“THE REBELLIOUS DAUGHTER OF THE REPUBLIC” OR
“THE MOTHER OF THE TURKS”: RE-CONSIDERING THE LATE
OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND THE EARLY TURKISH REPUBLIC
THROUGH THE POLITICS OF HALİDE EDİP ADİVAR

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Özgün Basmaz
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Özgün Basmaz

Thesis

Approved:               Accepted:

_________________________________    ____________________________
Advisor              Dean of the College
Dr. Janet Klein                                              Dr. Ronald F. Levant

________________________________    _______________________________
Co-Advisor                                                  Dean of the Graduate School
Dr. T.J. Boisseau                                         Dr. George R. Newkome

______________    _______________________________
Department Chair                                       Date
Michael M. Sheng
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

There are few Turkish women more widely known and controversially debated than Halide Edip Adıvar. Her life spanned one of the most critical periods of Turkey’s history. As a nationalist, women’s rights activist, modernist, educator, and popular novelist, Halide Edip was active in shaping the cultural, ideological and political milieu of 20th-century Turkey during its transition from a multi-ethnic empire to a secular nation-state. Halide Edip Adıvar, who wrote twenty-one novels, four collections of short stories, two theater plays, and countless articles, was among the most prolific writers of the late-Ottoman and early Turkish Republican periods. Besides her impact in Turkey, she proved herself as a cosmopolitan intellectual with an international audience. In mainstream Turkish historiography, and indeed, in state-sponsored textbooks, Halide Edip’s story is interestingly complex. On the one hand, she is lauded as a patriot and the ideal “Turkish woman”; on the other hand, Halide Edip’s nationalist credentials are challenged, and she is simultaneously depicted as a traitor, primarily for her disagreements with Mustafa Kemal (who took the surname Atatürk (Father Turk) in 1934 when the surname law was passed) and for her alleged support for an American mandate to oversee Turkey in the aftermath of the First World War, and Mustafa Kemal’s subsequent depiction of her as a “mandaci-traitor” (traitor for her support of the Mandate) in the Turkish National
Struggle. The problem with this characterization that the present study confronts is twofold: The primacy given to the words and deeds of Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) in Turkish historiography (with its particular emphasis on his famous *Nutuk*) has resulted in the love/hate (patriot/traitor) depiction of Halide Edip from the early years of the republic. In other words, Halide Edip must have been a “traitor” on some level because Mustafa Kemal said so. However, a much more complex picture—not only of Halide Edip, but of politics, nationalism, and women in the period before and after the Turkish War of Independence—can emerge if we decenter Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk)’s narrative and explore other accounts of that very eventful period. Halide Edip’s own writings allow us to expand our source base for—and hence, our understanding of—the transition from empire to republic as it happened for many in the land that became Turkey following the First World War and the breakup of the Ottoman Empire. Her own diverse writings not only shed more complexity on herself as a historical figure during that time, but also on the time itself.

Hülya Adak has compared Mustafa Kemal’s *Nutuk* (*Speech*) and Halide Edip’s *The Turkish Ordeal* (the second volume of her autobiography), and in doing so has suggested that focus on the latter text can produce for the historian not only a more complex picture of Halide Edip, but also of Turkish history.¹ In other words, Adak suggests that it is time to decenter Mustafa Kemal’s *Speech* as the major text of the early republican period, and to include other texts such as Edip’s *The Turkish Ordeal* in order to open ways to

alternative readings of history of the period. The present study expands on Adak’s findings and suggests that not only *The Turkish Ordeal*, but the wider body of Halide Edip’s prolific production, can help us to nuance Turkish historiography on the period in question.

In this project, I will examine Halide Edip, her life, and her memoirs and novels to understand the ideological, cultural, and political atmosphere in the late 19th- and early 20th-century Ottoman Empire/Turkey. I suggest that Halide Edip’s collected works will nuance our understanding of her as an historical figure, and also of nationalism, gender relations, and other identity politics for the period in question. This project is particularly relevant today as struggles over what it means to be Turkish have produced new clashes between “Kemalist” and “alternative” discourses on present-day visions for Turkey. Historians now acknowledge how the past is characterized for presentist purposes; the paradox in Turkish historiography, however, is that while many Kemalist principles are being actively debated today, Mustafa Kemal himself is almost immune from critique, and his depiction of history in the period he lived it remains largely unquestioned and repeated. Inspired by Hülya Adak’s proposal that Halide Edip’s memoirs can serve as an alternative account of the period in question, the present study suggests that a wider survey of the themes in her novels, in addition to her memoirs, will help us to decenter the “great-man” history that has been enshrined in Turkish historiography, and in so doing, will help us to arrive at a more complex picture of this rich and controversial period in Turkish history. Halide Edip wrote as a woman, an Ottoman, a Turk, a Muslim, and a westernized intellectual in circumstances that often demanded a driven mindset and a clear identification with a singular cause and leader, religion, and people, which she
found difficult to accept and yield to without dissent. Throughout her political and literary career, she created an alternative ideological framework as the intersection of nationalism, modernity, Westernization, and the so-called “woman question,” while at the same time reproducing the dominant discourse to a certain extent. In this study I will focus on Halide Edip’s ideological complexities and her original discourse, which cannot be summarily categorized as feminist, nationalist, or Westernist, rather than reinforcing the claim that her engagement with the “West” and the “woman question” fails to exceed the boundaries set by orientalist and patriarchal discourses. Rather than trying to fit her into a single category of nationalist, feminist, secularist, or Islamist, I will highlight how her discourse opened up a space that emphasized diversity, humanity, and the continuity of history in a political milieu that attempted to unite people around a constructed national idea, that created “others” and eradicated people’s sense of the past, which is what Mustafa Kemal’s vision largely did. By mapping the inconsistencies in her discourse, I will also analyze the ways Edip resisted and challenged the existing systems, particularly as they related to her challenges to Mustafa Kemal and his politics. Halide Edip’s criticism of Kemal, who is a “sacred” figure in Turkey and criticism of whose views is “legally” criminalized, can offer a new understanding of issues related to modernity, nationalism, the Ottoman legacy, and gender relations in these contexts. Mustafa Kemal’s interpretation of these issues remains unchallenged. In Turkey, official history, which is too widely reproduced, suggests that Atatürk’s visions about Turkey’s past and future had always been for the best of the country; on the rare occasion that he is

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acknowledged as human and thus flawed, he is portrayed as having done his best in a given political and historical context. On the other hand, Halide Edip’s discussions of different possibilities and models for the new Turkey offered alternatives to the Kemalist model. Moreover, as I will discuss in more detail later, through her account in *Turkish Ordeal*, Halide Edip relates a different version of the historical conditions and possibilities within which a new Turkey could be established, unlike Atatürk’s account, which presents his model as a historical necessity, and which subsequent historians have also uncritically regarded as such. Thus, Halide Edip is a critical historical figure not only because she opens Atatürk and his narrative to discussion but also because she presents us with new perspectives for writing the history of Turkey, which was long monopolized by Mustafa Kemal, primarily in his grand *Speech (Nutuk).*

A Brief Summary of Halide Edip’s Life, Politics and Perception

Halide Edip gives a vivid account of her life in her two-volume autobiography, *Memoirs* and the *Turkish Ordeal*. She recounts that she was born in Istanbul in 1882, into a wealthy traditional family. Her father, Edib Bey, was a secretary of Sultan Abdülhamid II and worked in the palace. Her mother, whose ancestors were learned religious men, died when Halide was very small. She was cared for by her maternal grandparents until she was four years old, and this period was crucial in molding her religious outlook. Upon her father’s remarriage, she returned home. There she received a privileged education by English chaperons and Turkish religious sheikhs until she

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3 The following information is based on her account in her *Memoirs* (1922) and *The Turkish Ordeal* (1928).
attended the American College for Girls. She was educated in eastern and western literature, religion, philosophy, and sociology, and was also exposed to the teachings of Durkheim and Comte, who would respectively influence her views on nationhood and positivist interpretations of modernity. Immediately after her graduation in 1901, she married her mathematics teacher, Salih Zeki Bey. Her nine years of marriage ended upon her husband’s decision to marry a second wife. After her divorce, she intensified her political activities. At that time, she gave fervent public speeches and published articles on women’s education and their participation in national life.

The dominant theme of women’s education and participation in politics in Halide Edip’s writings was replaced with issues of nationalism and the ideological debates about “Turkism” and “Turkishness” after 1912. She describes the period from 1910-1912 as “a prelude” to her “final plunge into nationalism, which took an intense form after the disaster of the Balkan War.” Moreover, after she witnessed the First World War and the demise of Ottoman Empire in its aftermath, she became even more fervent in her nationalist activities. She developed as a moving public speaker, who urged the Turks to fight against the occupation forces (the British, French, Italians, and Greeks) in her famous Sultanahmet speech, delivered in 1919. Immediately afterwards, she traveled to Anatolia to participate in the Turkish Independence War (1919-1922). After the Turkish military triumph, the Turkish Republic was established in 1923, with Mustafa Kemal (who later became known as Atatürk) as its first president. During the immediate aftermath of the foundation of the new republic, Halide Edip served as a model for the

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ideal “Turkish woman,” as an educated intellectual and ardent nationalist. However, soon Halide Edip’s perspectives on the ideals of the new state and forms of sovereignty began to depart significantly from the vision that Mustafa Kemal embraced. This contradiction was crystallized in her insistence on the ideals of democracy and liberalism, whereas Mustafa Kemal prioritized secularist and republican ideals over democratic demands. Edip implicitly accused Kemal of establishing a despotic regime. In 1924, with other important personalities of the Independence War, her second husband, Adnan Adivar, founded an opposition party named Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası (Progressive Republican Party). The party was closed in 1925 by governmental decree and a court case was opened against the leaders of the party on the claim of instigating a religious insurgence and plotting to assassinate Kemal. Adivar and Halide Edip went into self-imposed exile in 1924 before the trial began. Between 1924 and 1939, they lived abroad, and returned to Turkey only after Atatürk’s death. In exile, she continued her writings, the most significant of which is her two-volume autobiography. Upon her return, she was hired as a professor at the University of Istanbul’s Department of English Language and Literature. Between 1950 and 1954, she served as the İzmir deputy in the Turkish parliament. She died in 1964.

Throughout her autobiography, Halide Edip presents herself as an intellectual innovator, a defender of her nation and thus as one of the main figures and agents of the Turkish nationalist movement. Nevertheless, Halide Edip’s nationalism was to be challenged, albeit subtly, by Atatürk’s labeling of her as a “mandaci-traitor” in the

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Turkish National Struggle. As a result, in subsequent Turkish history, Halide Edip became at once loved and revered and simultaneously disliked. The state-mandated curriculum incorporates her novels at the primary-school level as part of its “citizenship education” curriculum. And although she remains regarded as the writer of eminent works of Turkish nationalist literature and her books were assigned to train “better citizens,” history textbooks paradoxically use Halide Edip as an example of a “traitor” to the nation. Briefly referred to as the “Corporal Halide” who fought in Mustafa Kemal Pasha’s unit during the Nationalist Independence War, official history portrays her as a treacherous intellectual who betrayed the ideal of independence by advocating the American Mandate. In this narration, Halide Edip Adivar’s membership in the “Turkish Wilsonian League” has been recounted as the manifestation of her willingness to render Turkey subservient to the American protectorate, and thus, as proof of her failure as a nationalist. Indeed, this narrative is derived from Nutuk, a speech delivered by Mustafa Kemal in 1927 that dismissed Edip’s and other leading figures’ roles in the Independence Struggle and the establishment of the republic. In his speech, Kemal characterized her as “mandaci-traitor,” based on a letter Edip sent to him in 1919 vouching for the American Mandate.

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6 Turkish history books spare long pages for these “treacherous intellectuals” who established various committees to spread their “limited” vision of a new country. According to the accounts of official history, these intellectuals envisioned the new country to be established only through the protectorate of another powerful Western state, and therefore, they were far from reaching Atatürk’s brilliance, as he had insisted on a completely independent Turkey. This particular representational style served as a perfect ground to juxtapose contemporary intellectuals with Atatürk and to code Atatürk as the single legitimate leader of Turkey.
For many, Edip’s ideological and political conflict with Mustafa Kemal after the establishment of the republic also suggested her disloyalty and false-heartedness as a person in general. The prominent intellectuals from Atatürk’s narrow circle commonly refer to her as a “witch” in their accounts. They depict her as “selfish, greedy for power, vindictive and rancorous to the extend that is unfitting for a lady.”7 On the other hand, she was simultaneously acknowledged as the model of the republican construct of the “ideal” Turkish woman “who is well-educated, Western--in appearance--and a dedicated nationalist.”8 In spite of her contested place in Turkish historiography, her deeds and writings in both fiction and non-fiction both in Turkish and in English are so significant that everybody who talks or writes about the National Independence War and the early Turkish Republic feels obliged to include her in their grand narrative, although either with a good dose of reverence or hate, or an odd combination of the two. Interestingly, the way she was perceived by male members of society and was included in the official historiography reveals the peculiarities of the early Republic of Turkey in terms of its gender ideals and the visions of femininity.

