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## ON THE RUINS OF OTTOMAN EMPIRES: EDIP ADIVAR'S NARRATION OF THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

### Abstract

Halide Edip Adivar was one of the best-known symbols of the modern, pro-Western daughters of the Republic of Turkey. Through her own life and work, she exemplified how Turkish women should change. One of her greatest works is “The Daughter of Smyrna” (“Ateşten Gömlek”); its story takes place during the war of independence. Women participated in the fight and they encouraged the fighters, similarly to Ayşe, the character from the novel. They were the symbol of Anatolia and Turkey.

In the article, the context of the war of independence is briefly sketched. Then, the figure of Halide Edip is presented with the special attention paid to the period of her fight by Mustafa Kemal's side. In the last part, the figures of the women presented in the book are analysed. The important questions asked in the article concern the similarities between the author and the characters created by her and how modern Turkish women living in the Republic of Turkey at the beginning of its existence should have looked.

**Keywords:** Halide Edip Adivar, Ateşten Gömlek, war of independence, Turkish women

It is common in Turkish historiography to claim that it was during the War of Independence that women engaged in the struggle and won the right to vote at the beginning of the Republic. For decades, there has been an official narrative cutting off the heritage of the Ottoman Empire from the Republic of Turkey and presenting Turkish women, as if the change in their position and situation had not happened in the Ottoman Empire and the changes in mentality were not the result of previous changes. The standard example of the ‘modern woman’ was the writer Halide Edip Adivar. Not only through her life, but also through her work she indicated the way Turkish women follow. This article is intended to present

Halide Edip Adivar and the national liberation war depicted in her works, but with special attention to what Halide Edip and Turkish women drew from by engaging in the war, where their involvement came from. It is precisely pointing out that Halide, like her contemporaries, was an Ottoman woman, and this part of the change should not remain a *tabula rasa*. Therefore, it is worth asking ourselves whether the war for independence not only led to the creation of the state and increased its importance on the international arena, but also gave a voice to the other half of Turkish society, i.e., women, or whether they were already involved before and that they then stood up to fight as the aftermath of the changes of the Ottoman Empire?

#### CHANGING THE SITUATION OF OTTOMAN WOMEN BY EXAMPLE HALIDE EDIP: WRITER AND FIGHTER

Halide Edip Adivar was perceived as the symbol of the birth of Turkish (at the beginning Ottoman) feminism. This statement seems to be quite overstated as she was not the only person who at the turn of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey fought for the rights of women. In those times in the country of sultans there were other influential, well-educated women, but the memory of them is not as common as of Halide Edip. Her novels still sell in thousands of copies and are translated into foreign languages. It would not be an overemphasis to call Halide Edip the national Turkish writer, as maybe not all Turkish people love her novels, but all of them know them. She wrote about women showing their problems and not forgetting about the difficulties of lower social classes. It is also important that despite the fact that it is considered a symbol of Turkish women's rights, she was born and shaped her personality during the Ottoman Empire, as well as all the founders of the republic, including Mustafa Kemal. So it is worth taking a look at what influenced this. The more so because when looking at her autobiography, one can receive the impression that when describing her life she distanced herself from the feminine, and in novels such as "Ateşten Gömlek", while giving a voice to women, she ignored the feminine side of most of her protagonists?

Halide Edip was born in 1884 in Istanbul<sup>1</sup>, in the high social class. Her father, Mehmet Edip Bey, was a secretary of Sultan Abdul Hamid II (1876–1909) and her mother Fatma Bedrifem Hanım died when the girl was around 3 years old<sup>2</sup>. At the beginning, Halide was taught at home. Halide Edip was able to study at that time not only because she came from a family that made it possible for her, but also because the Sultan allowed and even ordered the education of women at that time. Women's education was already initiated by the reforms of the *Tanzimat* period (1839–1876), in 1869 compulsory education for boys and girls was introduced, and vocational schools for girls were also established (e.g., Teachers'

<sup>1</sup> İpek Çalışlar, *Halide Edib – Biyografisine Sığmayan Kadın* (İstanbul: Everest Yayınları, 2010), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Kemal Öztürk, *Halide, Tutku, Hüznün, İsyan* (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2009), 32.

College for Girls)<sup>3</sup>. In 1871, 17 schoolteachers studied at universities as teachers in schools for students in Istanbul. They were pioneers of Turkish teachers.

