The Historical Novel: Genre Development In The Framework Of World Literature

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Abstract

This article provides an in-depth analysis of the formation and developmental stages of the historical novel genre in the context of world literature. The historical novel is not only a means of artistically interpreting past events but also serves as a vehicle for preserving cultural memory, fostering national identity, and facilitating philosophical and aesthetic reflection. The article explores the poetic and stylistic features of the genre, the balance between historical fact and fictional imagination, and the evolution of the historical protagonist. Particular attention is given to the literary evolution of historical novels—from classical examples to modern and postmodern approaches. The study also examines the role and significance of historical novel traditions in various regions, with a focus on Turkish literature. Through the works of authors such as Namık Kemal, Tarık Buğra, and İskender Pala, the article illustrates how historical consciousness, national memory, and literary style converge in this genre.

Moreover, the influence of modern technologies and digital culture on the historical novel genre is addressed in detail. The article investigates how electronic formats, audiobooks, and interactive platforms contribute to the genre's popularization and enhance engagement with readers. It also touches upon the emergence of AI-generated historical texts as a new phenomenon in literary creation. Finally, the article offers scholarly insights into the role of historical novels in education, moral development, and the preservation of cultural heritage, highlighting the genre's relevance and potential in the contemporary literary landscape.

1. Introduction

This article analyzes the emergence, formation, and early stages of development of the historical novel as a genre. The developmental trends of the historical novel are intrinsically linked to the overall evolution of the literary process and have varied across different periods in accordance with changing social, political, and cultural contexts. While the genre initially relied on the depiction of conventional historical events, its structural organization and aesthetic principles later became significantly more complex. Early historical novels primarily focused on the lives of major historical figures and large-scale political processes; over time, however, attention increasingly shifted toward the lifestyles of various social strata, details of everyday life, and spiritual and aesthetic explorations. Modern and

postmodern literature has exerted a substantial influence on the poetics of the historical novel, giving rise to retrospective and experimental approaches. Whereas traditional historical novels prioritized an ostensibly objective interpretation of history, contemporary historical novels increasingly employ subjectivity and multifaceted modes of interpretation. This shift has fostered the emergence of new forms in the artistic interpretation of historical events, the confrontation of diverse perspectives, and the convergence of history and fiction.

Technological advancement has also played a significant role in the development of the historical novel. As a result of the expansion of audiovisual media, the historical novel has gained popularity not only as a textual form but also as a multi-platform artistic product. The growth of cinema, television, and digital literary formats has broadened the reach of historical novels and amplified their impact. At the same time, the increasing availability of scholarly research and archival materials as open-access resources has contributed to a deeper factual grounding of historical novels.

From this perspective, historical novels today function not only as a genre that represents the past but also as an effective medium for addressing contemporary social and philosophical issues through historical retrospection. Through a multilayered approach, modern historical novels enable an in-depth analysis of historical processes, reveal differences among civilizations, and facilitate the reassessment of historical experience. Consequently, the historical novel continues to develop as a significant literary genre that not only offers an artistic interpretation of historical reality but also connects society with its historical roots and contributes to defining directions for future development. On the basis of a synthesis of existing research and scholarly conclusions, we systematize the developmental trends of the historical novel genre as follows:

2. The Formation of the Historical Novel and Its Development as a Literary Genre

In preparing this article, the stages of development, thematic orientations, aesthetic and poetic features of the historical novel genre, as well as the influence of technological factors, were examined on the basis of literary-analytical and historical-typological methods.

The thematic orientations of historical novels have undergone significant transformations over time.

Whereas early historical novels focused primarily on major political events, the fate of empires, and the lives of great historical figures, modern historical novels increasingly turn toward the history of social strata, the details of everyday life, and artistic explorations that foreground individuality. This process of development is closely connected with the formation of historical consciousness and reflects the reciprocal influence between literature and the discipline of history. One of the central themes of early historical novels was the portrayal of eminent historical figures and their roles in socio-political events. In these works, the lives of statesmen, military leaders, and royal dynasties occupied a central position.

For instance, Walter Scott's "Ivanhoe" (1819: 307) depicts the political events of medieval England and the Crusades of King Richard. Alexandre Dumas's "The Three Musketeers" (1844) is associated with court intrigues and historical events in seventeenth-century France, offering an artistic interpretation of real historical figures. Leo Tolstoy's "War and Peace" (1869: 465), in turn, presents the history of Russian society through the Napoleonic wars. A common feature of these novels is their emphasis on representing historical processes through individuals and major events, thereby creating a synthesis of artistic imagination and historical reality.