Backlash: The Potentiality, Limits, and Uses of her Counter-Discourse and Works

Halide Edip would not, however, allow these accounts’ portrayals of her to remain unchallenged. One year after Nutuk was delivered, Halide Edip published the second volume of her autobiography, The Turkish Ordeal, which not only completed the first

7 S. U. Betin, Atatürk İnkilabi ve Ziya Gökalp, Yahya Kemal- Halide Adivar, (İstanbul: İnkilap Yaynevi 1951), 89.
8 M. Atadan, “Memoirs of Falih Rifki Atay and Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu” in Ağabeyim Mustafa Kemal, (İstanbul: Milliyet Yaynevi, 1955), 124-145.
volume of her autobiography, *The House with Wisteria (Memoirs)*, but also complemented (and at once challenged) Mustafa Kemal’s narration of the national struggle in *Nutuk*. Hülya Adak claims that *The Turkish Ordeal*, which narrates Edip’s pivotal role in the articulation of Turkish nationalism and in Turkish Independence Struggle, “was a text of self-defense written as a response to *Nutuk*, which dismissed Edip’s role in the Independence Struggle entirely.”

While Mustafa Kemal was relating the story to the Turkish parliament, in her autobiography written in English, Edip addressed British audiences with an account of the same events from her point of view. As she herself put it, she wished to leave an account of the men and women of her time for her children, so that they would understand why she and her contemporaries had joined in the liberation struggle, and why she had been prepared to leave her own children behind in order to do so. While Halide Edip hoped that her memoirs could serve as a primary source for the early twentieth-century history of Turkey, her account did not enjoy the publicity of the autobiographies of Atatürk’s other political opponents. While *Nutuk* and *The Turkish Ordeal* are both similarly autobiographical accounts of “the Ottoman Empire, the history of the Turkish nationalist movement, the Independence Struggle of Turkey and the foundation of the Turkish Republic,” Edip’s autobiography lacked the historical credibility and authority that *Nutuk* achieved. Indeed, *Nutuk* would come to be the official account of Turkish history and monopolized subsequent history-writing, whereas Edip’s could not be translated into Turkish until 1962, and could only be

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9 Adak, 511.
11 Adak, 512
published after being immensely modified. Halide Edip changed her text enormously in its translation. Instead of criticizing Atatürk and its assertions regarding Turkish history, the Turkish version, *Türkün Ateşle İmtihanı*, showers Atatürk with compliments.

Although not without its problems, Edip’s *Turkish Ordeal* is critical to the rethinking of the Turkish history, like the other ignored, banned, or unpopular autobiographies. In her analysis of autobiography as a genre, Leigh Gilmore claims that autobiography is a “site of resistance, especially as it engages the politics of looking back and challenges the politics of how the past and present may be known in relation to a particular version of history.”

In line with this claim, I will initially look at Halide Edip’s *The Turkish Ordeal* as a work that challenges Atatürk’s version of history, along with her other writings. While it would admittedly be too ambitious to use her autobiography to compose an entirely alternative history of the early Republic of Turkey (and its preceding decades), and while I am not aiming to replace the monopoly of *Nutuk* in writing Turkish history with that of *The Turkish Ordeal*, I will use Halide Edip’s autobiography as a tool, as Adak does, “to analyze the challenges to the monopoly of

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12 Although most of these “counter” autobiographies were written in the 1920s and 1930s, they could not be published until the 1990s. Halide Edip’s autobiographies are exceptions to this rule since both works went through serious censorship when they were published in the sixties in Turkey.

13 Halide Edip’s text was censored while most other “non-official” autobiographies were banned because they violated the law, under the heading “Crimes against Atatürk,” passed by the Turkish Parliament. Until the 1990s, authors of works that were thought offensive to the memory of Atatürk could be punished up to the three years of imprisonment. See Yael Navaro Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey*, (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), 202.

Nutuk as narrative, both structurally and in terms of content.”15 Because of its divergence from Nutuk in terms of style and content, Halide Edip’s The Turkish Ordeal and selected novels offer new tools for writing the history of Turkey, which have long monopolized by Nutuk (Speech). Halide Edip’s Memoirs and The Turkish Ordeal are also important since they are one of the few testimonies to the historic events that unfolded in the transition from the late 19th-century Ottoman Empire to the early Turkish Republic that were written by a Turkish woman. In these works, Edip portrays herself as one of the intellectual innovators of Turkish nationalism, a soldier defending her nation, and an educated woman. In these autobiographies, Halide Edip also depicts a wide array of women from diverse social classes and different ages whom she encountered throughout her life. She also highlights their active role during one of the most critical historical transitions. Therefore, Halide Edip’s autobiographies are significant since they show woman as critical agents in the making of the history. By using autobiography as a genre, Halide Edip as a woman makes a claim to history and redefines women as agents in the process of history-writing. For these reasons, Halide Edip is not only an important writer who “brings women from the margins to the center of historical focus and, in the process, transforms the way all history was written,”16 but also a critical figure of analysis for historians with the same goals.

Besides her autobiographies, Halide Edip’s novels are also important for analysis. Here I follow the presumption of the “new historicism” that literature is an integral part of history and politics. Initially, on the basis of the new historicist claim that literary texts

15 Adak, 512.
are “material products of specific historical conditions”\textsuperscript{17} and that they “contain insights into the formation of historical moments,”\textsuperscript{18} I will look at Halide Edip’s novels as a means to understand the complex process of transformation from the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire into the secular nation-state that Turkey became. I will explore the ways in which Halide Edip’s novels reveal the processes and tensions by which historical change in Turkey came about.

Halide Edip wrote in a period of successive waves of modernization and the accompanying cultural tension between modern and traditional, rising nationalist movements, and intensified attempts to carve out new national identities, as well as in the midst of the concomitant debates over the “woman question.” Her novels deal intensely with these issues and serve as an additional source for historians’ understanding of the period. In this period the “woman question” became one of the main reference points of the ideological debates and arguments about “national and cultural integrity,” limits of modernization, and “the conceptions of indigenous relative to foreign.”\textsuperscript{19} Halide Edip responds to these issues through her interpretation of the “woman question.” In her novels, she utilizes the popular themes of family, responsible motherhood, and the education of citizens as parts of the “woman question,” which on the broader level was discussed as an integral part of national identity.


\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, 418.

Visions of national identity changed between the Tanzimat period, the Second Constitutional era, and the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Since the question of national identity was addressed through discussions of the so-called “woman’s question,” it is important to examine the key turning points in the discourse on women, for as Kandiyoti points out, these moments “coincide with the critical junctures in the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic.”

Halide Edip’s novels, which are in constant dialogue with the existing discourses on women and gender relations, reflect the changing nature of nationalist visions and the major turning points in the wider discourse on women. Most importantly, Halide Edip’s novels highlight these tensions and changes from a woman’s point of view. In this sense, these novels are helpful for historians to observe how a woman reinforced and challenged the contemporary discourse on women in a society at a cultural and political crossroads, and how one woman envisioned the “new nation” and “new woman” in the overwhelmingly male-dominated societies of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic. Rather than assuming that literary texts merely “reflect” or “reproduce” some preexisting social reality, I will follow the assumption that literary texts are active producers of meaning, “constitutive and inseparable part of history in the making, and therefore rife with the creative forces, disruptions and contradictions, of history.”

As stated above, Halide Edip wrote in a period when carving out a new national identity was a main societal and political concern. As Anderson claims, nationalism is a cultural development, nations are “imagined communities” rather than natural entities, and thus they depend on cultural

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20 Ibid, 140.
21 Brannigan, 418.
articulation and construction. Halide Edip’s novels both reflected the social, political, and cultural atmosphere of their production, and also helped construct the cultural and political identities of their age. As such, Halide Edip’s novels and autobiography serve as wonderful sources to understand the ways in which society viewed the cultural tension between modernity and tradition along with the political transition from empire to nation-state and the related “woman question.” They are also important for historians to observe the ways in which these models of the “new woman” and “new nation” in her novels reproduced, reinforced, or challenged the dominant discourse set forth by Mustafa Kemal’s narrative. Halide Edip used her novels as political sites through which she could negotiate within and against institutions, power, and the dominant discourses on woman, nationalism, and modernity. As Said suggests in his theory on Orientalist discourse, literature, by subtly penetrating into the common senses, has the potentiality to shape people’s perception and even their reality. In line with this thinking, I assume that Halide Edip through her novels played a special role not only in proposing new ideals of nationhood and womanhood but also in transforming society according to these ideals. Thus, I take Halide Edip as an important historical figure who, as a woman and widely read writer, defined the contours of debates on nationalism, modernization, and the “woman question,” and shaped the cultural texture of Turkish society and the history of Turkey.

In approaching Halide Edip, I have resisted drawing a uniform, closed portrait. Neither the circumstances of her life nor those of her country or the nationalism that she embraced made uniformity possible. She lived in a time of great turmoil, change, and complexity. It is hard to describe her through rigid or handed-down categories. For
instance, she is a women’s- rights activist but not a feminist. Suspicious of power, male authority, and excessive masculinity, she was also eager to stimulate it. In *The Turkish Ordeal*, she expresses her pride in being a “Corporal” in “one of the noblest wars in the world.” On the other hand, she indicates her unwillingness to become “a member of the collective mass of Turkish community which he [Atatürk] meant to possess and command.” She was an astute, committed nationalist but at the same time a humanitarian, who “dreamed of a nationalism which [would] create a happy land of beauty, understanding, and love,” but deplored how she had “seen nothing but mutual massacre and mutual hatred…[and] nothing but ideals used as instruments for creating human carnage and misery.” She received a Western education and supported modernization but also she embraced the mysticism and Islam according to whose dictates she was raised. For her, Islam was an answer to humans’ spiritual quest and renewal. She supported the establishment of the Turkish Republic but was also troubled by the sudden disappearance of a cosmopolitan empire into a uniform state, of multiple faiths into a single state that regulated religion and culture.

In studying Halide Edip, I have faced the necessity to understand her personality and novels both *in relation to* and also *in reaction to* the existing social order and political climate. In her novels she deals with the popular questions of modernization, nationalism, and the “woman question.” As these ideological trends are not static but dynamic processes that are interpreted and modified in line with changing political, social

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23 Ibid, 190.
and cultural climate, the change in the conceptualizations of these terms is therefore reflected on her discussion of them. While reproducing the dominant discourse, she also manifests striking ideological divergence from dominant views. Her interpretations of, and affiliation with, the feminist, modernist, and nationalist ideals differ through time in line with and simultaneously as a reaction to the common views and dominant discourses as they changed over time.

In the text that follows I will analyze Halide Edip’s life story and her novels in four parts, each of which represents a distinct phase in her conceptualization and discussion of the “woman question,” nationalism, and Westernization. Following a chronological order, I will first survey the period from 1890 to 1914, which was marked by the Tanzimat reforms, rising nationalist movements, and the Balkan Wars. In order to understand the social and political milieu and to analyze her views on the East/West paradigm as well as her ideas about women and nationalism, I will focus on the first volume of her autobiography, the House with Wisteria, as well as her novel, Handan (1912), along with her utopic political novel, Yeni Turan/ New Turan (1912). I will try to demonstrate how Halide Edip’s model of the “new woman” and “new nation” was both similar to and different from the mainstream view. I will then explore the period from 1914 to 1923, when she witnessed World War I and the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, and when she became an engaged public speaker and a soldier in the National Independence Struggle and the establishment of the Turkish Republic. In this part, I will explore the relevant parts from the second volume of her autobiography, The Turkish Ordeal (1928), her novel Ateşten Gömlek: Sakarya Ordusuna/ Shirt of Flame (1922), and her public speech at the Sultanahmet Meeting (1919). Following this, I will analyze her
politics in the context of the early Turkish republican period after 1923. In this part, I will focus in particular on the ways she ideologically supported the new order. She not only served as a model of the ideal “modern Turkish woman” but also created female models in her novels along the lines of the state visions of femininity. In this part, I will explore her novel, *Vurun Kahpeye/ Strike the Whore* (1924), written in the immediate aftermath of the establishment of new Republic but set in the period of the National Independence Struggle. Finally, I will concentrate on the post-1925 period that was marked by her ideological conflict with Mustafa Kemal, which resulted in her self-imposed exile. In this part, I will again analyze the *Turkish Ordeal*, through which she articulates her criticism of Mustafa Kemal and generates a counter-discourse to *Nutuk*. I will analyze *Turkish Ordeal* as compared to *Nutuk* in terms of their content and style of interacting with the readers, and explore the ways Halide Edip challenges Atatürk’s historical account. Besides her autobiography, in the last part, I will also explore *Turkey Faces West: A Turkish View of Recent Changes and Their Origin*²⁵ and *Conflict of East and West in Turkey*,²⁶ as these works reveal her views on Turkey’s relation to the West and her critique of the Kemalist westernization project. Among her novels, I will explore *Sinekli Bakkal /The Clown and His Daughter*, (1936) which contains a critique of the Kemalist cultural politics that dictated a break from the Ottoman past and also addresses Kemalist gender politics. This novel written in 1936 will be read as a critique of Atatürk’s denial of Turkey’s Ottoman heritage and his model of ideal “Westernized” women.