In the academic year 1893/1894 she started her education at the American College for Girls. It was a school run by American missionaries, with English as a medium of instruction. In 1901, Halide Salih (later Halide Edib Adivar) was the first Muslim student to graduate from the College (At that time, college was allowed to award B.A. and B.Sc.)<sup>4</sup>. However, she was not the first Muslim to study at this prestigious school. In 1890, when the school was still a high school (not a college) the first Muslim graduate, Gülistan İsmet Hanım, daughter of an army colonel, completed her studies. After the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, the College happily welcomed more Muslim students, who were now allowed legally to attend foreign schools; in the same year, the College formally ended its missionary affiliation and declared its status as private, secular, non-religious, institution of higher education, thus positioning itself to welcome a new generation of religiously diverse students. It is interesting that Halide grew up in the milieu of religious and ethnic minorities of the Ottoman Empire, she wrote a lot about it herself in her autobiography, but at the same time in her novels such as “Ateşten Gömlek” she does not mention it, as if she indicated who a Turk was between the lines.

The involvement of women in public life was an important achievement of the 1908 revolution. The first texts addressed to women began to appear in 1868, but it was the Young Turkish period that saw the development of the press published for women (and often by women). The first magazines for women appeared, the most famous was the magazine “Women” (“Kadınlar”), published in the years 1908–1910, edited by Fatma Aliye, and “The World of Women” (“Kadınlar Dünyası”) published from April 1913 to 1921<sup>5</sup>. Aynur Demirdirek mentions that for the period prior to the establishment of the Republic, it is possible to identify forty publications<sup>6</sup>. Halide also became involved in the activities of the Ottoman press, already the wife of a renowned mathematician and the mother of two sons, she joined the editorial board of “Tanin”, the newspaper established in 1908<sup>7</sup>. There, Halide met the leading Turkish writers of that time, and she made her first attempts at writing. What may seem interesting is the fact that Halide wrote at home, as she was “not emancipated enough to go to the headquarters of the newspaper”<sup>8</sup>. This fragment shows that women had already appeared in social life, but it was news that frightened them a little.

<sup>3</sup> Yucel Gelişli, “Education of women from the Ottoman Empire to modern Turkey,” *Journal for Labour and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe* 4, 7 (2004): 126.

<sup>4</sup> Çalışlar, *Halide Edib – Biyografisine Sığmayan Kadın*, 39.

<sup>5</sup> Erdinç Gülcü, Samiye Tunç, “Osmanlı Basın Hayatında Kadınlar Dünyası Dergisi,” *Çankırı Karatekin Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 2, 3 (2012): 161–165.

<sup>6</sup> Aynur Demirdirek, “In Pursuit of the Ottoman Women’s Movement,” in *Deconstructing Images of “the Turkish Woman”*, ed. Zehra Arat (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 32.

<sup>7</sup> Halide Edip Adivar, *Mor Salkımlı Ev* (İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 2009), 156.

<sup>8</sup> Halide Edip Adivar, *Memoirs of Halide Edib* (London New York: Century Co., 1926), 263.

The emancipation of women became a symbol of the modernisation of society and the country. Arranged marriages, polygamy, and the segregation of sexes were seen as constituting the major obstacles obstructing the liberation of women<sup>9</sup>. It is very important that it was women educated and brought up in the Second Constitutional Period who shaped the young Republic of Turkey and influenced the changes taking place in it. Ziya Gökalp, the founder of Turkish nationalism and a poet with the Committee of Unity and Progress, believed that women were the treasury and guarantor of the past<sup>10</sup>. Halide Edip worked closely with him in the period 1911–1915. In 1912, during a congress, the organisation *Türk Ocağı* granted Halide Edip membership<sup>11</sup>. She was the first woman in this group. Halide realised that a thorough, modern education was needed to change society. Under the Young Turks, Halide Edip became the main inspector of the female schools<sup>12</sup>. She fought for the abolishment of corporal punishment and for a greater focus on sciences and languages, such as English or French. In 1912, Halide Edip went to Great Britain. During this stay, she wrote the novel “New Turan” (“Yeni Turan”). The text described a political and nationalist utopia in which women could vote and work. It was a liberal and democratic New Turkey, where the upper classes were not degenerated by luxury<sup>13</sup>. Interestingly, Halide “transferred to paper” the views of other women of her time. In 1911, the so-called “White Congresses”, in which women also took part and talked about their situation and rights. It was a movement for the emancipation of women founded by a small group of upper- and middle-class women, but it perfectly shows that Halide was part of the changes in the consciousness of women that began with *Tanzimat* and evolved.