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the thematic scope of historical novels expanded to include not only rulers and military leaders but also the lives of ordinary people and issues of social justice. Historical novels increasingly sought to demonstrate the impact of historical processes through the destinies of different social groups. For example, Émile Zola's "Germinal" (1885: 608) portrays the Industrial Revolution in nineteenth-century France and the life of the working class. Halide Edib Adıvar's "Sinekli Bakkal" (1936: 387) illuminates interclass relations within the Ottoman Empire, while Kemal Tahir's "Devlet Ana" (1967: 436) depicts the historical development of the Turkish people from the perspective of ordinary individuals. This tendency enriched the historical novel with themes of social justice, poverty, colonialism, and revolution.

From the second half of the twentieth century onward, increased attention to human psychology became evident in historical novels, with historical processes being represented through personal experiences. This shift marked the transition of the genre to a new stage of development. Rather than providing generalized depictions of historical events, writers began to explore

how these events are reflected at the level of individual consciousness. For instance, Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale" (1985: 392) highlights the relationship between individual psychology and historical conditions, while Orhan Pamuk's "My Name Is Red" (1998: 472) interprets history from an alternative perspective through the destinies of historical figures and the philosophy of art. This tendency rendered historical novels more personal and philosophically complex.

In contemporary literature, the concept of alternative history has also gained prominence within the historical novel. In this approach, authors reinterpret historical events according to their imaginative visions, constructing alternative scenarios. Philip K. Dick's "The Man in the High Castle" (1962: 452) is an alternative history novel based on a scenario in which Germany and Japan emerge victorious in the Second World War. Robert Harris's "Fatherland" (1992: 397) similarly explores a hypothetical world shaped by a Nazi victory. This new direction has moved historical novels away from strictly factological interpretation, opening new experimental and philosophical horizons.

Today, the thematic scope of historical novels has expanded considerably, encompassing not only political history but also various aspects of cultural and social history. Contemporary historical novels address themes such as individual destinies, social movements, cultural transformations, and even the history of science and technology. At the same time, the artistic orientation of the genre continues to evolve. New works are often based on complex stylistic experiments, blending real historical events with fictional elements in the representation of history.

In general, the thematic orientations of the historical novel genre have undergone notable changes over time. While early works centered on the lives of rulers and prominent historical figures, later developments introduced themes related to ordinary people, social strata, historical psychology, and alternative history. This evolution confirms that the historical novel is a genre in constant renewal, developing in close interaction with artistic thought. Historical novels not only represent the past but also serve as a means of helping contemporary readers understand the pressing issues of their own time.

3. The Development of the Historical Novel in Different Regions: A Cultural and Social Context

Since its formation, the genre of the historical novel has developed under the influence of diverse artistic and stylistic approaches. While early traditional historical novels were written in a chronological narrative mode, based on real events and precise depictions of historical figures, the artistic possibilities of the genre expanded considerably under the influence of modernism and postmodernism. Contemporary historical novels have moved away from conventional storytelling and have consolidated their position as a genre through new poetics, psychological interpretation, and metafictional strategies. These transformations have had a profound impact on the interpretation of historical events, narrative techniques, and the reader's relationship with the text.

Traditional historical novels were grounded in a realist aesthetic and sought to represent past events through an ostensibly objective approach. For example, in Walter Scott's "Ivanhoe" (1819: 508) or Leo Tolstoy's "War and Peace" (1869: 981), historical figures and events are depicted in a highly realistic manner. In such novels, the narrative is organized chronologically, allowing the reader to observe historical processes directly. This traditional approach remained dominant in the historical novel until the late nineteenth century. However, with the advent of the twentieth century and the rise of modernism, methods of artistic representation underwent significant change.

Modernism, across art, literature, and philosophy, rejected conventional forms and developed new artistic methods through an exploration of the complex inner world of human consciousness. The historical novel did not remain outside this process. Modernist historical novels are characterized by the disruption of linear chronology, subjective representation, the use of interior monologue, and stream-of-consciousness techniques. Thomas Mann's "Buddenbrooks" (1901: 302) is a vivid example of this approach: it portrays historical processes through the life of a single family while enriching traditional narrative order with complex psychological analysis. Similarly, Virginia Woolf's "Orlando" (1928: 601) introduces a new poetic form by employing characters who travel across historical periods, thereby illustrating the interconnection between historical and artistic thought.

