

AN EPIC FOR PEACE

By Hülya Adak

An epic as much as an autobiography [Edib's *Memoirs* and *The Turkish Ordeal*]; both equally complementary to one another; and each aspect intensifying the actuality of the other. Passion and sympathy, [...] philanthropy and politics, home and revolution, oratory and education, [...] humour, and capacity for little things and big, receptive and perceptive, Conservative and Liberal, nurse and mother, teacher and friend, soldier and peace-lover, journalist and realist, reader and thinker, no contradiction came amiss to her, no addition one too many, in so far as one and all did not go against the grain of that tenderness and loyalty which underlay every movement of the mind, which made horses, dogs, men, women and children equally welcome, all classes, all creeds, all conditions of living. (Bates 331)

Although not the first, Halide Edib (1882-1964) is the most prolific Ottoman-Turkish woman writer, with twenty-one novels, four short story collections, two dramas, four scholarly works and a two-volume autobiography. One generation earlier, Fatma Aliye's (1862-1932) novels were widely read. Her *Nisvan-ı Islam/The Muslim Women* (1891) achieved success both in Turkey and abroad; in 1893, this work, translated into French and Arabic, was exhibited at "The Woman's Library of the World's Fair" in Chicago. Similarly, in her memoirs, *The Imperial Harem of the Sultans*, published in France in 1925, Leyla Saz details experiences in the "Imperial Harem" and also challenges the Western exoticization of Ottoman female life. Furthermore, Selma Ekrem's autobiography, *Unveiled: The Autobiography of a Turkish Girl*, was published in the United States. Ekrem's *Unveiled* narrated the break up of the Ottoman Empire as a result of the series of wars after 1910 while celebrating the

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Kemalist revolution. Among this productive group, Halide Edib was the most politically involved. Between 1908-1918, she was close to Unionist circles; for the next three years, she was part of the National Army; and between 1923-1925, she formed part of the opposition to Mustafa Kemal's Republican People's Party. In 1950, she served for one term (four years) as a Member of Parliament. Edib's political involvement had a significant impact on her work, while securing her national as well as international fame.

Halide Edib was born to an aristocratic family. After the death of her mother, her father, Edib Bey, who worked as First Secretary to the Sultan Abdül Hamid II's Privy Purse, married two women. The polygynous marriage caused serious suffering to both wives and children. Halide Edib lived between her maternal grandmother's and her father's houses. Her grandparents' house was in the Muslim quarter of the city; her father's was in Ihlamur, an Armenian and Greek neighborhood. Halide Edib's multicultural education began in these formative years. Her grandmother taught Edib the principles of Islam, while her father, due to his admiration for the British, enforced a British diet, dressed her in British clothes, and sent her to a kindergarten attended only by Christians (*Memoirs* 23).

In 1893, Halide Edib started her education at the American College for Girls, a missionary school in Istanbul, where she quickly mastered English. The Bible Studies courses Edib took at the American College had a profound impact on her literary work. In a few years' time, Edib was confined to the domestic sphere because of the imperial decree by Sultan Abdül Hamid which prohibited Turkish students from attending missionary schools. During this hiatus, Edib took lessons from her resident English governess and an Italian music teacher. Additionally, she was tutored in Arabic, French and Turkish literature. In 1899, Halide Edib resumed her studies at the American College for Girls. She excelled in all subjects with the exception of mathematics. In order to pass the mathematics course and graduate, she had to be privately tutored by Salih Zeki, a very prominent mathematician and "an intellectual aristocrat" (*Memoirs* 202).

In 1901, Halide Edib graduated from the American College for Girls at Üsküdar as the first Muslim-Turkish woman. Immediately after her graduation, she married Salih Zeki, twenty years her senior. Edib described her profound attachment to him

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as an “enslave[ment] to another mind. I always indeed retained the humble attitude of a child and student toward him [...] [n]o little Circassian slave bought from the slave-market at the lowest prices could have entered upon our common life in such an obedient spirit as I did” (*Memoirs* 204, 206). Yet, in *Memoirs*, Halide Edib does not depict a life of married bliss but records a series of nervous breakdowns, the causes of which she does not specify. In the first few years of their marriage, Halide Edib assisted Salih Zeki in his research by translating the life stories of famous British mathematicians and the Sherlock Holmes stories, which he enjoyed very much. Edib gave birth to two sons, but by 1909, “she was going through serious domestic trouble” (307).

THE YOUNG TURK REVOLUTION: HALIDE EDIB AND NATIONALISM

1908 was the year of the Young Turk revolution. Members of the Committee of Union and Progress took to the hills with troops and demanded the restoration of the constitution of 1876. In the struggle against the Unionist insurgents, several of the Sultan’s officers were murdered and some refused to fight. The triumph of the Unionists resulted in the restoration of the constitution of 1876, which had been suspended by Sultan Abdül Hamid during his thirty-two year rule (1876-1908). The Young Turk revolution opened up many possibilities, particularly for women. Halide Edib describes the revolution as one of general enthusiasm and rebirth, in the midst of which she claims: “I became a writer” (*Memoirs* 260). The same year also marks Halide Edib’s entrance into public life as social activist, journalist, and public speaker.