The real change in the role of women happened at the beginning of the 20th century, when the Ottoman Imperium was torn by wars, and women grew a sense of national belonging and also became involved in them. During the First Balkan War, a large part of Istanbul's inhabitants left the city for fear of Bulgarian troops. Halide Edip stayed in the city to contribute to the Society for the Improvement of the Situation of Women (*Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti*) and to look after the wounded together with other women<sup>14</sup>. This women's association was founded by teachers and well-educated women. They focused on self-development, organised, inter alia, French and English lessons for female members, as well as open classes for a limited number of Turkish women, including topics related to raising children and improving housework. The association focused on usability and philanthropy.

<sup>9</sup> Elif Gözdaşoğlu Küçükaliçoğlu, “Narrating Turkish Women’s Past: Intersections of Nationalism, Gender and Modernisation,” *Ufuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 9, 17 (2020): 114.

<sup>10</sup> Katherine Elizabeth Fleming, “Women as Preservers of the Past: Ziya Gökalp and Women’s Reform,” in *Deconstructing Images of “the Turkish Woman”*, ed. Zehra Arat (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 128.

<sup>11</sup> Çalışlar, *Halide Edib – Biyografisine Sığmayan Kadın*, 98–99.

<sup>12</sup> Çalışlar, *Halide Edib – Biyografisine Sığmayan Kadın*, 351.

<sup>13</sup> İnci Enginün, *Halide Edib Adıvar’ın Eserlerinde Doğu ve Batı Meselesi* (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1978), 35.

<sup>14</sup> Adıvar, *Mor Salkımlı Ev*, 197.

The women organised a small hospital (thirty beds) and looked after the wounded in the Balkan War. It was the first time in the history of the Ottoman Empire that women dressed foreign men, and it caused quite a scandal<sup>15</sup>.

The beginning of the 20th century was a series of military conflicts for the citizens of the Ottoman Empire, from the war with Italy over Libya, through the Balkan wars up to the outbreak of World War I. Women had to deal with many problems, including the lack of a male family member who was the only one working or representing them in official matters. As in other countries of the world, World War I changed the situation of women as they had to replace their husbands, fathers, and brothers in factory work. During the war, the Ottoman authorities, the Red Crescent's Women's Centre, and several women's organisations participated in campaigns to improve the fate of the soldiers, such as the one for "winter presents" (i.e., knitting hats and gloves, or sewing long johns) launched only a few weeks after the mobilisation of August 1914 and repeated a year later during the Battle of Gallipoli<sup>16</sup>. It was not possible to establish a nursing school, but first aid courses for women were organised, in which the wives and daughters of Ottoman officials participated. At the end of the war, over a thousand "Turkish" women and girls were working as clerks in public or private institutions. It was the same with Halide Edip, during World War I, she worked as a teacher and inspector. By then, Halide Edip as an inspector visited schools in Lebanon, Beirut, and Damascus<sup>17</sup>. Only when staying in these provinces did the writer discover the poverty of such places. In 1916, at the invitation of Cemal Pasha, Halide Edip travelled to Lebanon and Syria to open a school. She opened two schools for girls and an orphanage in Arab provinces. She did not return to Istanbul until March 1918.

On 20th October 1918 the leader of the government, İzzet Pasha, signed the unconditional surrender of the Ottoman Empire, known as the Armistice of Mudros. Several days later the British soldiers entered Istanbul and the occupation of the capital started<sup>18</sup>. Based on the entry allowing the winning countries to take over any part of the Ottoman Empire "if safety reasons would require that", the Turks kept losing territories. One of the most hurtful moves was the landing of the Greeks in Izmir on 15th May 1919<sup>19</sup>. The government in Istanbul was fully incapacitated by the invaders and many activists of the Young Turks were arrested or exiled. The war for independence was unique, as the feeling of injustice and

<sup>15</sup> Adivar, *Memoirs of Halide Edib*, 335.

<sup>16</sup> Nicole van Os, "Women's Mobilization for War," 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, accessed January 21, 2022, [https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/womens\\_mobilization\\_for\\_war\\_ottoman\\_empire\\_middle\\_east](https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/womens_mobilization_for_war_ottoman_empire_middle_east).