CHAPTER II
FROM HOUSE WITH WISTERIA TO THE TURKISH HEART (1874-1914)

College had a liberating effect upon me, giving me a much greater balance and opening up to me the possibility of a personal life with enjoyment of a much more varied kind... Yet it is recalled at this earlier period the action and reaction of my soul and of my thought as distinctly dual personalities. While I was free from all material and past influences in moments of unrepressed thinking, some other part in me, a strange and distinct part, claimed to be an outcome of Islamic culture, a product of mosques, candles, cemeteries, and set prayers. With strange insistence I held on to the outward aspect of Islamism, and in some mysterious way, I struggled to fit all the new outlook of life, acquired through my education in the college, into Islamic belief and experience.27

These lines convey not only a middle-class woman’s experiences but also an intellectual’s conception of and reaction to the changes in the 19th-century Ottoman society, promoted by an intense Westernization, launched after the public declaration of the Hatt-ı Hümayun of Gülhane in 1839. Halide Edip attended the American Girl’s College, which was opened as a consequence of the Tanzimat-era educational reforms for girls. Observing the positive transformation she went through after her education, Halide Edip affirms the positive impact of the female educational reform on women. On the other hand, she implies that her education created a split in her personality. Indeed, the “duality of soul and thought” that she claims she experienced was the reflection of a broader societal conflict between traditional/ alaturka / Eastern / Islamic

and modern/alafranga/Western ideals at that period. Her identitarian struggle was a reflection of a broader cultural identity crisis. The early part of her life story and her writings in the post-Tanzimat period manifests her struggle to create a discourse to resolve this duality of two “different” cultural forms.

As it is also known, the Hatt-ı Hümayun of Gülhane describes a series of changes intended in the imperial order. In the financial sphere, taxes would be regularized so that inequalities were abolished. Justice was to be guaranteed to individuals through a new penal code, and personal property was declared to be protected by the state. Minorities were guaranteed more rights than before. The essence of the document and the series of reforms following its declaration were critical in terms of bringing the government into areas where no Ottoman government had entered before. For instance, if there was unemployment, the state was supposed to help the economy. If people required better justice, the state would reorder the justice system, which had previously been left to religious judges. If people needed roads, bridges, or water pipelines, the state would build them, instead of leaving these projects to “vakif” (private charity organizations) to complete. In other words, the Tanzimat-era reforms represented the codification of modern state-building practices.

The Tanzimat reforms were to create deep cleavages in Ottoman society, reflected both at the institutional level and at that of culture. The imperial decrees of 1839 and 1856 initiated not only a series of modernization reforms but also the process of forming a new and “modern” Ottoman subjectivity. With the Tanzimat, the Ottoman state subtly acknowledged the material superiority of the Western nations. This was followed by the emergence of the new ideas of the “Ottoman nation,” or Osmanlılık, which centered on
independent and enlightened individuals instead of the traditional Ottoman society, which was based on the religious social order (millet) and guild network. The ideological debates mainly focused on the possibilities and the ways to transform from a multi-ethnic Islamic empire into a modern nation-state. These reform programs also increased the perception that the empire was stagnating or declining in comparison with the “dynamic” and “progressive” Europe. With the Tanzimat reforms and mentality, Ottomans subtly affirmed the material superiority of European nations and the necessity to “westernize” in order to overcome Ottoman “decline.” Nevertheless, later as Ottomans failed to modernize due to limited financial and industrial infrastructure, lack of capital and skilled industrial workers, and their inability to integrate into capitalist economy, Tanzimat reform programs ironically accelerated the Ottoman decline vis-à-vis Europe.

The Tanzimat reforms gave rise to conflicting evaluations of the changes the program embodied, which would divide society along ideological and ethnic lines. Initially, Kandiyoti points out that the Tanzimat alienated the groups and classes which “were excluded from the new ‘modernised’ structures (such as craftsmen, artisans, the urban lower middle class, petty civil servants and the lower ranks of the ulema).” She claims that these classes were to become the focus of a resistance that often took Islamic forms. Along the same lines, Kemal Karpat observes that the Tanzimat reforms expanded ideological and commercial relations with the West. According to him, this exchange not only created a new middle class “made up of upper agrarian groups and the

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well-to-do commercial bourgeoisie”²⁹ and an “Ottoman intelligentsia,” but it also led to nationalist uprisings. By means of their contact with Europe, this new middle class was exposed to new foreign systems such as capitalism, and they believed that the Ottoman administrative and economic system would limit their gains.

The new Ottoman intelligentsia, who were similarly exposed to novel foreign ideological fashions such as enlightenment, liberalism, and nationalism, opposed the Tanzimat as “one-sided bureaucratic despotism.”³⁰ They were convinced that the Tanzimat policies would destroy the state. As Zürcher states, “the solution, in their eyes, lay in introducing representative, constitutional and parliamentarian government in the empire, thus instilling a true feeling of citizenship and loyalty to the state among all Ottoman subjects, Muslim and non-Muslim.”³¹ In their critique of the Tanzimat reforms, these intellectuals were heavily under influence of Western models of modernity. Emphasis on the principles of science, rationality, and progress came to dominate Ottoman intellectuals’ discourse of carving out a new Ottoman subjectivity. In line with this, education was a primary area they deemed reform was required. These reformers believed that the traditional Muslim educational system was not suited to the modern world. None of the reformers ever intended to close the Islamic schools since the problem was not that the schools were religious. The problem lay in what Islamic schools did not teach—mainly technical subjects such as trigonometry, calculus, biology, chemistry, and foreign languages. The effect of the schools was to create a new educated elite.

³¹ Ibid, 68.
Debates about the content of modern Ottoman subjecthood and the nature of society gave the status of women a prominent place in discussions. As Kandiyoti observes, it was basically during the Tanzimat period that the “woman question” appeared in the public political discourse. Modernist reformers bemoaned the condition of women as the symptom of backwardness, and highlighted the significance of the “woman question” for societal transformation.\[32\] For them, the condition of women had to be improved for larger societal progress. They pushed for a package of girls’ education as well as conjugal marriage, unveiling, and an end to seclusion, arguing that educated women would help the nation develop, a theme that was widely circulated in the women’s press. Elizabeth Frierson similarly discusses the increasing popularity of female education within the broader context of the late-Ottoman state’s attempt to forge a “modern” Islamic statecraft and society.\[33\] Accordingly, the educational opportunities were expanded to include women, who could now have access to education from primary school to technical high schools. Although the schools for training the military and the bureaucracy were only restricted to men, the teacher-training schools, schools of nursing, and schools of “home economy” were opened for girls.

These social and political developments also affected Halide Edip’s life. She attended the American Girl’s College, which was opened as a consequence of the Tanzimat’s educational reforms for girls. It was in 1894 when she first went to the school upon her father’s insistence to “remove her from the influence of ‘that woman’ as he

\[32\] For more information, see Qasim Amin, *The Liberation of Women and the New Woman: Two Documents in the History of Egyptian Feminism*, (Cairo American University in Cairo Press, 2000).

called “Teyze.” This short anecdote is indeed quite telling about the post-Tanzimat cultural and social milieu. Initially, the name of the school she attended was crucial in terms of manifesting the intention to offer a “western” education to girls in that period. Secondly, as Edip’s father’s motive to send her to the Girls’ college in order to distance her from the influence of her “teyze” indicates, there was an emerging cultural gulf between traditional (alaturka) and modern (alafranga) ideals of that period. Her father wanted Halide to be educated in the alafranga style and not to become an alaturka woman under the influence of her “teyze”. Halide Edip’s life from 1894 to 1910 clearly reflects this societal tension. Finally, Halide Edip’s father exemplified the modernist elite of that age who first send their daughters to the Western style schools as part of their political aim to modernize and westernize the nation as a whole.

Nevertheless, unlike the Western-oriented bureaucratic elite, intellectuals and the Muslim middle-class were still committed to “Ottoman communitarian conservatism.” Despite their desire to Westernize and modernize the nation, there was a tenacious concern with “excessive” Westernization. As Kandiyoti points out, these intellectuals were trying to accomplish a synthesis between “Western notions of ‘progress’ and a harmonious Islamic state.” Their ideology was a complex blend of constitutionalism, modernism, Ottoman nationalism, and Islamism. For them and also for more conservative groups, “excessive” Westernization needed to be implemented without really eroding the moral fabric of the society.

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34 *Teyze* is a Turkish word for an old woman and aunt. Here she must be implying that her father wanted to take her away from the traditional and superstitious upbringing of her old grandmother.
35 Kandiyoti, 25.
36 Ibid, 25.
In these critiques, the inside/outside distinction and the concomitant association of women with the inner domain, the home, and the family prevailed. In *The Nation and Its Fragments*, Chatterjee offers an analysis of the reasons and the limits of this dichotomy between these inner and outer domains. According to Chatterjee, nationalist thought tried to resolve the problem of becoming *modern* without becoming too *Western* “by dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains – the material and the spiritual.”37 Chatterjee explains that in the reformer’s discourse, the material is the domain of the “outside”--of economy, technology, science, and statecraft in which the West’s superiority is affirmed. Nationalist reformers recognized the necessity to learn European’s superior techniques of organizing material life to become a successful nation. The spiritual, on the other hand, was “an ‘inner’ domain bearing the ‘essential’ marks of cultural identity” and it was the domain where “the East was undominated, sovereign, master of its own fate.”38 Along with the preserving, protection, and strengthening of the inner core of the national culture was equally, if not more, critical for the nationalist reformers’ agenda. It is through this dichotomy of material/outer and spiritual/inner domains, and the priority of the inner domain over the outer domain that the “woman question” became a significant site of reconstruction. Chatterjee explains that the metaphor of spiritual/ inner domain was the “home.” And since the home was envisioned as the female sphere, women were assigned the national responsibility “for protecting and

38 Ibid, 121.
nurturing this spiritual quality” and for not losing “their essentially spiritual (that is, feminine) virtues.”

Similarly in the Ottoman context, excessive Westernization was regarded as a “threat” primarily to the traditional Ottoman family system and women’s roles in it. For Ottoman intellectuals and reformers, the family was a sphere through which the authentic and spiritual essence of the nation should be protected against the threats of excessive Westernization. In this period, familial rhetoric was intensely used and the nationalists mobilized an array of familial metaphors. These family discourses operated on both the micro and macro levels, ranging from debates about the shape of an individual family to the rhetoric of the nation as a family. As the family was envisioned as the basic unit of modern Ottoman nation, it was subjected to an intense restructuring. Rather than the traditional polygamous and extended Ottoman family, the new model was the bourgeois nuclear family based on conjugal companionship. As Chatterjee explains, the theory behind this was that for nationalists, the inner-domestic sphere had to be reformed in order to adapt “to the requirements of a modern material world without losing its true identity.”

Women’s social roles were redefined along the lines of the literal and metaphorical meanings of the family. In other words, the nationalist reform in the inner sphere automatically necessitated “redefining” feminine roles and “remaking” the images of women. As I stated above, female education was part of the broader project of carving out new subjectivities. Nevertheless, their education according to the terms of modernity

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39 Ibid, 126.
40 Ibid, 120.
did not assure them mobility in the modernized material sphere. On the contrary, nationalists propagated woman’s education as part of the wider project of reorganizing the domestic space to make it compatible with the “modern” outside. For them, women should be educated to acquire certain virtues “characteristic of the new social forms of ‘disciplining’ – of orderliness, thrift, cleanliness, and a personal sense of responsibility, the practical skills of literacy, accounting, hygiene, and the ability to run the household according to the new physical and economic conditions set by the outside world.”

Nationalist reformers tried to resolve the tensions between alaturka and alafranka cultural forms --which respectively referred to the Ottoman-Turkish and European “frankish” styles, through the images of women. Neither completely alaturka nor totally alafranga cultural expressions were approved. Instead women were supposed to reflect a balanced fusion of both cultural modes.

In the Ottoman case, for example, after graduating from the College in 1901 where she received a Western education, Halide Edip married a mathematics teacher, Salih Zeki Bey, who was much older than her. She bore two sons and led the life of “a traditional Turkish women.” The main purpose of her education like all the girls of her generation was to achieve the same educational level as Western women to use her education for the maintenance of a better household in the service of her husband and children. In other words, her education aimed to render her a good, educated, and modern mother who would rear and train her children (the future citizens of the nation) in line with Western ideals, and a wife who supported her husband (the active citizen in the outside realm).

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41 Ibid, 126.
This theme is also repeated in Halide Edip’s early novels, such as *Handan* (1912) and *Yeni Turan* (1912).

As these novels were written in a context when the questions of marriage, the production of the modern family and women’s roles in the family were a major societal concern, the main issue at stake in these novels is the production of conjugal subjects and the redefinition of the social meaning of marriage. Therefore, they redefine the “feminine,” and to a certain extent the “masculine,” subjectivity by positioning men and women as the subjects of love. Edip tried to see whether and how love could become the grounding on which strong and stable conjugal ties might be produced, as opposed to the traditional polygamous and extended Ottoman family. These novels show that while repeating the existing ideas on woman question, Edip nonetheless generates a new discourse on women by taking up, interrogating, and redefining the limits of the contemporary discourse on women.