Under the influence of postmodernism, historical novels turned toward even more complex artistic experimentation. Postmodern historical novels are based on the reinterpretation of history, metanarrative elements, self-reflexive storytelling, and ironic approaches. In this context, the objective interpretation

of historical facts is questioned, and multilayered artistic structures are created. Umberto Eco's "Foucault's Pendulum" (1988: 826) is one of the most prominent examples of the postmodern historical novel. In this work, historical facts and fictional constructions are interwoven, compelling the reader to confront the boundary between reality and fantasy. In Salman Rushdie's "One Hundred Years of Solitude", historical events are blended with personal experience and folkloric elements, producing a new model of metafictional narration. In postmodern historical novels, historical events are reconstructed through artistic interpretation, alternative historical scenarios are proposed, and historical truth is presented as a subjective construct. For instance, David Mitchell's "Cloud Atlas" (2004: 506) links events from different periods to advance the idea of the cyclical nature of historical processes. This approach transforms postmodern historical novels into a means not merely of depicting the past, but of philosophically and artistically examining historical processes.

With the transformation of artistic approaches, the historical novel has significantly enriched its modes of representation. Historical novels have come to function not only as a means of depicting real events, but also as a medium for reflecting on history itself. Modernist historical novels expanded the genre's possibilities by linking human psychology and inner experience with historical events. Postmodern historical novels, in turn, revealed the interdependence of history and thought, enabling historical truth to be explored through multiple interpretations. This development has transformed the historical novel from a genre that simply reflects the past into a field of artistic experimentation addressing contemporary philosophical problems. Today, historical novels not only continue the tradition of chronological narration but also experiment with new forms through innovative approaches. Contemporary writers seek to expand the boundaries of the genre by incorporating concepts such as virtual reality, interactive narratives, and alternative history. As a result, the historical novel has become one of the most dynamic and constantly evolving genres in literature.

When discussing changes in structure and composition in historical novels, it is essential to identify the factors that have shaped their formation. The two fundamental elements are the interaction between historical fact and artistic invention. Although the balance between these elements has varied depending on period and authorial

style, historical novels have consistently developed through the interplay of truth and creativity. Some writers have sought to depict historical events with maximum realism, while others have created works by reinterpreting, reconstructing, and imaginatively reshaping history. This article aims to examine the proportion between fact and fiction in historical novels, to determine their place within the literary process, and to analyze this relationship through various examples.

Traditional historical novels, particularly those formed in the nineteenth century, relied heavily on historical facts and sought to represent events in chronological order. For example, Walter Scott's "Waverley" depicts a specific period in Scottish history, reviving real historical figures and events through artistic representation. Leo Tolstoy's "War and Peace", while portraying the Napoleonic wars, presents historical truth through the destinies of individual characters. In such novels, the dominance of historical fact led authors to rely extensively on archival materials, historical documents, and other contemporary sources. However, as the historical novel evolved, significant changes occurred in the balance between fact and artistic invention. Some writers began to emphasize artistic interpretation over precise factual representation. For instance, although historical figures and events appear in Alexandre Dumas's "The Count of Monte Cristo" and "The Three Musketeers", their literary portrayals diverge considerably from historical reality. The author employs dramatic effects and adventure elements to animate the historical setting.

By the twentieth century, artistic invention assumed an even more prominent role in historical novels. Writers approached historical events from a personal perspective, interpreting them through new artistic concepts. For example, Marguerite Yourcenar's "Memoirs of Hadrian" is grounded in historical facts about the Roman emperor Hadrian, yet the core of the novel focuses on his inner experiences. In such works, historical data serve as a backdrop, while the primary emphasis lies on psychology, philosophical reflection, and artistic craftsmanship.

Postmodern historical novels reconsidered the relationship between fact and fiction from an entirely new perspective. Representatives of this movement questioned the notion of absolute historical objectivity, arguing that history can only be understood through the author's imagination. Umberto Eco's "The Name of the Rose" (1980) exemplifies this tendency, synthesizing historical facts and fictional elements in a way that

compels readers to confront the boundary between history and fantasy. Salman Rushdie's "The Golden House" similarly intensifies artistic invention through an ironic and metafictional treatment of historical events.

Today, historical novels are regarded not only as a means of reconstructing the past but also as a literary genre that interrogates historical facts themselves. Some contemporary historical novels, such as Hilary Mantel's "Wolf Hall", depict the life of the historical figure Thomas Cromwell through a realistic, document-based approach, while others adopt radically experimental perspectives on historical processes. For example, Philip K. Dick's "The Man in the High Castle" reimagines the history of the Second World War through an alternative scenario. This demonstrates that historical novels have evolved beyond merely narrating past events, functioning instead as a literary laboratory for rethinking history itself. The relationship between historical fact and artistic invention has taken different forms across periods: while early traditional novels prioritized factual accuracy, contemporary historical novels tend to employ broader elements of fiction and interpretation. Under the influence of postmodernism, the boundary between historical fact and artistic imagination has become increasingly blurred, transforming historical truth into a conceptual phenomenon subject to discussion and reconstruction. Consequently, the historical novel today emerges not only as a narrative of the past but as a crucial genre for the artistic and philosophical exploration of history.