<sup>17</sup> Svetla Ianeva, "Female Actors, Producers and Money Makers in Ottoman Public Space: The Case of the Late Ottoman Balkans," in *Ottoman Women in Public Space*, ed. Ebru Boyar, Kate Fleet (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2016), 69.

<sup>18</sup> Hüner Tuncer, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı Oslanlı Devleti'nin Sonu* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2016), 137-144.

<sup>19</sup> Süleyman Tekir, Selçuk Ural, "Batı Anadolu'da Yunan İşgali Ve Aydın Muhacirleri (1919-1920)," *Cumhuriyet Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi* 13, 26 (2017): 128.

the fear of losing a sovereign homeland aroused nationalism also among women who were actively involved in the defence of the state.

Halide Edip was informed that Izmir was occupied by the Greeks by Miss Dodd, her teacher from college, who called her in the morning on 16th May 1919 and asked whether she was worried about Izmir very much<sup>20</sup>. Halide engaged herself in the fight for independence, at the beginning speaking at rallies concerning Izmir. It was the beginning of her career as a speaker<sup>21</sup>. Just one of the most dramatic manifestations of women's national activity was the large-scale meetings where women addressed the masses. In her memoirs, she describes the speech in the prestigious school that she had attended as her first one. The conference room was overcrowded. Halide writes that the faces of the female representatives of the Christian minority were satisfied, she saw triumph and eminence on them. Dressed in black, she went on stage and started talking to the gathered people. Despite the fact that she felt like she had been going to be executed, she understood how important such undertakings were<sup>22</sup>. This is especially interesting because before the Revolutionary War, Halide can be seen as a real Osman. Educated in secular schools with representatives of minorities, knowing several foreign languages, including Greek. Caring for the development of education in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Even with her second husband, Adnan Adıvar, they helped their Armenian friends safely leave the country. Here you can see her transformation into a Turkish woman and putting its national identity first.

Her most famous appearance was in the meeting of SultanAhmet held on the 23 of May of 1919. During the rally in the district of Sultanahmet, where 200,000 people were gathered, the Turkish writer spoke again, describing the Wilson's Twelfth Point, which concerned the autonomy of different nationalities living in the Ottoman Empire<sup>23</sup>.

[...] The rally took place in the district of Fatih. We were to talk from the balcony. Is it possible that the entire crowd was listening to my voice? When I was thinking about this dramatic issue, I forgot my fear. On the building, the red flags with the star and crescent were fluttering...<sup>24</sup>

After that day, Halide became a symbol and went down in the history of Turkey<sup>25</sup>. She became so popular in Turkish society that she was seen as the Turkish Joan of Arc<sup>26</sup>. She was the most influential woman among Turkish patriots, a great speaker, called in the British press of the epoch an inciting and dangerous agita-

<sup>20</sup> Halide Edip Adıvar, *Turkish Ordeal* (New York–London: Century Co., 1928), 17.

<sup>21</sup> Halide Edip Adıvar, *Türkün Ateşle İmtihanı* (İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 2017), 38.

<sup>22</sup> Adıvar, *Türkün Ateşle İmtihanı*, 36.

<sup>23</sup> “8 January, 1918: President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points,” The Avalon Project, accessed April 23, 2020, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/wilson14.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp).

<sup>24</sup> Adıvar, *Türkün Ateşle İmtihanı*, 37–38. The quote in the translation of the author of the text.

<sup>25</sup> Enginün, *Halide Edib Adıvar'ın Eserlerinde Doğu be Batı Meselesi*, 48.

<sup>26</sup> Grace Ellison, *Ankara'da Bir İngiliz Kadını* (İstanbul: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1999), 245.

tor<sup>27</sup>. Many other women joined the resistance movement against foreign occupation and organised rallies similar to those in Istanbul across Anatolia. Halide stayed in touch via letters with Mustafa Kemal, who just after landing in Samsun (19th May 1919) wrote a letter to her proposing a meeting. Halide sent her response on 10th August, writing about her wish to go to Ankara. From that moment, she remained under his orders<sup>28</sup>. The writer was becoming increasingly dangerous for the padishah and the British occupying Istanbul. There was a risk of her being sent to Malta, so together with her husband and sons she escaped to Anatolia with a plan to get to Ankara, to Mustafa Kemal. On 15th March 1920 they had to leave their house in Istanbul, because Doctor Adnan discovered that “the British would stage a coup in the evening”<sup>29</sup>. On 16th March 1920 at the station in Gevye (nearby Sakarya) she met the journalist Yunus Nadi (Abaloğlu), together with whom on 6th April 1920 she established the first Turkish press agency – Anatolia Agency (*Anadolu Ajansı*)<sup>30</sup>. Her task was to support the Ankara government by disseminating information about the war of independence. During the Turkish war of independence, Halide tried to reinforce the government in Ankara and help in every possible way.