In 1908, Halide Edib became a literary columnist for the Unionist paper *Tanin/The Voice*, edited by the prominent poet, Tevfik Fikret, and the famous Unionist, Hüseyin Cahid (*Memoirs* 261). In her twenties, Edib wrote on women’s issues and nationalism, without allowing herself to visit the newspaper offices of *Tanin*. Obeying the practice of gender segregation, Halide Edib found it acceptable only to appear in front of the intimate friends of her father and Salih Zeki (*Memoirs* 263). Her articles in *Tanin* propagated the emancipation of women and equal education for women, which provoked harsh criticism from the opposition to the Unionists (*Memoirs* 267). Halide Edib also published articles in various journals, such as *Aşiyân*, *Resimli kitap/The Book with*

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Illustrations, Demet/Bouquet and Mussavver Mubit/The Illustrated Milieu (Enginün 31).

After 1908, Halide Edib founded many women's organizations, such as *Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti/Society for the Development of Women*, which promoted the "cultivation of its members" through lessons in French, English and Turkish, domestic science, and child rearing (*Memoirs* 334-5). In 1912, during the Balkan War, Halide Edib worked as nurse in the small hospital that the *Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti* opened up in Istanbul. She remarks that as, "the Balkan War was the first" to see "Turkish women nursing men, any little human incident became a tremendous scandal" (*Memoirs* 335).

Edib was also highly active and influential in the progress of the Turkish nationalist movement after 1908. In 1909, during the counterrevolution against the Unionists, Halide Edib escaped to Alexandria and visited England for the first time. After Edib returned to Istanbul in 1910, she embraced Turanism, the ideal of bringing together all Ural-Altai or Turanian (particularly Turkish) speaking people, including those outside the Ottoman dominions. Edib was called "The Mother of the Turk" among the literary and cultural clubs known as *Türk Yurdu/Turkish Homeland*, founded by Turkish students in Geneva in 1910. Halide Edib was highly influenced by the philosophy of Ziya Gökalp, which synthesized Islam and Turkish ethnicity with European-style modernization. Gökalp argued (in line with Ferdinand Tönnies, the German sociologist) that attending to the distinction between *bars/culture*—the set of values and habits current within a community—and *medeniyet/civilization*—a rational, international system of knowledge, science and technology—offered the possibility of reconciling the "culture" of the Turkish nation and "European civilization" (Zürcher 136).

Halide Edib was also involved in the pan-Turanistic organization *Türk Ocakları/Turkish Hearths*, founded in 1911. Turkish Hearths were the first national clubs that aimed to raise Turkish educational standards and encourage social and economic progress. The public lectures at *Türk Ocakları* were attended jointly by men and women, which was a great social innovation for the time. Not involved in party politics until 1918, the *Ocaks* were pan-Turanistic and against pan-Islamism, i.e. the *Ocaks* were attended

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by members who were ethnically affiliated as opposed to being religiously affiliated (*Memoirs* 323).

One of Edib's early novels, the utopia *Yeni Turan/New Turan* (1913), written during her stay in London, explicitly depicts her Turanist ideology. *Yeni Turan* gained wide acclaim not only locally but also internationally, as it was translated into German in 1916. Her utopia envisions a liberal and democratic Turkey with a mature Union and Progress, giving political suffrage and employment opportunities to women. The novel became so famous in the Ottoman Empire that many cafés and shops began naming themselves "*Yeni Turan*."

Halide Edib's novels, *Raik'in Annesi/Raik's Mother* (1909), *Seviyye Talip* (1912), *Handan* (1912), *Son Eseri/ Her Last Work* (1913) and *Mev'ut Hükiim/The Decree* (1917-8) problematize different facets of women's issues in Ottoman society, such as the role of women in relationships and in marriage. The suffering of women confronting their husband's disloyalty is a recurrent theme in these works (particularly in *Raik'in Annesi* and *Handan*). Most of the early novels criticize arranged marriages as they promote women's freedom to choose their own spouse (*Seviyye Talip* and *Handan*). Although the novels attempt to narrate women's sexuality, the female protagonists who transgress socially acceptable modes of conduct are punished at the end of the novels. Those female protagonists who live together with their lovers, without the "sacred bond" of marriage (Seviyye in *Seviyye Talip*), those who have extramarital relationships (Handan in *Handan*), or those who flirt with married men (Kamuran in *Son Eseri*) die as a result of the "female malady" hysteria (or are defamed) at the end of the novels. Hence, the social codes of women's "chastity" and "honor" are reaffirmed at the end of the novels to camouflage some of the progressive elements concerning women's sexuality (Adak 2004).

Halide Edib's early novels were autobiographical, written during her experience of "domestic trouble" when Salih Zeki decided to marry a second wife. In *Memoirs*, Edib insinuates that Salih Zeki may have had extramarital attachments before his announcement to take a second wife: "But knowing Salih Zeki Bey's passing caprices of heart and temperament I wanted to be absolutely sure before breaking up my home, of the stability of his latest attachment" (308). This statement might explain Halide

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Edib's series of nervous breakdowns immediately after her marriage.