With the development of the historical novel as a genre, its central element—the image of the protagonist—has also undergone significant transformation. In early historical novels, protagonists were predominantly depicted through conventional heroic archetypes; over time, however, their psychological complexity increased, and their relationship to historical processes and the social environment was rendered in greater depth. From the twentieth century onward, the subjective experiences and individual perspectives of protagonists began to assume heightened importance in historical novels. This article analyzes the evolution of the protagonist in historical fiction, the stages of this development, and the principal factors underlying changes in the character's artistic representation.

The protagonists of early historical novels typically appeared as idealized portrayals of historical figures. For example, in Walter Scott's "Ivanhoe" (1819), the central character Ivanhoe is presented as a courageous, patriotic, and morally impeccable figure. He is depicted as an ideal hero who struggles for justice and truth amid the turbulence of historical events. Similarly, D'Artagnan in Alexandre Dumas's "The Three Musketeers", as well as the protagonists of Friedrich Schiller's "William Tell", belong to the tradition of conventional historical heroes distinguished by their heroic virtues. At this stage, historical novels were largely based on event-driven narration, with limited attention devoted to the protagonists' inner experiences and personal conflicts.

4. The Relevance of the Historical Novel Genre in Contemporary Literary Thought

From the second half of the nineteenth century onward, the image of the protagonist in historical novels became increasingly complex. Protagonists were no longer portrayed solely as courageous or patriotic figures; instead, they began to be represented with doubts, inner conflicts, and distinctive individuality. The characters of Andrei Bolkonsky and Pierre Bezukhov in Leo Tolstoy's "War and Peace" provide vivid examples of this shift. These figures are complex personalities formed against the backdrop of historical events, gradually comprehending historical processes through their own reflective consciousness. Similarly, in Honoré de Balzac's "The Lily of the Valley" and Stendhal's "The Charterhouse of Parma," protagonists are depicted as individuals struggling with historical circumstances and society while searching for their own personal truth. At this stage, greater depth was accorded to the protagonist's inner experiences and subjective attitudes toward historical processes.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the development of the protagonist in historical novels acquired even greater psychological depth. Writers increasingly focused on depicting the inner world of their characters and sought to present historical events through the prism of subjective perception. In Thomas Mann's "Buddenbrooks," the interrelation between personal experience and historical processes is rendered in detail. Likewise, in Marguerite Yourcenar's "Memoirs of Hadrian," the philosophical and spiritual world of the Roman emperor Hadrian is revealed through extended interior monologues. This tendency led to a departure from traditional heroic attributes, presenting the protagonist instead as a psychologically complex individual marked by inner contradictions.

Under the influence of postmodernism, protagonists in historical novels assumed even more multifaceted and

intricate forms. During this period, writers sought to portray historical figures not merely as exalted heroes, but also as victims of historical processes, objects of manipulation, or assemblages of subjective memories. Characters such as William of Baskerville in Umberto Eco's "The Name of the Rose" and Saleem Sinai in Salman Rushdie's "Midnight's Children" exemplify protagonists who attempt to comprehend historical reality through their own perception, yet often fail to arrive at definitive truth. Similarly, in David Mitchell's "Cloud Atlas," characters from different historical periods are interconnected, reflecting the recurring patterns of historical processes.

In contemporary historical novels, the image of the protagonist has become increasingly individualistic and multidimensional. Modern works depict characters who interpret historical events through personal experience and construct individualized perspectives on history. In Hilary Mantel's "Wolf Hall," the figure of Thomas Cromwell is revealed through the complex interrelationship between historical events and his private life. As a result, protagonists in historical novels are no longer merely passive participants in historical processes, but active subjects who interpret and give meaning to history.

Overall, the evolution of the protagonist in historical novels has passed through several stages. Initially depicted as idealized heroic figures, protagonists later evolved into psychologically complex characters whose personal experiences gained central importance. In postmodern historical novels, protagonists emerge as individuals striving to comprehend history while confronting its problematic and subjective nature. In contemporary historical fiction, the protagonist has become a means of exploring both the internal and external dimensions of historical processes through individual experience and personal perspective. This development allows historical novels to be understood not merely as a genre that represents historical facts, but as a literary phenomenon that reconsiders and reinterprets history through human experience and individual perception.