After the first battle of İnönü (6th–10th January 1921) Halide together with a group of officers went to the hospital in Eskişehir to take care of the wounded there. In the Second Battle of İnönü (23rd March–1st April 1921) women played an important role. They carried weapons, ammunition, food, and beverages for the fighting soldiers (frequently, also heavy missiles or bags with wheat or flour, weighing several dozen kilos)<sup>31</sup>. These women are often depicted in civilian clothes with children in their hands. On the one hand, it is a demonstration that they were not associated with any armed formations, but rather it was a “mass mobilisation”, helping society for those fighting for their homeland. On the other hand, it is a symbol commonly read in Turkey that the sanctity of the motherland is greater than the sanctity of motherhood and that even a child should be sacrificed for the freedom of the country. Şerife Bacı is just such a symbol, she carried cannonballs with her daughter Elif. She died of hypothermia, because she covered her with her own sweater so that they would not get wet.

Halide still worked at the hospital. After the victorious battle she returned by train (together with Mustafa Kemal) to Ankara<sup>32</sup>. On 5th August 1921, Mustafa Kemal Pasha became the commander-in-chief<sup>33</sup>. Eleven days later (on 16th Au-

<sup>27</sup> “Turk Nationalists Organize to Resist”, *The New York Times*, 20 March 1920, accessed April 16, 2020, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1920/03/20/118311807.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> Ahmet Ercilasun, „Halide Edip Adivar ve Milli Mücadele”, in *Tarihi Değiştiren Toplumcu Dönüştüren*, ed. Alev Karaduman, Gonca Gökalp-Alpaslan, Pelin Şahin-Tekinalp, Meltem Teki (Ankara: Hacettepe Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayını, 2016), 10.

<sup>29</sup> Adivar, *Türkün Ateşle İmtihani*, 71.

<sup>30</sup> “Kuruluşundan Bugüne Anadolu Ajansı,” *Anadolu Ajansı*, accessed April 16, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/p/tarihce>.

<sup>31</sup> Adivar, *Türkün Ateşle İmtihani*, 204–205.

<sup>32</sup> Enginün, *Halide Edip Adivar'ın Eserlerinde Doğu be Batı Meselesi*, 63.

<sup>33</sup> Ayferi Göze, *Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı ve Devrimi Tarihi* (İstanbul: Beta Basım Yayın, 2000), 101.

gust) Halide was enlisted in the Western front<sup>34</sup>. She took part in the Battle of Sakarya, which took place from 23rd August to 12th September 1921. For her courage, she was promoted to the rank of corporal (*onbaşı*)<sup>35</sup>. However, she was not the only Turkish woman who fought with weapons in hand, in this context it is worth mentioning Kara Fatma, who even received the task of forming a militia unit in which 43 women served. In Halide Edip's memoirs, she writes about that time: 'Up to the moment of the great entry of the Turkish army to Izmir in 1922, nothing mattered. I was no longer an individual. My work, writing, life became a part of the grand national madness.'<sup>36</sup>

#### THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE IN THE WORK OF HALIDE EDİP

During the War of Independence, Halide Edip wrote and published the book that has remained her most popular book until today in Turkey, "Ateşten Gömlek", the English title of which – "The Daughter of Smyrna" – better represents the content of the novel. It tells the story of a woman who fights for her homeland and two men who are in love with her<sup>37</sup>. The novel is told through Peyrami's words<sup>38</sup>. During the battle of Sakarya, he lost two legs and now he lies in hospital in Ankara. There is still a bullet stuck in his head and he dies at the end of the story, when it is being removed from him. The male narrator is here a clever trick aimed at giving the impression that the characters, including women, are seen through "male eyes" and not by the author. Halide Edip creates female characters who are interested in political issues, do not resist changes and transformation, and try to participate more actively in social life. There are two female characters in the book. Firstly, there is Ayşe, the idealised woman, the symbol of the National Fight. Her husband and son were killed after the Greek army entered Izmir<sup>39</sup>. Lightly wounded, she escapes to Istanbul, where she takes part in the rallies concerning Izmir, during which women from the capital go together with labourers<sup>40</sup>. These rallies were practically the uprising: "the fire of the lightning was burning in the eyes under almost 50,000 black *çarçaf*."<sup>41</sup> All participants were carefully dressed, shaved, they were going with heads leaning as if in a religious rite<sup>42</sup>. Writing about rallies, Halide writes about a phenomenon that she herself was a part of. Here, she emphasises national unity and solemnity, as if she wanted to indicate to the reader that the fight for war is like religion. The

<sup>34</sup> Adıvar, *Türkün Ateşle İmtihanı*, 232.