In the Ottoman context, the right to polygyny was permitted until the "Decree on Family Law" in 1917, when the Unionists proposed a nuclear and monogamous family model, entitled the *Milli Aile*/National Family. This legal code gave women the right to divorce, placing marriage in the authority of the state rather than, as had previously been the case, solely in the hands of religious authorities. The Family Law did not outlaw polygyny, but made it obligatory to obtain consent from the first wife (Ahmad 86). In 1910, with no legal rights at her disposal, Edib faced a serious dilemma. Her childhood years reminded her of the profound suffering and misery associated with her father's polygyny, yet she was still passionately in love with her husband. Salih Zeki's marriage to the second wife without Edib's consent must have been the final straw for Edib, who then convinced Salih Zeki to give her a divorce. She left her marriage of nine years, claiming her two sons (*Memoirs* 307). The entire year after the divorce, Edib lay ill (*Memoirs* 308-9).

In 1914, Halide Edib sided with the Unionist Triumvirate's decision for involvement in World War I on the side of the Germans. Edib argued that war was inevitable in order to rescue the Ottoman Empire from the Capitulations (giving European nations preferential trade terms), to overcome the threats of Russian imperialism, to improve the financial status of the Empire, and to balance the privileged situation of the minorities in the Empire (Enginün 39). Her disagreements with the Unionists, however, began around 1916 and took an intense form after Edib delivered a speech in *Türk Ocağı*, which articulated her critical stance against the violence perpetrated by the Turks against the Armenians. Her subsequent educational activities in Syria (1916-1918) may have been a kind of self-imposed exile. In 1916, Edib established a series of primary and secondary schools, with the help of the local governments in Syria and the Ottoman army. During the same year, French schools and monasteries were closed in Arab provinces because they propagated French imperialism and kindled anti-Turkish sentiment. Edib united the variety of schools in Damascus, Beirut and Lebanon under one teacher training school and college, based in Beirut. Education was conducted in French, Turkish and Arabic (*Memoirs* 402). Edib also worked at the *Dar al-*

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mu'allimat/Women's Teachers' Training College in Jerusalem, where teaching credentials were given to women who attended the College for one year beyond the secondary school level.

In 1917, while Halide Edib was engaged in educational activities in Syria, she married by proxy her second husband, Dr. Adnan, a family doctor, who was in Constantinople at the time. Their marriage took place in Bursa and was attended by the groom and Edib's father, who gave Edib's letter of consent to the authorities.

Edib returned to the sad situation of Istanbul in March 1918, and in this atmosphere of despair and utter loss after World War I, she was unable to write (*Inside India* xxxi). The Mudros Treaty of 31 October 1918 signaled massive territorial loss for the Ottoman Empire and allowed the Allies to occupy the Ottoman Empire whenever the security of the Entente was under threat. After World War I, the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph Mehmet VI Vahdeddin vouched for the mandate of the British Empire, prompting a group of nationalists flee to Anatolia to start a national struggle to claim the remnants of the Empire.

Edib remained in Istanbul and started to give public speeches that gave hope to the Turkish people. Her most popular speech took place on June 6, 1919 in Sultan Ahmet with roughly two-hundred thousand spectators. Halide Edib became an outspoken advocate of the American mandate as the only solution to prevent the Ottoman Empire from further territorial loss, to protect Turkey from the influence and rivalries of Europe through an alliance with a power stronger than Europe, and to strengthen the nation against the threats of the Christian minorities who were empowered under the aegis of the Powers (Kemal 84). This proposal was used against Halide Edib and other prominent intellectuals when the national myth of the founding of the Turkish Republic, *Nutuk/The Speech* was delivered by Mustafa Kemal in October 1927. *Nutuk* provided a solipsistic account of the Independence Struggle of Turkey and the establishment of the Republic, dismissing the roles of Edib and many other political leaders in the Independence Struggle in order to depict Mustafa Kemal as the singlehanded leader in Turkish history (Adak 2003: 515). In *Nutuk*, Edib is vilified as "*mandat*-traitor" (the one who votes for the mandate of a European or American power in lieu of national autonomy) of the Turkish National Struggle because she

had advocated the American mandate. During the single-party rule of Mustafa Kemal (1923-1938), Edib's defense, just like those of other opponents of Mustafa Kemal, did not enjoy much publicity in Turkey. Edib's articles were not published in Turkey between 1927 and 1935. For several decades, *Nutuk* was taken as the model for many history books as well as school books in Turkey and alternative accounts were silenced. Hence, Edib's position as *mandat*-traitor has only recently been contested and historically analyzed (Adak 2003: 511).

THE NATIONAL STRUGGLE OF TURKEY

Before the irrevocable split from Mustafa Kemal in 1925 and his vilification of her in *Nutuk*, Edib and her husband were part of the nationalist high command inner circle. In March 1920, most Unionist intellectuals were sent into exile to Malta by the British; Halide Edib and her second husband Dr. Adnan, convinced that the only solution for the salvation of the Ottoman Empire lay in armed resistance against the Allies, secretly escaped from Istanbul to Anatolia to join the Nationalist Army. On May 13, 1920, the Istanbul government—the Ferit Paşa government—issued a death warrant on Halide Edib, Dr. Adnan and Mustafa Kemal, along with other nationalists in Anatolia (Enginün 55). Edib took part in the Independence Struggle of Turkey (1919-1922) as public speaker, journalist, translator, writer, editor, nurse, and soldier. She established *Anadolu Ajansı*/The Anatolian News Agency during the struggle. In recognition of her services, she was promoted to sergeant major in the Nationalist Army.