The historical novel is one of the most significant genres in literature and has reached the contemporary period through continuous renewal and adaptation over the course of its development. In the twenty-first century, technological progress has further transformed this genre, enriching it with interactivity, audiovisual adaptations, and new formal possibilities. Modern technologies no longer limit historical novels to printed or electronic book formats; instead, they extend them into video games, virtual reality (VR), audiobooks, and innovative forms supported by artificial intelligence. Such transformations have revitalized the historical novel, directing it not only toward readers but also toward interactive users.

Interactive historical narratives are currently gaining increasing prominence. One of the most notable examples is represented by historically themed video games. For instance, the "Assassin's Creed" game series combines the conventions of the historical novel with interactive gameplay, turning players into direct participants in historical processes. By reconstructing environments from the Renaissance, the Ottoman Empire, Ancient Egypt, and other historical periods, these games enhance not only the gaming experience but also historical awareness and knowledge. In addition, interactive graphic novels introduce new approaches to historical literature by allowing readers to choose the course of events themselves.

The adaptation of historical novels into audiovisual formats has also contributed significantly to their popularization. Historical novels adapted for cinema and television attract new audiences through their dramatic intensity and visual expressiveness. The BBC television series based on Hilary Mantel's novels "Wolf Hall" and "Bring Up the Bodies" provide a compelling example. These screen adaptations enrich the cinematic interpretation of the historical novel by depicting the complex political events of the reign of Henry VIII. Similarly, the television series "Outlander," based on Diana Gabaldon's historical-fantasy novels, offers an artistic reconstruction of different historical periods through the motif of time travel.

Electronic and virtual historical novels have likewise attracted considerable attention in recent years. With the advancement of digital technologies, e-books and audiobooks have become widespread, while virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) formats have given rise to new forms of historical storytelling. For example, the "Titanic VR" project enables users to experience the events surrounding the sinking of the Titanic in 1912 within a virtual environment. This development transforms historical narratives into immersive experiences, extending their impact beyond purely literary representation. The growth of electronic publishing has also led to the emergence of interactive e-books and hypertext narratives, in which readers can

explore alternative historical scenarios by selecting different narrative paths.

The development of artificial intelligence has begun to influence the process of writing historical novels as well. AI technologies expand the possibilities for analyzing historical data and creating literary works based on such information. Experiments in writing historical fiction using models such as GPT-4 demonstrate how artificial intelligence can assist authors in collecting, processing, and contextualizing historical material. Moreover, AI-based interactive historical narratives may enable readers to shape personalized storylines by choosing among multiple scenarios (Moretti, 2013: 31).

The integration of the historical novel with contemporary technologies broadens its artistic potential and facilitates the attraction of new audiences. Video games, audiovisual adaptations, virtual reality projects, and AI-generated narratives render historical novels more vivid, interactive, and accessible. In the future, this process is likely to intensify, leading to increasingly multi-format and experimental forms of historical fiction. Consequently, the historical novel may evolve not only as a means of representing the past, but also as an interactive experience that enables a deeper understanding and emotional engagement with historical processes.

5. The Development of the Historical Novel Genre in Turkish Prose

These tendencies are also clearly observable in the development of the Turkish novelistic tradition, particularly in the evolution of the historical novel genre. Although the historical novel in Turkish literature began to take shape in the second half of the nineteenth century, its roots extend much further back in time. The artistic representation of historical events had already been present in the oral traditions of Turkic peoples, including epics and narrative tales. Works such as "The Book of Dede Korkut," "Manas," and "Alpomish" are, in essence, closely related to the historical novel genre, as they are distinguished by heroic narratives, national consciousness, and artistic interpretations of historical processes. However, the historical novel in its modern sense emerged and developed in Turkish literature primarily in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The first historical novel in Turkish literature is generally recognized as Namık Kemal's "Cezmi" (1880). This work depicts the political events of the seventeenth-century Ottoman Empire and foregrounds themes of heroism, patriotism, and freedom. Namık Kemal interpreted historical events not merely for artistic interest, but also as a means of shaping national consciousness.

In the early twentieth century, the traditions of the historical novel entered a new phase of development. Tendencies toward depicting past events through a realist approach and conducting in-depth psychological analyses of historical figures became more pronounced. Writers such as Ömer Seyfettin, Halide Edib Adıvar, and Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu portrayed historical processes in close connection with the quest for national identity. In works such as "Ankara" and "Yaban," Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu offered a literary analysis of the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the process of the formation of the modern Turkish state.