In these novels, Halide Edip carries on the reformists’ vision of the ideal woman and the anxieties of “extreme” westernization. These novels are at the same time representative of the twist in Halide Edip’s vision of the “woman question.” Her depictions of female identity and the way she constructs her heroines are far more complicated than that of the male-dominated reformist/modernist discourse. As Nükhet Sirman observes, Edip’s female heroines are “an inversion of the heroines of the modern Turkish novel that appeared in tandem with Turkish modernisation after the 1870s.”

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the *femme fatale*, who was frequently used as an allegory of false modernism or excessive westernization and who is criticized for her unbridled passion and desire. The second type of women is the voiceless innocent victim who suffers either because of the unjust social order or because of the *femme fatale*. Thus, male authors have used these heroines to critique both the traditional Ottoman social order and also the new forms of adopting western patterns of life and consumption. According to Berna Moran, these novels impose the subjectivity of the male-headed nuclear family and the forms of intimacy imagined by modern men.\(^4\) Halide Edip, on the other hand, combines the innocent victim and the *femme fatale* in the same person and thereby problematizes the identity of “woman.” For instance, in *Handan*, the heroine looks like *femme fatale*; however, she is indeed an innocent victim whose plight was caused by intellectually and emotionally undeveloped men, who represented the traditional social order. The problem is not the character of the female heroine but the male gaze who perceives women as either/or. Similarly in *Yeni Turan*, the ambitions and desires of the *femme fatale* are depicted as positive as long as they are used for the higher good of the unity of nation. As such, Edip undermines the modern Turkish novel’s negation of the ambitious, active and powerful woman.

Edip uses the particular device of describing the heroine through the male voice. For instance, the main narrator in *Handan* is Refik Cemal, who is Handan’s cousin’s husband and also a sensitive politically involved young man. The reader gets to know Handan’s character and her life story through the Refik’s narration and his letters to and

from other people. *Yeni Turan* is also narrated by a man who is waiting to die. In spite of the novel’s choice of female characters as protagonists, it is the male hero’s thoughts and actions that are given priority. According to Nükhet Sirman, it is either the writer’s unconscious continuation of the male novelists’ tradition, or Edip’s conscious choice to reinforce the credibility of the story since the female narrator would not be perceived as reliable as the man by the masculine Ottoman society. Sirman speculates that Edip might be thinking that the reader would tend to rely on and also identify with the accustomed male narrator more easily.\textsuperscript{45}

Although these novels cannot be regarded as feminist texts because of the use of the male narrator, it can be claimed that Halide Edip consciously used this narrative device to support her activism for women’s rights. She is well aware of the fact that she should appeal to men as well as women in order to make a societal reform in women’s conditions in the late-Ottoman period. Therefore, she chooses a male narrator to enable the male reader to identify with the story with the female heroine.

Edip, as the writer, involves the male narrator into the story and depicts his falling in love with the female heroine, who simultaneously carries the traces of *femme fatale* and that of a voiceless victim. Thus, she stresses the “acceptability” of the complex ideal women. Moreover, she does not portray the relationship between the male narrator and the female heroine as linear. Instead, the male narrator usually dislikes the female heroine in the beginning of the novel, since he perceives her solely as a *femme fatale*. As Nükhet Sirman observes, the male narrator does not like the heroine in the beginning since “she seems to contradict some norm: either of femininity through the excess physical prowess,

\textsuperscript{45} Sirman, 250.
or of morality by transgressing the code of honour and modesty as it applies to women.”

As the male narrator gets to know the female heroine better throughout the story, he not only admires her courage, intelligence, and sincerity but also falls desperately in love with her. Here, Halide Edip stresses that the problem is with the male gaze that initially perceives women as either *femme fatale* or as a victim. She instead suggests that appearances are deceptive, especially for women. In Edip’s early novels, the male narrator’s initial negative perception of the female heroine is instrumental to strengthen the effect of his final acknowledgment of female heroines as the ideal woman. Thus, by describing the transformation in the male gaze, Halide Edip aims to transform Ottoman men’s perception of the “woman question.” In a way, she asserts that although these heroines do transgress certain societal codes, it is these masculine codes that needs to be changed. Through her idealization of the female heroine, Halide Edip ensures that the female reader will identify with the female heroine and in so doing will try to change herself in line with this model of the ideal woman.

While both novels try to offer new models of ideal woman, Edip’s visions of ideal women in *Handan* and *Yeni Turan/New Turan* differ significantly. Although her two ideal women, Handan and Kaya are similar in many senses, they are at the same time very dissimilar. Their differences are particularly crystallized in their distinct decisions in the face of love. Through this, Halide Edip explores the limits and possibilities of conjugal love and of an ideal female subjectivity. To be more specific, her particular characterization of the female heroines in these novels should be explored, which I will do below.

46 Sirman, 255.
Initially in *Handan*, the female protagonist is an enlightened and extremely charming woman who was educated in Western schools and fluent in English. Unlike her “alafranga” sisters who are excessively “Avrupai,”[47] “speaking in English in the presence of ordinary people,”[48] Handan is “modest, Eastern in spirit and incredibly intelligent.”[49]

The reader is informed that at the age of 16, Handan takes lessons in philosophy, mathematics, and sociology and develops a close friendship with her revolutionary tutor, Nazım. He falls in love with her and asks her to marry him but she refuses him on the grounds that he only wants her as a comrade in his political struggle. He loves her mind but not herself. She instead marries an older Ottoman bureaucrat, Hüsnü Pasha, who makes her feel like a woman. The revolutionary Nazım is arrested soon afterwards and commits suicide in his prison cell upon his realization that his cause had no meaning without Handan. Here, Halide Edip depicts Handan as a desiring woman—a quality which has generally been attributed to the *femme fatale*. In line with this, the narrator, Refik Cemal, also blames Handan for Nazım’s death and accuses her of being a selfish, desirous, and vicious woman. However, Halide Edip makes it clear on a subtle level that Handan’s marital choice positively manifests her strong will and her insistence on her *womanliness*. Unfortunately, Handan’s sincerity about what she wants in marriage is juxtaposed with the dreadful experiences she went through. It turns out that her husband, Hüsnü Pasha, is solely interested in her sexuality. In the meantime, he begins having affairs with other women and finally decides on a separation and leaves for France with

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47 She uses the Turkish word “Avrupai” here, which refers to people who are not European but “act like and look” European.
49 Ibid., 25.
Handan’s former chambermaid as his mistress. He claims that he is disturbed and estranged by her independence and strong personality, which he sees as an expression of superiority and haughtiness. Here, Halide Edip underlines that the qualities which indeed made Handan an ideal woman were misinterpreted as those of a *femme fatale* by Hüsnü Pasha, who is only capable of sexual desire. Thus, Halide Edip pinpoints “excess masculinity, all materiality, no soul” as the source of women’s problems in the Ottoman society.

During her problems with Hüsnü Pasha, Handan starts to spend most of her time in England with her cousin and her cousin’s husband, Refik Cemal, who is forced to leave Istanbul for political reasons. Refik Cemal’s initial dislike for her on the assumption of her being a *femme fatale* starts to transform into love as he recognizes her as an ideal Turkish woman “who is western in mind and eastern in spirit.”\(^5^0\) He understands that he has mistaken Handan as *femme fatale*, as he realizes that she is also a victim. Handan becomes ill when her husband leaves her and Refik Cemal takes care of her. He is already in love with her and she too falls in love with him, and, suffering from a temporary loss of memory, she returns his kiss. When she regains her memory she recognizes her own betrayal of her cousin and dies. In her unsent letters to her husband, she makes it clear that her pain stems from her inability to realize the conjugal love that she defines as “a total union of mind, body and soul.”

It is significant to note that the novel plays with the opposition of mind (represented by Nazım) and body (represented by Hüsnü Pasha). In order to resolve the opposition or to enable their coexistence, Halide Edip interposes a third term – soul. Handan discovers

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the importance of sexuality and rejects Nazım’s proposal that will make her disregard her sexuality. But she is eventually thrown into a relationship with Hüsnü Pasha that constructs her as nothing but a sexual being. This is equally unacceptable since it reverts to the view that equates women with sexuality. Refik Cemal, the narrator, is the only man with whom a complete and fulfilling union can be contemplated because in his person both feminine and masculine qualities are combined. Similarly Handan also combines these two qualities. Handan, like Halide Edip’s other heroines, is not pretty, but she is passionate. This makes them irresistible, but also places them at the center of a drama that imbues them with an air of extreme sadness, though also of dignity. These women, while being the objects of sexuality, are subjects of desire and knowledge. In this sense, they are like men. It is their asset of knowledge and desire that inscribes Handan as a free spirit and ironically makes her the object of intense desire. On the other hand, Refik’s wife, Neriman, is too complacent, domestic, apolitical, and unintellectual. After Handan joins them in England, Refik Cemal understands that he was bored with his life with the submissive Neriman. Here, Halide Edip suggests that the wives in the new society should be like Handan since simple domesticity, complete subjugation, and devotion on the part of women cannot make a stable family either. They have to be equal “mind” partners to their husbands. Only total communication can achieve this, and total communion can only be between total human beings, mind as well as body, or in short, the unity of souls, each of which combines feminine and masculine qualities. Edip in a way proposes the combination of masculine and feminine traits by both men and women as the only way to the resolution of the women question. She defines ideal Turkish women as educated, modern, and free-spirited, and at the same time conscious of traditional values of family.
to protect the authentic Eastern essence of the society. It is this particular solution of the “woman question” that problematizes her feminist claims. Although Edip depicts her protagonist as an educated and enlightened mind, her novel is also about a woman who continues the marriage with a man in spite of his habitual cheating and who complies with being fooled rather than asserting her individuality. Besides the positive qualities of Handan, her “indulgent” sacrifice of her “honor, personality and life” for the sake of the unity of family and the ideals of motherhood were represented as identifiable qualities of an ideal woman. As such, she prioritizes women’s social responsibility to protect the “inner sphere” over their individuality.

The issue of the family is the central focus of Edip’s novels that re-define women’s roles in the society. Similarly, love, rather than the obedient respect of traditional Ottoman society, is emphasized as a regulatory force of the relations between husband and wife, parents and children. Nevertheless, as Sirman claims, Edip’s novels are not simply “usual love stories” at all. In her novels, love gains new moral importance in that love is associated with one’s duty toward family, friend, companion and nation rather than personal desire. Sacrifice for these values becomes a major moral responsibility, and only compliance with these values would ensure recognition and respect from self and other.

In Yeni Toran/New Toran, Halide Edip redefines the scope of love and family. She draws upon the popular nationalist discourse that depends heavily on familial metaphors to give an emotive power to wider nationalist claims. As the nation was redefined as “one family” descended from the same roots with shared blood, women’s responsibilities within the family were expanded to determine her national significance. Similarly in this
novel, Edip replaces women’s sacrifice for family with that for the nation as their defining moral responsibility. Secondly, love for land and nation is prioritized over the love for an individual. Handan and Yeni Turan’s heroine Kaya are compared in terms of their moral choices. By rejecting revolutionary Nazım’s proposal, Handan indeed denies sacrificing her individuality for a national struggle, and prefers love and family. On the other hand, in Yeni Turan, Kaya sacrifices her love to a man for the love of nation. Moreover, unlike Handan, Kaya is a socially and politically active woman. She is a progressive reformer who has a deep impact on people’s lives. For instance, with her leadership, the peasants, who were lazily wasting their time, construct new “modern” roads, plant trees, and clean and organize their formerly old and shabby village. Moreover, Kaya also deeply influences Oğuz, who is the male leader of the Yeni Turan party. In this sense, she is the first female model who is strong and intelligent enough to influence people and transform society in general. Indeed, Yeni Turan is a political and national utopia of Turkey in 20 years time. It is basically the story of a competition between two rival political parties, namely Ittihat ve Terakki and Yeni Turan. The members of Yeni Turan, Oğuz, Erutherford, Sungur, and the female heroine, Kaya, were educated according to Turkish nationalist ideals and thus they have the right to serve as rulers in the new Turkey. In this scheme, Kaya is Halide Edip’s image of the ideal woman of this new Turkey, where women have the vote and work outside the home, a society in which work and simplicity are the highest ideals. As such, she thinks they ought to be in a liberal and democratic political regime. The novel also relates Oğuz’s speeches through the narrator. In these speeches, Oğuz, the leader of the Yeni Turan party, highlights the importance of family for national progress at large. Stating that he
was primarily educated by his mother, he draws attention to women’s social roles in the family as mothers. For him, women are the founders and the protectors of the micro-units of the nation. Moreover, he claims that nations’ fall starts when they forget to repeat the words “land” and “nation.” He claims that Anglo-Saxons’ material superiority resulted from their conceptualization of land as home. For him, referring to “land” as “home” is the most mature expression of a developed nation. The Turkish word “anayurt/anavatan,”\(^{51}\) which was highly circulated in his speeches, not only imagines land as “home” but also genders land and nation as female. This metaphor enabled the nationalist Oğuz to redefine women’s roles at home as their national roles. Women were again redefined as “Mothers of the Nation” with a special nurturing and protective mission. Here, Halide Edip indeed relates her and other prominent nationalists’ views through the mouthpiece of Oğuz.