Halide Edib's national romances, *Ateşten Gömlek*/The Shirt of Flame (1922) and *Vurun Kabpeye*/Thrash the Whore (1923), relating the struggles of *Kuvayi Milliye*/The National Army against the Allied Forces, particularly the Greeks and the Islamic fundamentalists in Anatolia, became canonical works not only of the period of the Struggle but for decades thereafter. *Ateşten Gömlek* was translated into English, German, Arabic, Russian, Swedish, and French. During the Struggle, Halide Edib learned how to ride a horse and how to use a rifle; the inspections that she, the famous novelist, Yakup Kadri, and the nationalist, Yusuf Akçura, conducted in the battered villages in Anatolia also inspired two short story collections, depicting scenes of misery and violence: *Dağa Çıkan*

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Kurt/The Wolf who took to the Hills and *İzmir'den Bursa'ya/From İzmir to Bursa* (Enginün 64).

EXILE TO LONDON AND PARIS

Halide Edib and Dr. Adnan's self-imposed exile to the United Kingdom and to France began in 1925 and ended in 1938, after Mustafa Kemal's death, when they returned to Turkey (1939). The reasons for their exile cannot be identified clearly in any of Halide Edib's works. The most probable cause was the establishment of the single-party regime of Mustafa Kemal, the Republican People's Party, and the closing of the opposition party, the Progressive Republican Party, whose founding members included Dr. Adnan. After the establishment of the Republic, Halide Edib was severely attacked in newspapers for propagating the American mandate and for her association with the Wilsonian League in 1919. When asked in 1924 which party she supported, Edib responded unhesitatingly that she did not support any party that did not give political suffrage to women, making clear that she supported none of the parties (Enginün 69). Mustafa Kemal has often been heralded as a feminist, but, in 1923, much to Edib's chagrin, he refused to grant the long-promised political vote to women. Political suffrage was finally granted by Kemal himself in 1934.

NOSTALGIA FOR THE PAST: HALIDE EDIB'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

During Halide Edib's exile, the first volume of her autobiography, *Memoirs of Halidé Edib*, was published in New York and London by The Century Company in 1926. The second volume, *The Turkish Ordeal*, was published two years later by the same house. Chronologically-speaking, the second volume is a sequel to the first, but there are remarkable differences between the two in terms of content and style.

Memoirs narrates Edib's childhood during the last years of the Ottoman Empire. Underscored in the account are reminiscences of the multi-ethnic, multi-religious character of the empire (1886-1910) and the different phases of Turkish nationalism (1912-1918). Halide Edib translated the *Memoirs* into Turkish as *Mor Salkımlı Ev/The Wisteria-Covered House*, which was published with certain modifications in 1963.

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The second volume of Edib's autobiography, *The Turkish Ordeal*, narrates the events of the Independence Struggle, foreshadowing the early years of the Turkish Republic. *The Turkish Ordeal*, describing Edib's pivotal role in the nationalist movement and particularly in the Independence Struggle, responded to the accusations made in Mustafa Kemal's speech, *Nutuk*, delivered and published the previous year. Though *The Turkish Ordeal* subtly criticizes the Kemalist Regime of the twenties, the criticisms are generally not explicitly narrated and the autobiography is full of silences. In 1962, when Edib's *The Turkish Ordeal* was "translated" into Turkish as *Türk'ün Ateşle İmtihanı*, most of the critique of Mustafa Kemal and his regime was edited out by Halide Edib herself. So whilst the English original challenged the Kemalist myth of the origins of the Republic, the Turkish version, *Türk'ün Ateşle İmtihanı*, paradoxically, endorsed it when it appeared over thirty years later (Adak 2003: 524).

Both volumes of the autobiography hint at the "dictatorship" in Turkey, which is compared to fascist Italy and described as "a violent type of the Unionist system, with a single man at the head [...] instead of the triumvirate" (*Memoirs* 268). Upon witnessing the "desperadoes" of Mustafa Kemal, conspiring against prominent military and political leaders, such as Ali Fuat and Rauf Bey, Edib remarks that the country is drifting into "a state with one man and a camarilla—a dictatorship where every man of high qualities would be put aside and sycophants would prey on the people as in the old days" (*The Turkish Ordeal* 404). Besides these references, both volumes make little mention of the political climate of the twenties, of Halide Edib and Dr. Adnan's political controversies with Mustafa Kemal, of the Caliphate, of political suffrage to women, of the reforms, and of the exact reasons behind their exile.

Edib's conception of nationalism changed over the course of her life. Her utopia was a multi-ethnic Empire, which could not be realized after the Ottomans lost their Balkan territories in 1912 and as the non-Muslim minorities, encouraged to varying extents by the Great Powers, increasingly engaged in nationalistic activities. After 1910, Edib embraces Turanism, and admits to being "nationalist" but simultaneously rejects all violent forms of nationalism, such as the violence perpetrated against the Armenians in 1915. Thus Edib's Turanism and her longing for a multi-ethnic Empire are not contradictory. After 1910, Edib perceives the former to be a

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realistic goal, incorporating minorities even though the majority rule will be given to Turanian people. The latter is a utopia, reflecting Edib's wishfulness for the inclusivist Ottomanist ideal that characterized much of the multi-ethnic support for the Young Turks in exile prior to 1908 and in the early years of the second constitution, but that could no longer be attained after the Balkan War and the First World War.