From the second half of the twentieth century onward, Turkish historical novels became even richer in both form and content. In this process, writers such as Tarık Buğra, Kemal Tahir, Attilâ İlhan, and Orhan Pamuk played a leading role. Kemal Tahir's novels "Bozkırdaki Çekirdek" and "Devlet Ana" approach historical events through a socio-political analytical framework, while Tarık Buğra's "Osmancık" offers a profound artistic interpretation of the early period of the Ottoman Empire.

The historical novel genre in Turkish literature has undergone a long process of development, encompassing diverse literary principles, aesthetic perspectives, and approaches to social and legal phenomena. The distinctiveness of this genre is primarily connected with its educational, philosophical, and artistic–aesthetic functions, serving to strengthen historical memory, foster national self-awareness, and harmonize past experience with the present. The specific features of the Turkish historical novel are determined by several key factors.

The first of these is the predominance of national spirit and patriotism. Turkish historical novels, especially from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries onward, assumed the task of promoting national consciousness and patriotic ideals. This process began with Namık Kemal's "Cezmi" (1880), which reflects ideas of resistance against colonialism and foreign invasion. This tradition was further deepened in the twentieth century in the works of writers such as Tarık Buğra, Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, and Halide Edib Adıvar.

The second defining feature is the integration of past and present, evident in novels that link historical events to contemporary concerns. Many Turkish historical novels seek to relate depictions of the past to modern social and intellectual problems. This approach allows authors to draw lessons from historical experience and to reassess events that have shaped society from a new perspective. In this respect, Orhan Pamuk's "The White Castle" stands as a distinctive example. While portraying seventeenth-century Istanbul, the author explores issues of personal identity, cultural difference, and historical destiny. Such a method enables the harmonization of historical processes with modern modes of thought. Similarly, writers such as Attilâ İlhan and Tarık Buğra incorporated history into a literary framework in order to convey the contemporary relevance of historical experience to modern readers.

A third important characteristic is the authors' commitment to realism. Realism and fidelity to historical facts constitute essential criteria of the Turkish historical novel. This feature is particularly evident in twentieth-century historical fiction, especially in the works of Kemal Tahir. In "Devlet Ana," Kemal Tahir depicts the early period of the Ottoman Empire while striving to ground his narrative in historical sources. His novels are marked by the realistic representation of historical events, the exploration of the relationship between the individual and society, and the accurate depiction of political and economic processes. These principles enriched the historical novel with a quasi-scholarly approach, transforming it from a purely artistic product into a form closely related to historical inquiry.

The fourth feature is the prominence of psychological analysis and dramatism. Turkish historical novels not only depict historical processes but also reveal events through the inner worlds of characters—their psychological experiences, conflicts, and personal decisions. In Tarık Buğra's "Osmancık," for example, Osman Gazi is portrayed not merely as a historical figure but as a human being who experiences inner conflicts in the face of life's responsibilities and decisions. This approach lends Turkish historical novels psychological depth and dramatic intensity, allowing literary characters to be depicted not as static figures from historical documents but as living, complex individuals.

The fifth characteristic lies in the richness of literary and philosophical reflection within Turkish historical novels. These works do not merely recount historical events; they interpret them through literary and philosophical contemplation. In this respect, the writings of Kemal Tahir, Attilâ İlhan, and Orhan Pamuk are particularly significant. In "Devlet Ana," Kemal Tahir analyzes historical processes within the framework of social struggle, while Orhan Pamuk's "My Name Is Red" explores the relationship between history and art from a philosophical perspective. Such approaches broaden the artistic and aesthetic potential of the Turkish historical novel, presenting it not only as a fact-based historical narrative but also as an important manifestation of humanistic thought.

Among the factors contributing to the formation of the historical novel genre in Turkish literature, translations from European literature—especially in the nineteenth century—occupy an important place. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that Turkish literature possesses a rich national literary heritage. This heritage includes religious narratives (menâkıbnâmes), epics (destans), folk tales, and legends that artistically reflect different periods of Turkish history. Genres such as gazavâtnâmes, menâkıbnâmes, and futûhatnâmes, which served as sources for historical narratives, also occupy a distinctive position. Turkish scholar Sadık Tural emphasizes that prior to the Tanzimat (Reform) period, works such as the stories of "Dede Korkut," heroic battle narratives, zafarnâmes, and gazavâtnâmes played a crucial role in shaping the foundations of the historical novel.