Like *Handan*, this novel was written in 1912, at the height of the Balkan Wars. These years also witnessed paramount changes in the Ottoman nationalist movement within which Halide Edip was took part. As Erik J. Zürcher describes it, the political and social debate and intellectual life was between three competing ideologies: Ottomanism, the old Young Ottoman ideal of a union of the different communities around the Ottoman throne; (pan) Islamism, which sought to regenerate the empire on the basis of Islamic practices and of solidarity within the Islamic Ümmet (Community); and (pan) Turkism, which sought the union of Turkic peoples under the Ottoman flag. He also draws attention to a fourth ideological current, Westernism, the movement to adopt European

\(^{51}\) Direct translation from Turkish is “motherland.”
techniques and ideas, which intellectuals of the day contrasted with Islamic traditionalism.52

Nevertheless, Halide Edip’s political career and literary works reveal that such a simple categorization cannot explain the real nature of the debates which were much more multi-faceted. Kandiyoti observes that the rise of Turkish nationalism during the Second Constitutional period “represented an attempt at recuperating a sense of national identity which did not rest solely on Islam.”53 In her analysis of Ziya Gökald as the mastermind of Turkish nationalism, she explains his emphasis on “a pre-Islamic ‘golden age’” when Turks did not lose “their old morality under the impact of alien influences, especially Persian and Byzantines.”54 He claimed an authentic, pre-Islamic, and thus uncorrupted cultural identity. By denying the Western influence through the Byzantines and Islamic influence through Persians, Gökald constructed an idea of Turkishness which was authentically non-Islamic and non-Western.

On the other hand, Halide Edip, although deeply influenced by Gökald’s nationalism, still insisted on the Islamic faith as a source of national identity. In 1910 when she divorced, she actively entered the political arena and wrote pieces on education and the status of women for the revolutionary paper Tanin. As a result of her educational articles, she attracted the attention of the education minister of the day, who offered her a job reforming a girl’s school in Istanbul and then to open schools in Syria as part of the Turkization and modernization policies of the CUP. During this period, she was very influential in discussions about cultural and national identity, which centered on

52 Zürcher, 127.
53 Kandiyoti, 33.
54 Ibid, 35.
definitions of Turkishness and Turkism. She was deeply involved with the debates and programs at the cultural club “Türk Oçağı” (the Turkish Hearth) which opened in 1911 under the leadership of Ziya Gökalp and Yusuf Akçura. She officially became the first female member in 1912 and she earned the title of “the Mother of the Turks.” This group glorified the common legendary past and the future of the Turkish race, whose symbol was a she-wolf Bozkurt, regarded as the mother of the race. In line with this, Kaya in Yeni Turan was imagined as the mother of the race. She was drawn to a populist, nativist, and Islamic nationalism, emphasizing primal and unadulterated qualities tied to race, land, and religion. Halide Edip’s own feelings were intensified during the Balkan Wars. She recalls: “I realized then the extent of my affection for my people and for my land. I cannot make out which I loved best, but I felt my love was personal and incurable and had nothing to do with ideas, thoughts, or politics, that in fact was physical and elemental.”

55 Halide Edip Adivar, Memoirs, 335.
CHAPTER III

FROM THE FIRST WORLD WAR TO THE EUROPEAN INVASION OF OTTOMAN STATE AND THE NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE WAR (1914-1923)

During this period, Halide Edip emerged as an ardent nationalist public speaker as she witnessed a country--already trying to recover from the wounds of the Balkan Wars--enter into World War I, which resulted in its defeat and occupation by the Allied forces. Desperate to find a way out, she wrote a letter to Mustafa Kemal. The letter starts with the statement, “[T]he political situation in the country has reached a specially critical
point,” and continues with her suggestion to reach out for the support of America that “lies beyond the boundaries of Europe and that is mightier than Europe” in order to “protect the country from the influences and rivalries of foreign nations.” It concludes with her call to “fight with all [our] strength to safeguard [our] future, [our] development and [our] unity.”56 This letter would later be used by Atatürk in order to dismiss Halide Edip’s nationalist views and deny her agency in the National Independence Struggle and establishment of the Turkish Republic. In this part, I will focus primarily on Edip’s nationalist politics, her deeds, and her writings that question Atatürk’s representation of her. Halide Edip also expressed that it was first in this period that she began to doubt Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk)’s methods of leadership. In this vein, I will try to analyze the ways Halide Edip challenged Atatürk and created an alternative discourse that expressed her alienation from militarism but at the same time announced her devotion to the war for national independence.

After the Balkan Wars, the Ottoman State faced an urgent need to build up its military might quickly if it were to survive. Revenues from Balkans had been lost, as had been much of the Ottoman army and the Ottoman population had been replaced as soldiers. Thus, the Ottoman experience in the Balkan Wars had not made the prospect of an approaching war appealing. The Unionist government, however, decided to enter the war on the side of Germany. According to Erik Jan Zürcher, the Union and Progress Party members were convinced that the Balkan Wars had shown the empire’s diplomatic

isolation and “continued isolation would mean the end of the empire.” The Unionists chose to accept any alliance rather than continued isolation. After gaining Germany’s military and financial support, the Ottomans started to consider entering the war for an economic blow at the Allies, canceling payments on foreign debt owed to the Allies and unilaterally ending the capitulations. During the course of the war, the Ottoman state faced defeat on many fronts. By 1916, the British had begun their invasion of the Ottoman-Arab provinces and the east was under the control of the Russians. Although the Russian Revolution offered the Ottomans a respite in the east in 1917, the final defeat was officially acknowledged by the Ottomans when the British, representing the Allies, declared the Ottoman surrender in an armistice signed at Mudros in 1918. The Allies had demanded and received an unconditional surrender from the Ottomans. The southern provinces of Syria and parts of Iraq had been taken by the British while the French made claim to the region of southern Anatolia that included northern Syria.

Meanwhile, the Greek army had begun to invade the Aegean parts of Anatolia. Many Turks in Istanbul, including Halide Edip and her second husband Dr. Adnan Adıvar, were alarmed by the conditions of Mudros. After the war, ideologies of pan-Ottomanism and pan-Islamism lost their relevance. The country had mainly faced two choices--of either accepting the Western occupation and surviving as a small symbolic state in Istanbul or organizing a National struggle around the basis of the ideals of Turkism against the occupying forces. There were also those supporters of a middle way of attracting Western support to establish a Turkish state in Anatolia, as they would

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neither accept outright Western subjugation nor expect any success in the attempt of national struggle. A group of intellectuals including Halide Edip Adıvar and Yunus Nadi pleaded for the implementation of Woodrow Wilson’s “Fourteen Points” to be applied in the Ottoman Empire. Wilson’s “Fourteen Points” had called for the self-determination of Ottoman peoples, and the Muslim Turkish population was the relative majority in Anatolia. An active Turkish Wilsonian League, with Halide Edip as one of the leaders, was formed in Istanbul. Nevertheless, the Fourteen Points did not gain much popularity in the international arena. Thus, Halide Edip did not long hold onto it as an internationally acknowledged solution. After the King-Crane Commission, appointed by President Wilson finally recommended an American mandate over all of Turkey, Halide Edip dropped her hopes for “some degree of American assistance to an independent Turkey.”58 Meanwhile, Izmir and Istanbul were occupied by the allied forces. The Ottoman parliament was abrogated and the sultan in Istanbul was under the thumb of the Allied occupation.

Halide Edip, in her autobiography, the *Turkish Ordeal* (1928), and her novel, *Åteşten Gömlek/ The Shirt of Flame* (1922), gives a detailed description of these days. Before continuing with her account of this period, I should first question the historical relevance and the politics of these books. Initially, *The Shirt of Flame* is a novel that takes place in the period of Istanbul’s and Izmir’s invasion by Allied forces and narrates the heroic deeds of the Turkish people and the organization of a National independence struggle in Anatolia. The novel was written in 1922, one year before the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Through her accounts of the events of this period, Halide Edip

attempts to reawaken the spirit and idealism of the Turkish people’s struggle for independence and revive their memory in the face of growing debates about the nature of the new Turkish state. *The Turkish Ordeal* is written in 1928, one year after Mustafa Kemal’s speech which dismisses Halide Edip’s role in the National Independence Struggle. Indeed, Kemal’s accusation of Halide Edip as an advocate of the American Mandate is based on a letter that Halide Edip sent to Kemal after the defeat of the Ottomans in the First World War. Therefore, Halide Edip’s account of the period between World War I and the establishment of the Turkish Republic is significant as it also aims to respond to and challenge Kemal’s claim about her political affiliations in this period. In this sense, it is both a narrative of self-legitimization and an alternative historical account that highlights interdependence, and illustrates the agency and significance of a plurality of leaders and common people who took part in the Independence Struggle. In *The Turkish Ordeal*, Halide Edip highlights her agency in the National Struggle as a keen nationalist and patriot, and also links her representation of self with the history of her nation and portrays herself as a prophetic figure. While using these texts as historical sources, I will be aware of the tension between the impulse of self-justification and self-aggrandizement as vindication of the self’s significance in one of the most determining periods of the Turkish history. The account of the National Independence Struggle in these two texts shows similarities in terms of her attitude towards the West, Westernized intellectuals in Turkey, and her description of the ideal woman.

In *The Turkish Ordeal*, Edip talks about the rising dissent among the nationalist Turkish Hearth youth, Turkish army officers, and civilians. She also refers to the
increasing appeal of Bolshevism--partially in protest to the British and Allied indifference to the indignities suffered by the Turkish population. She mentions an anonymous civilian who proposes passing “the germ [of Bolshevism] to the West” and implicitly agrees with him when he claims that the West represents “an inhuman edifice” worthy of destruction.  

In this sense, a radicalization of nationalist sentiment and discourse is very apparent in her patriotic novel, *The Shirt of Flame*, and recollections from the days immediately following the Greek landing in Izmir in *The Turkish Ordeal* parallel this sentiment.

These two texts primarily convey Halide Edip’s feelings of betrayal and indignation not only towards the West but also towards the Western-educated intelligentsia. She juxtaposes herself as the avid nationalist and patriot, who is willing to take part in a national insurgency against the alienated and detached intellectual who simply observes the events. Besides her nationalist sentiments, in this period, she becomes more impassioned in her view that Turkish women have a central role to play in the preservation of the nation. In *The Turkish Ordeal*, Halide Edip frames the responsibilities of the Turkish woman during the national independence war. She states that:

> Women were primarily nationalist. The struggle for nation and motherland was much more important and sacred than the struggle for woman’s rights. If a woman prioritizes her feminist struggle, it was to expand their opportunities to raise better fighters for our national struggle…Women are your natural and most reliable friends who will help and support you in your most difficult causes for the motherland. They are your comrades and colleagues in your heavy duty to rescue our nation.

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59 Ibid, 6.
60 Ibid, 225.
Thus she writes with some contempt and irony about Turkish women in the cosmopolitan circles of Istanbul such as Pera and Şişli, whom she depicts as a group of “alafranga” women called “Roduslular.” According to Halide Edip, these women were united in their common hatred of the Unionists and fraternized with allied officers to gain the officers’ sympathy for Turkey’s cause. In *The Shirt of Flame*, Halide Edip juxtaposes these alafranga women with Ayşe, who is presented as an icon of the new nationalist femininity.

Ayşe embarks in Istanbul as a widow with a fractured and bandaged arm, suffering from the loss of her husband, child, and city during the Greek atrocities. In this sense, she is depicted as the mother and wife of martyrs and an exemplary martyr herself. Ayşe becomes the quintessential object of male desire as the male heroes of the novel nurture a secret passion for her. Nevertheless, Ayşe seduces not by an overt eroticism but by her sanctified status as a patriotic relic. On the other hand Salime Hanım represents the extremely Westernized (*alafranga*) type of women who is a burlesque figure in the excess of her alafranga manners and admiration towards West. In one scene, Halide Edip depicts a meeting in Ayşe’s rich aunt’s house in Şişli. Salime Hanım introduces an English correspondent to Ayşe, army officers, and Ayşe’s aunt. Halide Edip portrays the English correspondent Mr. Cook as “an abominable example of cruel colonialist British Empire.”61 The author implicitly denounces Salime Hanım’s motive to introduce Mr. Cook to Ayşe. Salime Hanım tries to gain the pity and support of the British by using Ayşe as the victim of Greek invasion. The novel recounts the conversation between

Salime Hanım and the “despicable” British correspondent, where Salime Hanım apologizes for the atrocities committed against the British and claims that the Unionists should be held responsible for that rather than “Ottoman society” at large. Mr. Cook insists that Britain will never forgive the Turks and that the Ottoman Empire’s end is inescapable. Halide Edip, here, gives a nuanced portrayal of Salime Hanım, whose arrogance toward her fellow Turks is juxtaposed with her beggarly attitude towards the Westerners. Ayşe rejects being presented as a victim and challenges Mr. Cook and Salime Hanım by stating if the British want to occupy Turkey, they will only do so after a serious fight and that they should be aware that the Turks had sworn to fight until their bodies were torn apart. Thus, she denies becoming an object of pity and restores the pride of her nation. Her “noble” and “honorable” response to the British and to the *alafranga* Turkish women incites the nationalist sentiments among the army officers in the room. It was also acknowledged by a male officer praying to Ayşe for consolation and salvation just before he dies in the National Independence struggle. He tells her, “You have shown us the way to the national freedom and national honor. In life have I followed your glorious footsteps and so will in death follow you too.”