PARIS, LONDON, NEW YORK AND INDIA

Halide Edib and Dr. Adnan relocated to England before moving to Paris, where they lived between 1929-1939, as Dr. Adnan taught Turkish at the *École des Langues Orientales Vivantes*. During this period, Edib traveled to London, the United States and India. In August 1928, she was invited to the Williamstown Political Institute's roundtable conference as the first woman lecturer on politics and was hailed as the extraordinary woman of "The New Turkey" (*Inside India* xxvi). At the conference, she presented a historical and ideological analysis of the Ottoman Empire and the young Republic. The conference lectures were published as *Turkey Faces West* in 1930.

In 1931, Edib became a visiting professor at the History Department of Columbia University, Barnard College for one semester. In 1932, one of the Lahore Muslims, Muhammed Yakub Han, translated *Ateşten Gömlek* as *Daughter of Smyrna*, with many modifications, in order to promote the anti-colonial struggle in India. This translation brought fame for Halide Edib in India. She was invited to help establish a Muslim University, Jamia Millia in India in January 1935. She stayed in India for two months, giving lectures, which were published as *Conflict of East and West in Turkey* in 1937.

In *Inside India*, Edib describes a country "nearer to her soul-climate than any other country not her own" and voices her protest against colonialism, opting for plural nationhood, not mono-ethnic nationalism. Also, in line with Jawaharlal Nehru, Edib argues for the necessity of a modern and secular Republic in India (3). The students in India recorded their appreciation of Halide Edib's faith on the coexistence of a plurality of nations in India (and in Turkey) in a poem they wrote for her as a welcome to Aligarh Muslim University in 1935:

You've adorned in your hand that unsheathed sword

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Whose sharp edge has changed governments.
You gave the Turks a sense of destiny
Your hands have spilled the wine of revolution all
around.

Your favours to Turkish revolutionaries
Are writ large on the pillars and walls of
Smyrna.

O but tell us, the wretched and the low, O' great soul
How to remove the distinctions of color and blood.

O reveal to us the secrets of freedom

How in the assembly is played the strain of liberty.

Your eyes reflect the democratic aspirations of the
people

Freedom, alas, is something that has eluded us. (*Inside
India* lxxviii)

Inside India was first published by George Allen & Unwin Ltd. in 1937 in London and a year later by the Macmillan Company in New York. Halide Edib's translation of the work as *Hindistana dair* was partly serialized in the Turkish newspaper *Tan/Dawn* in 1938 but not published as a book in Turkey. In 2002, the work was reprinted by the Oxford University Press in New Delhi with a lengthy introduction by Dr. Mushirul Hasan, who considers *Inside India* "by far the most eloquent statement on Indian society and politics in the 1930s" (x).

THE RETURN HOME

In 1939, Halide Edib and Dr. Adnan permanently returned to Turkey, where Halide Edib became the Chair of the English Language and Literature Department at Istanbul University. She wrote a three-volume work on English literary history in Turkish (*İngiliz Edebiyatı Tarihi*) and translated William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *As You Like It*, *Coriolanus*, and *Anthony and Cleopatra* into Turkish.

From 1940 onwards, Halide Edib became an outspoken opponent of the Nazis and all totalitarian regimes which destroy individual thought and action (Enginün 74). Her absurdist play *Maskeli Ruhlari* (1938), which she translated into English and published in London as *Masks or Souls?* (1953), and her translation of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* into Turkish in 1952 illustrate Halide Edib's preoccupation with totalitarian regimes in her literary work.

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Perhaps the first example of absurdist drama in the history of Turkish theatre, *Maskeli Ruahlar/Masks or Souls?* brings forth Edib's pessimism about the second decade of the Kemalist revolution: Mustafa Kemal is depicted as a dictator, the modern version of the great Tartar conqueror Tamarlane (1335-1405). Other protagonists include William Shakespeare and the folk figure Nasreddin Hoca, as the play critiques the materialism of the world, the mechanization of human beings, and the destruction of individual thought and action under totalitarian regimes. In abstract terms, the West symbolizes mechanization, and the East, in trying to westernize, loses its spiritual qualities and becomes a mirror-image of the West. In the Epilogue, Nasreddin Hoca and Shakespeare prefer death to living among the automatons of the world, who recite Nazım Hikmet's famous poem as the play ends:

Tirrim, tirrim, tirrim trak,
To be a machine I want,
To be a machine I want,
Happy shall I be to find a way,
When I can only say—
Behold a turbine on my navel,
And two propellers on my tail!" (*Masks or Souls* 126)

The play has not yet been staged in Turkey, but Hilary Blecher's adaptation was performed in New York during the 1997-8 season by "Women's Project and Productions" (See http://www.womensproject.org/past_reading.html).