Another genre that played a significant role in the formation of the novel is the epic. In this regard, Turkish scholar Argunşah states: "From the earliest times, humanity has accumulated collective tribal and national experiences. Epics are the earliest literary products that embody these experiences. In the modern era, novels have taken the place of epics. In our society, and even in world literature, before novels there existed works that provided people with the same pleasure now derived from historical novels. Foremost among these were epics. For our society, after epics came the stories of Dede Korkut, jangnâmes, gazavâtnâmes, battalnâmes, danışmendnâmes, and saltuknâmes, all of which emerged with the aim of developing epic sensibilities and assimilating collective experience" (Argunşah, 2016: 103).

From the nineteenth century onward, alongside oral literature, written literary works increased significantly in number. In addition to national literary works, translations from Western literature became widespread. Among the earliest translated works from Western literature were Alexandre Dumas's "The Count of Monte

Cristo," "The Queen's Necklace," and "The Three Musketeers," as well as Xavier de Montépin's "The Doctor of the Poor." From the 1860s onward, translations of French novels into Turkish became increasingly common. The first French novel read in Turkey is generally considered to be Fénelon's "The Adventures of Telemachus," translated by Yusuf KamilPasha under the title "Telemak," a work of significant didactic value. The second stage in the development of the novel coincides with the early twentieth century. A survey of world literary history shows that literature has consistently functioned as an echo of major transformations and revolutions in human life. In the history of every nation, significant historical events, uprisings, and revolutions occur, accompanied by prominent figures whose actions shape these processes. The Turkish people were no exception to such historical developments. In the early twentieth century—more precisely, in 1918—a wave of struggle for national liberation intensified in Turkey, culminating in the abolition of the sultanate in 1923 and the establishment of a republican system of government. During this period, the young republic was led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1880–1938), a military commander, statesman, and spiritual leader of the Turkish nation.

In 1908, a constitutional monarchy known as the Meşrutiyet was introduced in the Ottoman Empire. Socially and politically, the Meşrutiyet period and the years that followed are regarded as a time marked by major tragic events in Turkish history. During this era, the writer Mehmet Niyazi focused in his works on significant historical events such as the Balkan Wars, the Gallipoli (Dardanelles) Campaign, and the Yemen conflicts. The political events of this period left deep traces in the life of the country. As a result of the Balkan Wars, countless lives were lost and extensive bloodshed occurred. Prior to these conflicts, the Italo-Turkish War in Tripoli (Libya) had taken place, followed by the First World War, which shook the entire world—particularly the events on the Caucasus and Gallipoli fronts—leaving a profound impact on writers and intellectuals as well.

The 1920s were characterized by a series of reforms aimed at transforming Turkey into a bourgeois state. The national economy was reorganized, women were granted greater freedoms and recognized as participants in the workforce, the Arabic alphabet was replaced by the Latin alphabet, and radical changes were implemented in clothing and cultural practices. It was inevitable that these sweeping revolutionary transformations would also

be reflected in literature. In a conversation with the Russian literary scholar and translator A. Naumov, the prominent Uzbek writer Musa Toshmuhammad o'g'li Oybek stated: "History is literature, and literature is history." This observation not only underscores the close interrelationship between the two fields, but also suggests that literature cannot exist without history, while history occupies a central place within literary works. During this period, a strengthening of democratic principles can be observed in Turkish literature, a process in which the democratic press played a significant role. In particular, journals such as "Resimli Ay" and "Vakit" became focal points around which talented writers such as Nazım Hikmet, Sabahattin Ali, and Sadri Ertem gathered. Turkish literary scholar Türkeş emphasized the value of novels written during wartime as historical documents, noting that such works constitute important sources reflecting the psychological and social dimensions of their era. Novels and short stories convey not only the past, but also the individual, social, legal, and political relationships of the time in which they were written, as well as the spirit and cultural diversity of the period.

Following the proclamation of the Republic, the concept of the "Turkish History Thesis" emerged, encouraging the glorification of Turkish identity and the presentation of pre-Islamic Turkish culture and history. Within this framework, numerous novels with historical themes were produced. With the establishment of the Turkish Historical Society, interest in Turkish history beyond the Ottoman past increased markedly. However, Cheri notes that between 1923 and 1990 only twelve works were devoted specifically to this subject, eight of which were written within the first decade of the Republic (Cheri, 2000: 28). Among the most notable works of this period are Hüseyin Nihal Atsız's "The Death of the Grey Wolves" and "The Grey Wolves Are Reviving," Adalet Ergenekon's "Tuyu-Kunlar," İskender Fahrettin's "A Sun Rises in Asia," "The Sumerian Girl," and "The Son of God," as well as Abdullah Ziya Kozanoğlu's "The Red Banner," "The Horseman Khan," and "Gültekin."

