense, *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet* reflects an ongoing process of narrative transformation, in which older forms are not abandoned but reconfigured within a developing modern framework (Kaytâzzâde, 2004b).

Conclusion

This article examines the role of serialized fiction in the transformation of narrative form and the emergence of literary modernity in late Ottoman Cyprus under British administration through a close analysis of Kaytâzzâde Mehmet Nâzım’s *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet*. In doing so, it set out to address three central questions concerning the function of serialized fiction, the interaction between narrative traditions, and the novel’s position within Ottoman modernity.

First, the analysis has demonstrated that serialized fiction played a crucial role in reshaping narrative practices in this context. As shown through the historical development of the press and its literary

sections, newspapers did not merely serve as vehicles of information, but also created a space in which new narrative forms could circulate and evolve. In this respect, serialization facilitated the gradual transition from oral and manuscript-based storytelling to more structured forms of prose fiction.

Second, the study has shown that *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet* negotiates between Eastern narrative traditions and modern novelistic techniques through a hybrid narrative structure. Elements such as motif-based storytelling, an interventionist narrative voice, and moral didacticism coexist with features associated with the modern novel, including causality, chronological continuity, epistolary communication, and scene-based representation. This coexistence reflects an ongoing process of narrative transformation rather than a complete rupture with earlier forms.

Finally, the findings suggest that the novel should be understood within a broader, multi-centered process of Ottoman modernity. Rather than representing a delayed or derivative imitation of metropolitan literary developments, *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet* illustrates how literary modernity was negotiated and articulated in a peripheral context through local conditions of print culture and narrative experimentation.

Taken together, these findings highlight serialized fiction as a key site of literary innovation in this milieu, where inherited narrative models were reconfigured within emerging forms of modern prose. In this sense, *Yâdigâr-ı Muhabbet* stands not only as an early example of the Turkish Cypriot novel, but also as a revealing case of how modern literary practices were shaped through processes of adaptation, hybridity, and transformation.

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