The Clown and His Daughter, Edib's only novel in English published by George Allen & Unwin Ltd. in 1935, was written in Paris, and Edib's translation/adaptation of the work into Turkish as *Sinekli Bakkal/The Fly-Plagued Grocer* was published in Turkey in 1936. The novel claimed the Republican People's Party novel award in 1942. Written simultaneously for Western and Turkish reading groups, *The Clown and His Daughter* and *Sinekli Bakkal* edified populist practices and beliefs, the forgotten folk art and traditions of Karagöz, the shadow puppet play, and *meddah*, the storytelling tradition in the turn-of-the-century Hamidian Constantinople. In the novel, Sultan Abdül Hamid is depicted as the merciless tyrant. The male protagonist, the Italian music teacher and ex-priest Peregrini, who lives in Constantinople, converts to Islam and becomes Osman in order to marry his beloved, the Koran-chanter Rabia. Their marriage is a symbolic synthesis of

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Western civilization with Islamic and Turkish culture. In contrast to the mission of the Kemalist reforms, the westernization of the Turks, in the novel, the Western-Peregrini is Islamicized and Turkified to allow the synthesis to take place. This novel became an all-time best-seller in Turkey and was translated into French, Dutch and Norwegian.

In 1950, Halide Edib became an independent member of parliament for İzmir but resigned after completing her four-year term, becoming disillusioned with the Democrat Party and with politics in general. After her resignation, she continued writing short stories and novels in Turkish. Halide Edib died on January 6, 1964, nine years after the death of Dr. Adnan. Just before her death, her friends and relatives report that she again experienced nervous breakdowns, during which she is said to have burnt her notes and drafts.

HALIDE EDIB IN TURKEY AND ABROAD

Today, although some of Halide Edib's works still have not been translated into Turkish and have not been published in book form, Halide Edib remains a popular writer in Turkey. Edib's national romances, *Ateşten Gömlek* and *Vurun Kahpeye*, and her more mature novel, *Sinekli Bakkal*, are a part of the literature curriculum at most secondary schools and universities in Turkey. She is also studied as a pivotal figure of Turkish nationalism and feminism. Several scholarly works on Halide Edib have been written, the most notable of which is Ayşe Durakbaşa's *Halide Edib: Türk Modernleşmesi ve Feminizm/Halide Edib: Turkish Modernization and Feminism*, and a multitude of dissertations on Halide Edib await publication. Film adaptations of her national romances have served to popularize her work: *Ateşten Gömlek* was directed by Muhsin Ertuğrul (1923), and *Vurun Kahpeye* was adapted to the screen by Lütfü Akad (1949), Orhan Aksoy (1964) and Halit Refiğ (1973). The American novelist Frances Kazan's novel *Halide's Gift*, based on Halide Edib's life, was also translated into Turkish as *Halide* and became a bestseller in 2001. Further, the Turkish Studies Association Board in the United States gives financial support to undergraduate students who travel to Turkey to study Turkish language and culture with the annual "Halide Edip Adivar scholarship."

THE DIALECTICS OF NATIONAL STRUGGLE AND INTERNATIONAL PEACE

Roughly a decade before Virginia Woolf's masterpiece "Three Guineas" on the question of "how to prevent war," particularly how "women who are daughters of educated men" could prevent war, Halide Edib, who was the daughter of an educated man, was involved in a war (the Independence Struggle of Turkey), attempting to answer the same difficult question. The *Memoirs* and *The Turkish Ordeal* oscillate between the desire to narrate "one of the greatest epics of modern Europe" (*Memoirs* 472), the Independence Struggle (1919-1922), and the desire to resist "record[ing] and [...] immortaliz[ing] martial glories" (*Memoirs* 119). The texts are torn between celebrating the military power of the nationalist army of Turkey and advocating the prevention of war altogether. The autobiography shifts between the desire to legitimize the autobiographer's role in the national struggle, and the desire to tell a tale of collective agency which defies individuality and hero(ine)-worship.

War as Human Nature

Halide Edib suggests that one of the main reasons for World War I and for the ensuing three years of struggle in Anatolia, after the signing of the Treaty of Mudros, was Western politicians' greed and lust for power and territory. The narrator's ideal is to teach the coming generations "a higher state of national morality, a better adjustment and greater equality among all peoples" to prevent the occurrence once again of the greatest of human disasters, World War I, which was brought by the "selfish and materialistic philosophy of the latter part of the nineteenth century" (*Memoirs* 325-328).

The surface manifestation of the European powers' greed was the promotion of the struggle between smaller nations and races. Halide Edib attempts in the autobiography to define a pacifist nationalism which does not bring about violence to the nation's others. The narrator's own nationalism starts in 1910-1912 and takes an "intense form after the disaster of the Balkan war" (*Memoirs* 312). According to the narrator, after the War, the Ottoman Turk started to conceptualize his or her self as different from other races, as the process of Turkish nationalism gained momentum. Upon inspection of the inner meaning of her own

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nationalism, the narrator finds self-study and the study of the particular qualities of one's nation essential for self-expression. The process of such a self-study, which the narrator defines as nationalism is the first and right step "to international understanding and love of the peoples and nations" (*Memoirs* 326). Only after understanding one's own people and their virtues and faults, can people understand others. The narrator distinguishes this type of pacifist and empathetic nationalism from the "narrow, negative and destructive nationalism in the world, which has deluded itself with the belief that a nation can only grow and thrive by exterminating and oppressing the peoples under its rule, or by conquering and suppressing the nations around it" (*Memoirs* 326). Not only nationalism but internationalism can be chauvinistic and imperialistic as evident in the case of Soviet Russia (*Memoirs* 326).