Loved to death, the heroine Ayşe is at once an object of male desire and a saint of the nationalist struggle. By contrasting her response to Mr Cook with that of Salime Hanım, Halide Edip glorifies Ayşe, who believed in national resistance rather than begging the West to “forgive” and “protect” their nation. Indeed, Ayşe is portrayed as the leader of her nation and her band of officer admirers.

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Throughout the novel, Halide Edip contrasts Ayşe with the Christian women who became aggressive towards the Turks by the power they derived from the occupying forces in Istanbul. Stark is the contrast between an aggressive and threatening group of Christian women, defined by their lack of social and moral dignity, and Ayşe, who stands for the patient, enduring and dignified Turkish women with whom Halide Edip found inspiration. This type of Turkish woman is typical of the nationalist iconography she constructs in *The Turkish Ordeal*. Indeed, while analyzing Halide Edip’s self-representation in *The Turkish Ordeal*, Ayşe Saktanber claims that Halide Edip modeled Ayşe of the *Shirt of Flame* on herself. Indeed this modeling can better be seen in a parallel reading of her account of the 1919 demonstration in Sultanahmet.

On June 1919, Halide Edip delivered her moving speech protesting against the Allied encroachment in the famous Sultanahmet Meeting, which thousands attended. In *The Turkish Ordeal*, Edip describe herself in the Sultanahmet meeting as a figure who was transformed from a “little shabby black figure” into “Turkey in black, her cheeks pale, her eyes sorrowful, her shoulders bent.” She describes her feelings during her speech, saying,

I believe that the Halide of Sultan Ahmed is not the ordinary, everyday Halide. The humblest sometimes can be the incarnation of some great ideal and of some great nation. That particular Halide was much more alive, palpitating with the message of Turkish hearts, a message which prophesied the great tragedy of the coming years.  

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64 Ibid, 134-135
As Cornelia A. Tsakiridou observes, in this speech, Halide Edip “seeks to inscribe herself within the Turkish psyche, at once muse and prophetess of a nation destined for miraculous resurrection.” 65 Ironically, her self-representation as “prophetess” of the nation and as “Mother of the Turks” mirrors Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk)’s self-representation as “prophet” and “Father of the Turks.” Interestingly, Halide Edip tries to refute Kemal’s accusation against her by reclaiming her agency in organizing the resistance by emphasizing her role as critical as that of Mustafa Kemal. Thus, she undermines Kemal’s representation of himself as the sole leader of the movement. Throughout the parts that she remembers her feelings during the Sultanahmet speech, Halide Edip imposes herself as she did with her fictional character Ayşe as an icon of a new nationalist femininity, who is not only comrade, helping and supporting men in their “heavy duty of rescuing nation,” but also a prophetic figure who leads the masses towards this duty.

In *The Turkish Ordeal*, Edip provides a transcript of excerpts from her Sultanahmet speech. This speech is also important in terms of revealing her views about Europe, which changed through the course of the Balkan Wars and the First World War. It is clear that Edip’s animosity towards European powers grew, while her nationalist zeal intensified. She accuses the western powers of treachery, duplicity, and injustice toward her people and religion, and charges them with conspiring to “break to pieces the last empire rules by the crescent.” 66

65 Cornelia A. Tsakiridou. “Nationalist Dilemmas: Halide Edib on Greeks, Greece and the West” in *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 27, (Fall 2002), 13
Edip, still, astutely underlines the difference between European governments and European people, by stating that “Governments are our enemies, peoples are our friends,” which would then become one of the mottos of the Independence War. This phrase demonstrates her insistence on humanist ideals even under severe conditions where humanism was willfully violated. Edip calls herself “a daughter of Islam” in this speech where she also states that she sees Islam as a unifying cause both for nation and for all humanity, as she proposes Islamic mysticism as a remedy to the existing conflict between East and West:

Flutelike voices from the minarets chanted, and hundreds of low bass voices, the voices of a myriad of ulamas and religious orders, took up the refrain from below – that refrain which the hallelujah of the Moslem Turks: “Allah Ekber, Allah Ekber, La Ilahek Illa Allah, Vallahu Ekber, Allah Ekber, Ve Lillahil Hamd.” As Halide was listening to this exquisite chant, she was repeating to herself something like this:

Islam, which means peace and the brotherhood of men, is eternal. Not the Islam entangled by superstition and narrowness, but the Islam which came as a great spiritual message. I must hold its supreme meaning to-day. Turkey, my wronged and martyred nation, is also lasting: she does not only share the sins and the faults and virtues of other peoples, she also has her own spiritual and moral force which no material agency can destroy. I must also interpret what is best and most vital in her, that which will connect her with what is best in the universal brotherhood of men.67

After her Sultanahmet speech, Halide Edip became a public figure of even greater political consequence and was, as such, in considerable danger. As she announced her anti-Western views and called for a national independence, she was now a threat for the occupying forces. In The Turkish Ordeal, she recalls how, fearing for the future of her two sons, she arranged them to be taken to America. The day after the children left,

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67 Adıvar, The Turkish Ordeal, 134-135.
Halide and Dr. Adnan Adivar left for the Nationalist front, disguised as an old hodja (Turkish religious leader), and his veiled wife. They traveled “by carriage, horse, cart, and on foot to Anatolia (Anadolu), then to Angora (Ankara).” She was sentenced to death in absentia, and her house and possessions were confiscated. Throughout the battles for independence, she worked closely with Mustafa Kemal Pasha, who emerged as the military leader of the movement. She served in the Turkish army as a noncombatant private and then corporal, translating and writing dispatches and counting soldiers and guns. She soon, however, began to doubt Mustafa Kemal’s methods. While she recognized his political astuteness and attributed a certain historical necessity to his leadership and personality, Halide Edip refused to yield to his demand for unconditional obedience. In her writings she expresses her unwillingness to become “a member of the collective mass of Turkish humanity that he [Kemal] meant to possess and command.”

During the parts that she relates the incidents during the national independence war, her self-aggrandizing tone vanishes and is instead increasingly marked by the emotional tensions and dilemmas that she went through. The emotional tone of her account switches between the feelings of extreme self-importance within a male dominated hierarchical order on the one hand, and the feeling of extreme insignificance as a numeric constituent of a grand military order on the other hand. At certain parts she expresses her discomfort with certain aspects of her militant activities--a moral and ideological confusion about her military responsibilities as a “Corporal.” She implies that her enthusiasm about war and the pride in her “Corporal” title tails down at certain moments when her humanitarian

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68 Ibid., 193.
69 Ibid., 192.
feelings weigh heavier. Edip recalls moments when she considered committing suicide as she was exposed to the scenes that were the outcomes of mankind’s “supreme instinct to kill.” Then she remembers her responsibility to her nation and acknowledges that the national cause is the only reality. In other words, she vacillates between nationalist Corporal Halide and a humanitarian who suffers from what she sees in the battlefield. The following passage from *The Turkish Ordeal* is quite telling about her dilemmas:

So far I had often been conscious of a dual personality: one living and acting, the other watching and criticizing. This everlasting critic in me has made me suffer much more than any of my own kind has been able make me suffer. Now this mental critic was torturing me to the extent of wiping out my everyday human identity.  

Her views on war in a way are quite telling. War, according to Edip, is a relentless will to power, the product of excess masculinity. For Halide Edip the desire to dominate, or “the will to power,” is masculine in essence and in effect defines masculinity. She thought that during the war the West exhibited this trait in its aggression towards Turkey. She would then attribute this masculine trait of “the will to power” to Mustafa Kemal while mentioning his relentless will to destroy his opponents after the establishment of the new Republic. Her account of the National Independence Struggle in *The Turkish Ordeal* and her speech in the Sultanahmet Meeting manifested her vision of nationalism which was geared towards a unified and harmonious humanity rather than only seeking the sovereignty of the nation as unique and distinct from others. In this sense, she refuses the masculine nationalism, intent only on domination, a point she later develops in her critique of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Furthermore, the tolerant Islamic mysticism practiced

70 Ibid, 368-370.
by her grandmother provides her with a cultural model on which her version of a modern social order rests. It is only by being true to this culturally specific self, the soul that provides the inner spring for real love, that not only Turks but all of humanity will, according to Edip, really be free. For her it is only on the ground of a humanistic and secular morality that rationality and spirituality, West and East can be in harmony in the modern world.

To conclude, Halide Edip’s attitude towards the Western powers and her construct of nationalist femininity reproduced and also further inspired nationalist discourse on the issues of “national identity” and “ideal woman.” Nevertheless, Halide Edip’s perception of the incidents after the First World War and during the National Independence War would shape her vision of nationalism as taking a different turn from that of Mustafa Kemal. In spite of their unity in action, the difference in their visions of nationalism would deepen the ideological conflict between Edip and Kemal in the early Turkish Republic, and would result in Halide Edip’s exile from country.
CHAPTER IV
THE NEW TURKISH REPUBLIC: FROM PARLIAMENT TO EXILE
(1923-1926)

Halide Edip collaborated with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in establishing the new Republic of Turkey as a nation-state. However, for the institution of different political organizations and regimes, a new and rather alien idea of subjectivity had to be implemented into the population. In this period, Halide Edip, not only through her novels but also through her image as the model of the ideal Turkish woman, contributed to the process of designing and promoting the new subjectivities as citizens of a modern nation-state. The Republic of Turkey was founded as a nation-state out of the remnants of the defeated Ottoman Empire. However, in order to set up different political organizations and regimes, a new and rather alien idea of statehood had to be introduced to a population that had until then thought of itself as subjects of the sultan, who as caliph was also the accepted spiritual leader of the community of Muslims. Thus, along with building the Turkish nation-state, the Turkish nation as such had to be created, people had to be given a new collective identity, and they had to be persuaded to accept it. The founders needed to establish the Turkish Republic in tandem with the Turkish people as
a nation, and Turks as citizens with an identity other than that of Muslim subject of the sultan. In this respect, Mustafa Kemal, who emerged as the leader of the movement, regarded Islam as the major impediment to establishing a new national identity and reaching “the desired level of contemporary civilization”\(^71\) on the path to Westernization.

Abolishing the religious foundations of the state and eradicating most of the cultural symbols by which these foundations were expressed in everyday life were crucial steps. The abolition of the caliphate in 1924, which had a great impact, was followed by the closure of the office of the şeyh‘ül Islam, the shar‘ia courts, and the medreses, all of which were centers of religious instruction and learning. The ban on the activities of the religious orders (tarikat) in 1925, which formed the backbone of folk Islam in rural Anatolia, discouraging veils for women, replacing Arabic script with European Latin script, and substituting the Georgian calendar for the Muslim calendar, constituted the launching of a radical new cultural framework for citizens of the new republic.

This cultural transformation was accompanied by the adoption of new legal foundations for conducting social and economic life: a new constitution, civil code, and commercial law, all of which were borrowed from Europe. “Taken as a whole, these reforms aimed at destroying the symbols of Ottoman-Islamic civilization and substituting them with their western counterparts”\(^72\) The imposition of epistemological and ontological categories borrowed from Europe and grafted onto the native realities of

\(^71\) It is one of Atatürk’s famous phrases, “Muhassır milletler seviyesine ulaşmak” that he expressed as the goal of the new modern Turkey

Turkey also led to a search for indigenous configurations of culture that matched the Western ideal.

In line with Chatterjee’s descriptions of the tensions embedded in nationalist discourse, Turkish nationalist ideology also needed to invent a culturally authentic self and a glorious past within which people of the “nation” could identify themselves. In line with his attempt to create a radical break with Islam and the Ottoman past, Mustafa Kemal imagined a pure pre-Islamic Turkic past which was corrupted by Islam and Ottomans.

Although Kemalist nationalist construction depended on Ziya Gökalp’s and Halide Edip’s nationalist visions which constituted the ideological foundation of the Turkish Hearth, Halide Edip later criticized Atatürk for his particular interpretation of authentic Turkic culture. Unlike Mustafa Kemal, who underlined the Turkic identity as pre-Islamic and thus non-Ottoman, Edip still felt culturally tied to the Ottomans as a source of the authentic self. Nevertheless, in the early years of the Turkish Republic, Halide Edip collaborated with Mustafa Kemal in building new nation.

The Kemalist construction of the Turkish nation as “Western” and “modern” was eloquently signaled through the images of women who became the icons of the new Republic. Cultural nationalism created a new discursive space by appropriating women’s emancipation in the name of pre-Islamic Turkish egalitarianism and condemning certain aspects of Ottoman patriarchy --such as polygyny and the seclusion of women-- as a corruption of original Turkish mores. The Republic adopted this approach to women’s emancipation as an item of official state ideology. In the early years of the Republic, in
spite of her doubts about Mustafa Kemal, Halide Edip contributed to Kemalist discourse on nationalist femininity both as an intellectual innovator and also as a model.

Edip initially reproduced the discourse that used “women’s images” to protect an image of Turkey as a nation of intrinsic western moral standards and virtue. In her novel, *Vurun Kahpeye/Strike the Whore* (1924) that she wrote in this period, she attempted to show how authentic Turkish culture shared with the British the same view of female virtue that emphasized a woman’s “manly” qualities and her “strength of character and straightforwardness.”