One of the principal themes of novels produced during the Republican era is Ottoman history. Scholars have noted that, particularly up to 1990, a large number of historical novels were devoted to the rise of the Ottoman Empire. Cheri identified fifteen novels on the foundation of the Ottoman state, thirteen on the Interregnum (Fetret Devri), sixteen on the period of expansion, twelve on the seventeenth century, twelve on the eighteenth century,

fourteen on the nineteenth century, and thirty-one depicting the decline of the Ottoman Empire. A comparable number of novels—thirty-two in total—were devoted to the Balkan Wars and the first decade of the Republic. In these works, rather than focusing exclusively on Ottoman themes, authors often highlighted the heroism of the people in the defense of the homeland. Novels addressing the foundation of the Ottoman state emphasized the Turks' capacity for state-building and the Turkish roots of Ottoman identity. Themes such as the construction of national identity and the reinterpretation of historical heritage within the framework of a new political system predominated in these works. Thus, novels functioned not merely as representations of historical events, but as instruments for understanding and shaping national identity. They also strongly articulated the historical values, cultural heritage, and national pride of the Turkish people.

In summary, Turkish novelists played a crucial role in shaping and reinforcing national identity through the artistic interpretation of historical events. This process exerted a profound influence not only on literature, but also on the cultural and political development of Turkish society. These dynamics significantly contributed to the formation of the historical novel genre in Turkish literature, demonstrating the interaction between national and international literary traditions. The distinctive features and rich heritage of Turkish literature served as fundamental factors in this development.

The tradition of the Turkish historical novel has followed a long and complex path of evolution, grounded in the interplay of national identity, historical consciousness, and artistic–aesthetic principles. Leading authors of the genre sought not only to depict past events, but also to approach them from philosophical and social perspectives, thereby enhancing the intellectual depth of the novel. National spirit, the integration of past and present, realism, psychological analysis, and philosophical reflection constitute the core components of Turkish historical fiction, elevating it to a distinctive and significant phenomenon within world literature. As a result of these factors, Turkish historical novels have gained recognition not only at the national level but also internationally.

The study concludes that the development of historical novels has resulted in an expansion of thematic orientations, transformations in artistic form and aesthetic style, increased dissemination through technological means, and the emergence of distinctive

developmental trajectories across different literary traditions—particularly within Turkish literature. The role of historical novels in contemporary literature, their approaches to the artistic interpretation of history, and their function in shaping historical memory within society and culture are therefore subjects of ongoing scholarly discussion.

6. Conclusion

The historical novel, through a continuous process of evolution and renewal, continues to maintain its position as an integral component of contemporary literary thought. By artistically representing complex social, political, and cultural processes in human history, this genre not only acquaints readers with historical facts but also encourages deep reflection on the human emotions, moral choices, and ideas of enduring relevance to modern life that underlie these events.

In Uzbek literature, the historical novel occupies a distinctive and significant place. In particular, Pirimqul Qodirov's "Yulduzli Tunlar" (Starry Nights) analyzes the Timurid period—specifically the figures of Amir Temur and Mirzo Ulug'bek—on historical and philosophical grounds, promoting values of national identity, patriotism, and intellectual enlightenment. Likewise, Abdulla Qodiriy's "O'tgan Kunlar" (Bygone Days), which depicts the social life of Turkestan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, stands as an important example of historical and spiritual memory. Through such works, historical consciousness, respect for the past, and a sense of national unity are reinforced. Turkish literature likewise offers outstanding examples in the development of the historical novel. For instance, Namık Kemal's "Vatan yahut Silistre" (Fatherland or Silistra) and Tarık Buğra's "Küçük Ağa" (The Little Agha) artistically represent the period of the Turkish national liberation movement and social awakening. Against the backdrop of historical events, these works profoundly explore themes of patriotism, freedom, human dignity, and responses to social transformation. Through such novels, Turkish literature presents history not merely as a sequence of events, but as a synthesis of national spirit, cultural heritage, and modern intellectual reflection.

In today's era of globalization, historical novels have become a means of promoting not only national but also universal human values. They are increasingly valued as an important literary medium that revitalizes the past, analyzes the present, and contributes to the conscious

shaping of the future. Looking ahead, the philosophical, aesthetic, and technological possibilities of the genre are expected to expand further, particularly through its integration with digital literature and artificial intelligence. For this reason, historical novels will continue to retain their relevance as a source of spiritual and moral enrichment for future generations.

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