Even though in her speeches Halide Edib called Ottomans to struggle against the Allies, she did not propound hatred toward the enemy or holy war against infidels, but offered a version of Islam as a spiritual message that would connect the moral force of Turkey with the universal brotherhood. In the Sultan Ahmet speech during the British and French occupation of İstanbul, at the "meeting of the revolution," Edib's motto to express the "proper sentiment of a Moslem nation" became a national slogan: "The peoples are our friends, the governments, our enemies" (*The Turkish Ordeal* 32).

Likewise, in the narrative, the scenes of war do not focus on bloodshed and triumph on the Turkish side. These images are in stark contrast to British women's accounts of World War I (Tylee 1990), which praise the heroism of British armies even when narrating the misery of war. Rather, *The Turkish Ordeal* delineates how the Greeks and Turks embraced each other at the point of death, illustrating the absurdity of war as such:

a Greek soldier and a Turkish soldier lying in each other's arms. Had they first fought and throttled each other and then realized in the throes of death that they were brothers after all? Had they, like two dying humans who have ceased to have any barrier, embraced each other in agony at the supreme moment of death? (*The Turkish Ordeal* 307)

Set before perpetual warfare begins, the first volume of the autobiography, *Memoirs*, is extremely significant in illustrating the

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possibility of coexistence between different races, nations, and religions in the Ottoman Empire. The first volume expresses nostalgia for the state of “childhood” where the narrator has no concept that barriers of race and religion exist. When Edib Bey sends Halide to the kindergarten, attended by the children of the Christian chiefs of Abdül Hamid, Halide is the only Muslim child, but her loneliness is mitigated by her warm relationship with the head of the kindergarten, the Greek Kyria Elenie. One day, in Kyria Ellenie’s house, Halide’s elder sister prevents Halide from looking at the *panagia*, the picture of the Virgin Mary, saying “It is Christian! It is sinful!” But the little Halide is in a state, incognizant of boundaries, such as Christian and Muslim—boundaries, marked by mutual bloodshed and massacres:

What did that mean to the little girl? She had not entered yet that narrow human path where religion and language as well as racial differences make human beings devour each other. The little girl was still in a world where the joy of life is heart fusion and natural existence. (*Memoirs* 27)

In this “natural existence,” the little girl speaks two languages, Turkish at home, Greek at school, without being aware of shifting between the two or that indeed she spoke two different languages (*Memoirs* 28). Typical of both of Halide Edib’s volumes is what she presents as the largely peaceable inter-ethnic relations of the late pre-Republican period, tempered by her recognition of tensions and conflicts within those relations. In *Memoirs*, for Halide Edib, the revolution of 1908 was marked by the shared celebration of men and women from all walks of life—all religions, and ethnic groups rejoicing together.

In carriages, sat the Moslem and Christian priests, hand in hand [...] while the crowd that followed sang enthusiastically, “O country, O mother, be thou joyful and happy to-day.”

The memory is so intense that to this day, I cannot think of it unmoved. I think of it as a final embrace of love between the simple peoples of Turkey before they should be led to exterminate each other for the political advantage of foreign powers or their own leaders. (*Memoirs* 271-2)

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During the Armenian massacres, instead of triumphant descriptions of combatants and war scenes, Edib's heroes and heroines are nurses, who refused to take sides in the struggle. She writes that Sister Anna

was the only Armenian who had sensed the double tragedy of the Armeno-Turkish massacres and simply brought her lovely heart to the service of the sick. That suffering has no race, sex, and class, and that the appeasing of it is the only human act which brings a lasting satisfaction. (*Memoirs* 414)

The political causes of World War I and the Armenian massacres, however, are not enough to explain the perpetual warfare that Halide experiences and reads in history books in her adolescence and adulthood. In lieu of trying to probe deeper into the particular political reasons behind World War I and the means of finding political solutions to prevent such a calamity in the future, the narrator analyzes violence as an integral constituent of human nature. At quite an early age, the narrator wishes she were not human and that Allah "would have stopped [her] life" so that she would not have to endure the type of cruelty so easily inflicted by human beings, which causes her not only insufferable pain but also an incurable alienation from humankind in general. An old wall collapses on a yellow dog, crushing half of its body underneath. As the dog tries helplessly to lift itself up from under the concrete, boys throw stones at it and seek entertainment in the dog's attempts at rescuing itself:

This was a symbolic and ominous revelation for me of the ugly instinct which stains the human species. I hated to belong to it [...] and I have realized since that no brute beast causes pain and commits cruelty for the simple pleasure of watching it. The cruelties which animals may commit in the course of their struggle for existence are too often done by us as a mere pleasure spectacle. (*Memoirs* 34-5)

The narrator's emotional distance from the human species makes her frequently take refuge in the friendship of dogs (*Memoirs* 107), while the feeling of moral shock at the nature of the humanity is usually expressed in "temporary loss of interest in life" and depression (*Memoirs* 36).