For Mustafa Kemal as for Halide Edip, women’s dress was considered as the most outward and evident token of the image of new Turkey. Accordingly, the veil became a critical issue of regulation and control since unveiling women became a fertile medium for signifying many other issues at once, such as the construction of modern Turkish identity as opposed to backward Ottoman identity, the civilization and modernization of Turkey and the limitation of Islam to matters of belief and worship. By strategically amalgamating the notions of pre-Islamic Turkic identity and of the unveiling of women as signs of modernization, Kemalists designed a new narrative that depicted the veil as a token of Muslim backwardness and by arguing that true Turkish women had never been covered. As Sarah Graham-Brown remarks, visual images of women in the 1920s and 1930s displayed them parading in a well-ordered manner and bearing the flag, in school or military uniform, wearing “ski-pants, sport

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shorts and backless bathing-suits.” She comments on a picture named “Turkish Girls under the Republic,” which portrays a group of school girls, wearing uniform sport shorts and parading in a highly organized way:

The republican government in Turkey laid stress on organized physical activity for women and frequently published photographs which extolled this kind of well ordered exercise. This also helped to legitimize a form of dress which would not otherwise have been socially acceptable in public for girls of this age.

Thus, while women’s “modern” clothes signified the “modernity” of the new Turkey, their construction as parts of a militarized order contributed to assigning to women “manly” attributes. Moreover, women, now sharing the public space, were to repress their femininity, and their dress had to reflect this asexuality. Now instead of the veil, women who could now work in public places were dressed in neutral and even masculine suits, with a long skirt and a tie and a jacket. Halide Edip’s picture that was taken in this period was shown in many women’s magazines.

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77 Ibid, 131.
This picture also illustrates how Halide Edip internalized the implicitly patriarchal Kemalist discourse that deprived women of their womanhood and femininity, and presented them as man-like so that women would not pose a threat to men sexually. It also exemplifies how she contributed to the image of “new women” as a model. Halide Edip attributed to the Kemalist discourse of femininity by supporting and reinforcing Atatürk’s vision of female subjectivity through the novels, especially *Vurun Kahpeye/Strike the Whore* that she wrote in the immediate aftermath of the establishment of the Turkish Republic. In *Strike the Whore*, written in 1923, she elaborates on the Kemalist themes of the “Westernized and educated daughter of the republic” and criticizes the ignorance promoted by the social structure of the Ottomans in the rural regions. Although written in 1923, the plot is set in an Ottoman province. It is about a young idealist woman.

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teacher named Aliye who is appointed to the primary school in an occupied Anatolian
town during the nationalist independence war. The story mainly revolves around the
female protagonist Aliye’s struggle not only against the occupying forces but also her
illiterate male compatriots. Aliye is portrayed as a well educated, beautiful, adamant
nationalist who would willingly sacrifice her life for her country. Her good qualities,
however, were completely misunderstood by the conservative, illiterate, and ignorant
men in the village, who regarded women as sexual objects rather than as humans. Aliye’s
education and independence made her be perceived as a loose woman by the uneducated
and narrow-minded men. She is finally killed by these men at the end of the novel. In
Strike the Whore, Halide Edip Adıvar draws attention to two simultaneous wars, one of
which is against outside forces and the other of which is against ignorance at home.
Written in the Republican context, Halide Edip emphasizes the war at home as the most
difficult one, since although the enemies had left the country, ignorance remained and
prevailed. Thus, Halide Edip conveys the message that it is not just the social order but
also its subjects that need to change. While idealizing her heroine as an intellectual and
brave woman and juxtaposing her against ignorant and non-nationalist men, Halide Edip
emphasizes the fact that the education of women alone cannot guarantee societal
progress. Edip implies that although Aliye is an ideal woman, she is not able to contribute
to society unless men are educated as well.

Halide Edip also compares Aliye to other women in the village. Although the male
members of the village cultivate animosity towards Aliye, women in the village like her.
Halide Edip implies that the village women also respect this enlightened teacher since she
accomplished everything that they desired. Bahriye Çeri observes that through her
depiction of Aliye’s perception by other women, Halide Edip further idealizes Aliye as a model that Turkish women should emulate. Although her education and manners makes her different from other women on the intellectual level, Halide Edip emphasizes Aliye’s similarity to other women on the grounds of womanhood. In other words, while contrasting Aliye to men, she constructs womanhood and mother’s “natural” roles as mothers as the common ground that makes Aliye no different from other women. Edip depicts the relationships among women as reflecting their common consciousness of womanhood. Particularly in one scene, Edip paints a picture of Aliye listening to the recitation of the Mevlid, which describes nature’s most mystical phenomenon of birth with a “music that fires the heart.”

Aliye feels the sufferings and happiness of birth and motherhood like any other woman. Thus, Edip stresses motherhood as a spiritual call that unifies women in spite of their different intellectual levels.

In this respect Halide Edip’s model flawlessly reproduces the Kemalist construction of the ideal Turkish woman as enlightened “daughters of the republic” and at the same “mothers of the nation.” The Kemalist discourse on woman stressed that while being educated, unveiled and “cultivated” according to Western cultural mores, Turkish women should retain and transmit the essential “virtues” of authentic culture. With respect to these “virtues,” women should continue to be good mothers and wives. Similar to the modernist perspectives during Ottoman Empire, women as mothers and wives were conceived as both icons and also reproducers of the nation. Mustafa Kemal’s speech sums up this attitude towards women:

79 Adıvar, Vurun Kahpeye, 67
History shows the great virtues shown by our mothers and grandmothers. One of these has been to raise sons of whom the race can be proud. Those whose glory spread across Asia and as far as the limits of the world have been trained by highly virtuous mothers who taught them courage and truthfulness. I will not cease to repeat it, woman’s most important duty, apart from her social responsibilities, is to be a good mother. As one progresses in time, as civilization advances with giant steps, it is imperative that mothers be enabled to raise their children according to the needs of the country. 80

Selda Şerifsoy has analyzed the emphasis on women’s roles as mothers in the context of the growing importance of family both as an institution and as a metaphor in the newly founded republic. She observes that the issue of the family was a central focus of the new social imaginary in Turkey. Family as an institution and as a metaphor offered a solution to the problems of constructing a new society in a situation where traditions had been delegitimized, and where each individual faced the immediate and pressing issue of “citizenry responsibilities.” Modernity in Turkey was conceived as being made up of a collectivity of nuclear families within which reigned peace and serenity. 81 In fact, the new imaginary of family as it was contrasted with the Ottoman family served as the basis for the legitimization of the new Republic. According to this narrative, the Ottoman family was the locus of strife and subordination, especially for women who were subjected to the double indignities of polygamy and repudiation. The modern Republic, by contrast, recognized women’s rights within the family and made them (although not so equal) members of the society.

Şerifsoy argues that family as an institution was significant for “increasing population through controlled reproduction,” for “framing the moral codes in the society” and for “raising citizens who feel responsible to their families and to the nation.” The last point in particular reveals the metaphorical meanings of family in the modern nation-state. On the metaphorical level, the analogy established between nation and family asserted that “the nation, according to its proponents, was “one family” descended from the same roots with shared blood. At the head of the nationalist movement generally loomed a dominating “father figure.”

This analogy served the nationalists’ need to create a sense of relatedness among people who were otherwise strangers and “often separated by ethnicity, race, class and religion.” In other words, the metaphor of nation as family was meant to generate bonds and ensure unity. With respect to this analogy, women’s roles as mother in the family were redefined as “Mothers of the Nation,” with a special nurturing and protective mission.

The modern Turkish woman was a subject with a specific agency, a socially competent individual who as a result of her education was able to cultivate her mind, but who as a mother would also sacrifice herself for the care and guidance of others in the family and in the nation. Halide Edip’s emphasis on “motherhood” as the spiritual call of nature that united women beyond their differences was also highlighted as a tool through which women would come together and cultivate the nation.

It is perhaps this unity of “agency through compassion and sacrifice” which has appeared as a paradox to Turkish academics who have attempted to explain women’s

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83 Ibid, 173.
position in modern Turkish society through the phrase “emancipated but not liberated.” For instance, Deniz Kandiyoti and Zafer Toprak acknowledge the “emancipation” of Turkish woman through the legal equality that women were granted after the Republican reforms in the first half of the 1920s, but on the other hand they draw attention to the persistence of the force of socio-cultural traditions because of which real liberation could not be easily realized. While Toprak sees Islamic traditions that defined women as subordinate to men as constituting the main source of these traditions, Kandiyoti identifies the practices of gender segregation in producing a dependent female consciousness and sexuality. Edip’s political activities and literary works, on the other hand, complicate matters by implicating women themselves in the production of this type of female subjects in the process of major social transformation. In spite of Halide Edip’s support for state-sponsored feminism, she later claims that she could not champion a regime where women had no right to vote and be elected. Moreover, her views on the ideals of the new state and the forms of sovereignty differed from that of Mustafa Kemal. The ideological pillars of democracy, humanism, and liberalism determined her political outlook whereas Atatürk insisted on secularist and republican ideals for the sake of which democracy could be sacrificed. Therefore, she accused Atatürk of establishing a despotic regime and a “one-man” state. In 1924, in line with her definition of Turkey as a

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86 Halide Edib Adivar, The Turkish Ordeal, (Westport, Conn.: Hyperion Press, 1981). These comments are not present in the Turkish translation of the biography, which was translated by herself. So it is evident that she self-censored to avoid criticism.
democratic state which should thus have a multi-political party system, Edip supported her second husband, Adnan Adivar, and other important personalities of the Independence War, in their foundation of the first opposition party of the Republic, named Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası (Progressive Republican Party). The party was closed in 1925 by governmental decree and a court case was opened against the leaders of the party on the claim that they were instigating a religious insurgence and plotting to assassinate Mustafa Kemal. Adnan Adivar and Halide Edip Adivar were forced to go into exile in 1924 before the trial began. Between 1924 and 1939, they lived abroad, and returned to Turkey only after Atatürk’s death. In the following chapter, I will offer a detailed analysis of the issues Halide Edip used to criticize Atatürk and his regime.
CHAPTER V
VOICES OF RESISTANCE FROM EXILE

In this part, I will examine the works that Halide Edip wrote in exile in order to analyze her ideological and political conflict with Mustafa Kemal. This conflict crystallized in particular around the issues of the new Turkey’s relation to its Ottoman past, the new Turkey’s conceptualization of Islam, the extent of the modernization project, and the lives and images of Turkish women in Kemalist Turkey. Halide Edip’s criticism of Atatürk, who is a “sacred” figure in Turkey and criticism of whose views is “legally” criminalized, offers us new insights into these issues. In Turkey, there has always been the official and popular sense that whatever Atatürk’s decisions regarding Turkey were, they had always been for the best of the country and that even if flawed, he did the best he could do in a given political and historical context. Halide Edip’s discussion of different possibilities and alternative models of the new Turkey offers us new ways to view Atatürk’s model, as well. Through her account in The Turkish Ordeal, Halide Edip gives her version of the historical conditions within which a different Turkey could be established, unlike Atatürk’s account, which presents his model as a historical necessity.

For these reasons, Halide Edip is a critical historical figure not only because she opens Atatürk to discussion but also offers new angles through which we might view
the writing of the history of Turkey which has long been monopolized by Mustafa Kemal’s *Nutuk*. In line with this claim, I will explore her treatment of these subjects by using four of her works: her autobiography, *The Turkish Ordeal* and a collection of her essays and some of her lectures, namely *Turkey Faces West: A Turkish View of Recent Changes and Their Origin* and *Conflict of East and West in Turkey*. I will particularly focus on *The Turkish Ordeal* as compared to *Nutuk* in terms of its content and style of interacting with the readers, and will explore the ways Halide Edip challenged Atatürk’s historical account. Halide Edip’s autobiography, written as a backlash to Mustafa Kemal’s *Nutuk*, is significant not only for articulating her political criticism of Atatürk but also for constituting an alternative account of the historical events. Halide Edip challenges Atatürk’s account both through content and also by using certain literary and narrative devices.