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Violence and war, the essential characteristics of humankind, are replicated during the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922). Nonetheless, this time the insufferable depression during the war leads the narrator to contemplate seriously the possibility of committing suicide:

one picture after another of the human race in the act of doing what the Greeks had done to the Turks. The pictures began from the great war and went back into prehistoric times. With nations and races it was mass carnage: fire and steel, steel and fire [...] And such a chorus of wails of agony too! [...] The nameless whispering thing in my brain succeeded in making me realize that the supreme instinct of mankind was to kill—and only that. It made me see clearly that those who lacked the instinct to kill did not belong to the human species. They were forced to be strangers to humankind. They might inhabit human bodies, speak a human tongue, but they could not have a single tie with mankind. It was not love or kindness which made humans alike—or even connected them. (*The Turkish Ordeal* 368-9)

If this is the human condition, then the narrator is alienated within the human body for not being able to identify with violence.

“You, who really are me,” said the tormentor in my brain, “are an anomaly—a being that has wandered by some ghastly mistake into the body of the graceless human demon. Why should you insist on abiding in their midst or suffering their woes? Break your chains.” (*The Turkish Ordeal* 369)

After which the narrator begins to think that the only cure to her alienation is death: “Shall I cease to be?” (*The Turkish Ordeal* 369) she asks at the moment when she hears the news of her promotion in the army: “Corporal [...] I have news for you—you are made sergeant.” (*The Turkish Ordeal* 369)

The promotion rings absurd and meaningful at the same time. The narrator's unbridgeable alienation from humankind because of the deep hatred she feels for violence makes a promotion in the ranks of armed forces, i.e. institutionalized violence, meaningless. However, amidst the misery in Anatolia, there is reason to fight and to be in the nationalist army. With the hope that the

occupation by the Greeks and the Allied forces would come to an end, and, with it, the glimmer of hope that a new revolution, far surpassing that of the Young Turk revolution of 1908 might establish a “new and progressive Turkey,” the narrator of the autobiography cannot opt for suicide.

The ongoing battle for freedom

Is Halide Edib’s autobiography an example of anti-war literature? The response is simultaneously “yes” and “no.” In lieu of critiquing war and military institutions, the last few chapters of *The Turkish Ordeal* praise the military victory of the Turks. The narrator boasts of her promotion to “sergeant major” in the national army, as the fiancé of Mustafa Kemal, Latife Hanım, sews the three signs of the title on Halide Edib’s sleeve (*The Turkish Ordeal* 390). These instances, which both glorify a collective struggle and also highlight and legitimate the importance of the narrator in the struggle as an individual within the collectivity, are particularly significant since Halide Edib is vilified as a traitor in the late 1920s in the various accounts of the history of the national struggle in Turkey. Nonetheless, the epic frame of the autobiography, justifying the narrator’s own significance in Turkish history, concomitantly bears within it the desire for peace and democracy.

Halide Edib’s *The Turkish Ordeal*, in contradistinction to Mustafa Kemal’s *Nutuk*, which appeals only to the *Turkish Youth*, appeals to all the nations involved in the Struggle. Her story, even while recounting the great feats of the Turkish Nationalist Army during the Struggle in Anatolia, does not propagate a narrow definition of Turkish nationalism but aspires to an inclusive ideal of peace and brotherhood, which Edib voices in an appeal to the “Youth of all the Nations Represented in *The Turkish Ordeal*”:

My story is simple. It does not aim at a moral. But I pray that the future Youth who will read it may tear away the Veil behind which they slew each other and were slain... recognize their likeness in the eyes of their brothers... grip each other’s hands... and on the old Ruins of Hatred and Desolation erect a New World of Brotherhood and Peace. (Preface)

During the twenties, “the appeal to the Youth of all nations represented in *The Turkish Ordeal*” cited above illustrates that the narrator was not yet as desperate about the possibility of peace and

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a meaningful human existence as the writer of the absurdist play *Masks or Souls?* (1953). There was hope not only for a “new world of brotherhood and peace” but also for a democratic Turkey. The narrator claims that the reforms of the twenties—the change from the Arabic script to the Latin alphabet, the instigation of the Swiss Legal Code, the closing of dervish lodges and brotherhoods—were attained at the very high cost of violence, which the narrator condemns. “Is the great change in Turkey enough to justify the human slaughter which was carried out by the tribunals of independence in 1925-6? How much of it was necessary for reform, and how much of it an excuse for removing political enemies? Are all changes smeared with so much blood in history?” (*The Turkish Ordeal* 347)

The Turkish Ordeal then, not only glorifies the struggle for national autonomy but also gives hope for the possibility of a different battle, that of establishing democracy at home.

My nation has earned her independence by an ordeal which will stand out as one of the hardest and the noblest in the world's history. But she has another ordeal to pass through [...], the Ordeal for Freedom ... [I]n the unending struggle for freedom there can be no real individual symbol, no dictator. There will only be the sum total of a people's sacrifice to bear witness to the guarding of their liberties. The independent Turkish nation will share its ordeal with many independent nations of the world. (*The Turkish Ordeal* 407)

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