These texts, which are both memoirs about the same historical period, significantly differ in their content and their style of interacting with the readers. Initially, while *Nutuk* breaks Turkey’s ties to the Ottoman past, Halide Edip’s autobiography highlights the importance of the cultural continuity between the Ottoman Empire and the new Turkey. Nostalgic for the Ottoman past, Edip emphasizes the loss of social values, morals, and spirituality with the disappearance of the sense of cultural ties to the Ottomans. She claims that Mustafa Kemal desecrated the Ottoman past so that he could present himself as the founder of the new Turkey, the father of all reforms and the sole prophet of Turkish history. For instance, *Nutuk* opens with Atatürk’s implicit juxtaposition of the Ottoman sultanate-caliphate and the Ottoman cabinet’s reaction with that of himself, to the events in the immediate aftermath of the World War I. Along with his depiction of the
harsh conditions that the Ottoman people had to face, he portrays the Ottoman sultan/caliph as an institution that prioritized their own personal interests over the good of state and nation. He states:

The group of Powers which included the Ottoman Government had been defeated in the Great War. The Ottoman Army had been crushed on every front. An armistice had been signed under severe conditions. The prolongation of the Great War had left the people exhausted and impoverished. Those who had driven the people and the country into the general conflict had fled and now cared for nothing but their own safety. Wahideddin, the degenerate occupant of the throne and the Caliphate, was seeking for some despicable way to save his throne, the only objects of his anxiety. The Cabinet, was seeking for some despicable way to save his person and his throne, the only objects of his anxiety. The Cabinet, of which Damad Ferid Pasha was the head, was weak and lacked dignity and courage. It was subservient to the will of Sultan alone and agreed to every proposal that could protect its members and their sovereign.87

In this part, Atatürk not only implicitly presents himself as an outstanding figure who stood against the Allied forces as well as Ottoman State but also justifies his policies and actions to break the ties to the Ottoman Empire. Halide Edip lists Atatürk’s actions, like erasing the names of sultans from history books, eliminating Ottoman history courses from schools, and erasing “tuğras” from mosques and fountains, and criminalizing any expression of affiliation to the Ottoman Empire in order to sever the ties with the Ottoman past and to re-shape the collective memory. Moreover, while Atatürk portrays himself in Nutuk as an unchanged, “prophetlike,” unified, and autonomous figure, Halide Edip’s version of certain events presents Atatürk as “one undergoing change according to

historical exigencies.” For instance, at the beginning of *The Turkish Ordeal*, Halide Edip relates the story how Mustafa Kemal Pasha tried to persuade the sultan to close the parliament to inaugurate a regime of absolutism. According to Halide Edip, Mustafa Kemal’s motive to do so was to become the minister of war. Strikingly, in this story, Halide Edip’s portrayal of Atatürk as one who acted according to historical exigencies subverts Atatürk’s self-representation in *Nutuk* as an unchanging and also unyielding figure who denied all ties with the Ottoman Sultan-Caliphate.

Mustafa Kemal also contrasted himself with other intellectuals who offered different solutions to save the Empire. Besides accusing the sultan and his Cabinet of collaborating with the Allied forces for their own interest, Mustafa Kemal portrayed himself as dissimilar from other intellectuals whose solutions were “limited,” “short sighted” and acquiescence of their “weakness and incapacity.” He lists three options that were suggested by other intellectuals as “to demand protection from England; to accept the United States of America as a mandatory Power; and finally to deliver the country by allowing each district to act in its own was and according to its capability.”

On the other hand, he represents national resistance to create a New Turkish state, “the sovereignty and independence of which would be unreservedly recognized by the whole world” as the *only correct* resolution and as *only his* resolution. He states that:

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This was how I acted. This practical and safe was, however, as may easily be understood, provoked certain differences of opinion of more or less importance, and even the discouragement and dissention which was observable from time to time between us and our most intimate co-workers, differences of opinion, sometimes in regard to principles, at others as to the method of the execution of our programme. Some of my companions who had entered into the national fight with me went over to the opposition, according as the limitation of their mental appreciation led them and their moral courage succumbed in the effort to develop national life to proclaim the Republic and enact its laws. I may add that it was incumbent upon me to develop our entire social organization, step by step, until it corresponded to the great capability of progress which I perceived in the soul and in the future of the nation and which I kept to myself in my own consciousness as a national secret.\(^92\)

As this quotation also shows, besides presenting himself as the “prophet” and the “sole designer” of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal depicts himself as an unchanging figure who “from the first could see what would be the result.”\(^93\) Furthermore, in Nutuk the narrator’s subjectivity was redefined as the whole nation’s subjectivity, which resulted in the fact that Atatürk’s personal memories came to determine the lines of public memory. As the quotation above exemplifies, his use of pronouns shifts between “I, me, my” and “We, us, our” throughout the speech. While giving the names of his opponents/ the others/ “they,” he never specifies whom exactly he refers to when he says “we,” although the reader deciphers the implicit identification of “I” with the nation. Hülya Adak calls this process (I-nation) where “the unified and atomistic self of Mustafa Kemal is conjoined with a unified depiction of the nation.”\(^94\)

Halide Edip’s self-representation stands in stark contrast to the self of Nutuk. Her narrative depicts the gradual intellectual and ideological formation and maturation of her

\(^92\) Ibid, 19- 20.
\(^93\) Ibid, 19.
\(^94\) Adak, 516.
sense of self through her education, reading and encounters with the social and political situations of the time. Through I-nation, *Nutuk* claims to produce an authoritative discourse of reality and an objective account of history. On the other hand, Halide Edip highlights her account as “her version of the events.” In *The Turkish Ordeal*, she states that she tried to make a “human document” about men and women in her life. Halide Edip constructs herself as one among many people and agents of the Turkish nationalist movement, and thus approaches the nationalist struggle as a collective experience rather than an individualist effort. Unlike *Nutuk*’s “never-forgetting, all-remembering” narrator, Halide Edip acknowledges that she forgets just as she remembers. Thus, unlike Atatürk’s pretense of objectivity, she stresses her account as subjective interpretation of reality. Because of its difference from *Nutuk* in terms of style and content, Halide Edip’s autobiography offers new perspectives to writing the history of the years around the founding of the Turkish Republic, which has long been monopolized by *Nutuk*. In line with her critique of Atatürk’s denial of the Ottoman past, Halide Edip also subverts Kemalist discourse on Islam as the ultimate opposite of everything that reform, progress, and civilization stood for. Mustafa Kemal discursively adopted the essentialist typology of the inferior “East” vs. the superior “West” and the Orientalist conceptualization of Islam as backward. In line with the radical break with Islam and the Ottoman past, Mustafa Kemal imagined a pure pre-Islamic Turkic past which had not been corrupted by Islam and the Ottomans.

Halide Edip defines Islam as the defining trait of the authentic self. For her, Islam was not inconsistent with the ideas of modernity and progress; instead, Islam could actually promote progress and civilization. In *The Turkish Ordeal*, Halide Edip claims
that two types of Islamic traditions existed in the Ottoman Empire: one was influenced by Arab and Persian Islam with their emphasis on ritual, spirituality, and intolerance, while the other was a Turkish Islam which was “a practical, utilitarian and private faith.”95 She further states that Turks were “objective” and “tolerant” and also possessed “cool, calculating power of organization and method which characterize the northern and Protestant Christians of the West.”96 While in Kemalist nationalist discourse Islam and Ottomans became an all-purpose evil representing everything that reform, progress, and civilization did not stand for, Halide Edip holds onto the Turkish interpretation of the Islamic faith as a condition for progress and civilization. Indeed this view of the coexistence of two types of Islam in Turkey is also prevalent in Strike the Whore, where Islam could be used both to justify ignorance and at the same time to reach a consciousness that comprehended the unity of souls. The latter interpretation also defines Halide Edip’s conception of Islamic faith. She tries to make the mystical interpretation of Islam the grounding of a humanistic and secular morality. She also offers her interpretation of Islam as a solution to the East/West conflict in Turkey. In her Conflict of East and West in Turkey, she asks,

What is East and what is West? ‘All nations are of one race,’ says Qur-an. It is true, for the anatomy of man is same all over the world. Nor does the immaterial or the invisible part of him, that is his mind or soul, differ in any fundamental way. That there is a difference in his color, features, language, civilization and behavior in different parts of the world, is only due to climactic influences, to specific struggles, to environment as well as to historical impacts.97

95 Halide Edib Adivar. The Turkish Ordeal, (Westport, Conn.: Hyperion Press, 1981), 209-211.
96 Ibid, 67
In line with her utopic desire for a unified humanity, the insistence was on Western or Eastern values, rather than searching for ways for their coexistence would be equally self-destructive. In this respect, she also criticizes ignorance and religious conservatism for their inability to borrow selectively from the West or their meaningless resistance. She calls their practitioner fundamentalists as they reject historical developments and accuses them of misinterpreting the Islamic message. She also criticizes the emphasis on Western intellectual superiority in Mustafa Kemal’s modernization project. According to Edip, he adopted the binary Orientalist construction of East and West as ultimate opposites, and denied Eastern values for the sake of becoming Western. She criticizes advocates of Westernization like Atatürk for their unqualified rejection of eastern values and institutions and their uncritical replacement of them with Western ones. Atatürk’s ultimate denial of Islam as the source of national identity was responsible for the degree of decadence in the cultural life in Turkey. According to her, this was best exemplified through the “images of women” in Turkey. She suggests that Atatürk’s “unselective” and “uncritical” Westernization and “irresponsible” policy to uproot people from their Ottoman and Islamic pasts, was reflected through the excessive alafranga manners the Turkish women exhibited. Although she praises the educational reforms in the new Turkey, she implies that women’s lives were becoming even more dominated and degraded by Western bourgeois cultural values.98 Her critique of modern Turkish women and also Kemalist discourse on women is also eloquently expressed in The Clown and

In this novel, published in 1938, Halide Edip depicts a strong Ottoman woman. The novel is set in a small Istanbul neighborhood during the reign of the absolutist Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876-1909). The novel is based on the story of Rabia, the daughter of a shadow puppeteer, who is known for the beauty of her voice and her deep piety. In this novel, Halide Edip explores the possibility of a modern country where rationality and spirituality, West and East can be in harmony. She tries to investigate this relationship through a love affair between the female heroine Rabia, the Quran reciter, and her piano teacher, an Italian priest. The priest decides to convert to Islam and marries this young woman whom everyone recognizes as being wiser and more mature than most. The love story is an allegory that serves to represent the right combination of East and West that the author deems necessary in order to reach a just and happy society. The novel as a whole reads as a representation of a social imaginary, that of a bygone “traditional” social order. Halide Edip’s depiction of Ottoman women as having strong, unyielding, and independent characters, in a way undermines the Kemalist presentation of Ottoman women as suppressed, weak subordinates. Moreover, Halide Edip sets Ottoman Rabia and her virtues as an opposite to the modern Turkish women who became more dependent and weaker in the “modernized” social order. Halide Edip is reflecting about the past from the vantage point of her observations of Turkey in 1936.

CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

Halide Edip’s discourse as celebration and simultaneous denial of the dominant—mostly patriarchal—discourse made her perceived as an inconsistent and contradictory figure. On the one hand, she has been and continued to be lauded as a patriot, and the ideal “Turkish woman”; on the other hand, Halide Edip is simultaneously depicted as a traitor on the basis of Atatürk’s portrayal of her in his Nutuk. The sanctity of the words and deeds of Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) in Turkish historiography has resulted in the picture of Halide Edip as a “traitor.” Nevertheless, Halide Edip, through her works and deeds, as a nationalist, a women’s rights activist, a modernist, an educator, and a popular novelist, managed to problematize Atatürk’s representation of her as a traitor and resisted against being denied agency in one most important events in Turkey’s history. If she is hated in Turkey today because of Atatürk’s depiction of her as a “mandaci-traitor,” she is also loved and revered because of her deeds and works. For the historian, I have tried to show how, through her undeniable contribution to the Turkish nationalist movement, she was able to problematize Atatürk’s account and to decentralize the “great man” history.

In this study, I emphasized Halide Edip as an intellectual and activist woman who played a critical role in shaping the cultural, ideological and political milieu of 20th
century Turkey that was overwhelmingly male-dominant. I argued that her involvement in the ideological debates through her political deeds and literary writings played a critical role in determining the parameters of the perceptions, discussions, and applications of the major issues of nationalism, the “woman question,” and modernism. Rather than sharing the claim that her engagement with the “West” and the “woman question” failed to exceed the boundaries set by orientalist and patriarchal discourses, I tried to highlight Halide Edip’s ideological complexities that cannot be confined to the uncomplicated categories of secular, modernist, Islamist, feminist, or patriarchal. On the contrary, I stress that Halide Edip generated a discourse through which she negotiated within, against, and beyond the epistemological and ontological categories of the dominant discourses. She lived in circumstances that often demanded a singular mindset, and identification with a singular cause and leader, religion, and people, but she found it difficult to accept these things uncritically without dissent. She wrote in a time when homogeneity prevailed over diversity, a sense of belonging to a constructed group dominated any attempts to achieve a unity of consciousness, and when a progressive future was prioritized over a “backward” past. I observed that her writings insisted on the ideals of diversity, humanity, historical/cultural continuity.

In this particular study on Halide Edip, my aims were two-fold. On the first level, I used her as a site of historical analysis through whose life and works I tried to reconsider a critical period of Turkish history. I approached Halide Edip’s writings in exile within the framework of their potentiality to decentralize Atatürk’s “grand” narrative of Turkish history, and of their challenge to Atatürk as the “sacred,” “prophetlike,” and “sole” leader of Turkey. Secondly, I explored Edip as a critical political figure who supported and
simultaneously questioned the existing discourses and dominant political trends. Rather than reading Edip’s different stances on certain subjects as Edip’s inconsistency, I interpreted this as her complexity and originality. I regard Halide Edip’s discourse as innovative, ‘revolutionary,’ and ‘counter-hegemonic,’ which emphasized interaction, exchange, and commonality rather than hostility, exclusion or “othering.” Through her discourse Halide Edip tried to suggest the possibilities of a common ground where cultures and ideas could meet and merge into each other to create a wider community of humanity and unity of conscience. In this respect, the unbiased interpretations of Halide Edip would inspire alternative views in today’s Turkey where Kemalist ideology has turned into dogmatism, where the aspiration to enter EU has almost become an obsession, and where the discussions of women’s rights is confined to the discussions on veil.
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