<sup>35</sup> Adıvar, *Türkün Ateşle İmtihanı*, 253.

<sup>36</sup> Enginün, *Halide Edib Adıvar'ın Eserlerinde Doğu be Batı Meselesi*, 47.

<sup>37</sup> Necati Mert, "Ateşten Gömlek'i Yeniden," in *Türk Dili. Dil ve Edebiyat Dergisi* 57 (2015): 113–116.

<sup>38</sup> Eniginün, *Halide Edib Adıvar'ın Eserlerinde Doğu be Batı Meselesi*, 220.

<sup>39</sup> Halide Edip Adıvar, *Ateşten Gömlek* (İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 2009), 37.

<sup>40</sup> Adıvar, *Ateşten Gömlek*, 42.

<sup>41</sup> Adıvar, *Ateşten Gömlek*, 45.

<sup>42</sup> Adıvar, *Ateşten Gömlek*, 43.



“women in black *çarçaf*” are very important here, their participation in the rally is a symbol that they are also rightful parts of Turkish society, they no longer sit at home, they are fighting for their homeland. After escaping from the capital, she joins the army of Mustafa Kemal and helps as a nurse in a field hospital. Working in a hospital and caring for wounded soldiers is another of Halide Edip's own experiences described in the book.

Ayşe is presented as a strong, smart and educated woman, for whom the good of the country is more important than her own. She is a nationalist, a strong and abiding woman despite her pain and suffering. In the conversation with the British correspondent, Mister Cook, she says that the English should declare an amnesty to the harmed rather than the harming<sup>43</sup>. She becomes the symbol of courage and bravery of all women during the war, as the Turkish blood is red and hot like the fire<sup>44</sup>. One aspect that Halide described “between the lines” is very important, namely Ayşe, how many women during the war were most likely raped. Rape in the war was at the root of the anxiety. The fact that everyone knew at the time, and Halide Edip spoke about it in her novels and short stories, was that far more women had the traumatic experience of rape than had taken up arms. The myth of a strong and independent Turkish woman emphasises male characteristics and deliberately desexualises and militarises the identity of women, as a coping mechanism, both recognising the inability of men to protect them and denying that rape actually took place. The inclusion of this aspect in the novel was very important as Halide broke some taboo and talked about the different kinds of suffering that war causes for women.

Peyrami describes Ayşe as a woman in a black dress, with dark hair, pale complexion, who looks like an ancient ivory sculpture. Her white and black colours are broken through green eyes, filled with pain, and big red lips<sup>45</sup>. On her face full of worry there is no anxiety but rather something depressing. Much attention is paid to her green eyes, which are compared with the olive groves surrounding Izmir<sup>46</sup>. She becomes the object of love of two friends: Peyrami and Major İhsan.

The second female character presented in the novel, remaining in the background, is Kezban. She is presented as a young peasant woman with deep green eyes, dressed in long shawl and red galligaskins<sup>47</sup>. Her rural background is emphasised by the fact that she does not wear shoes (she has bare feet)<sup>48</sup>. Despite this, she is seen as a pretty woman (not a child anymore), slender and round of body<sup>49</sup>. The women are often juxtaposed with each other. Ayşe has an urban accent, which distinguishes her from Kezban, who has a rural accent. Both women lost their loved ones, who had been killed by the Greeks. Kezban lost her

<sup>43</sup> Adıvar, *Ateşten Gömlek*, 52.

<sup>44</sup> Adıvar, *Ateşten Gömlek*, 53.

<sup>45</sup> Adıvar, *Ateşten Gömlek*, 46.

<sup>46</sup> Adıvar, *Ateşten Gömlek*, 39.

<sup>47</sup> Adıvar, *Ateşten Gömlek*, 88.

<sup>48</sup> Adıvar, *Ateşten Gömlek*, 93.

<sup>49</sup> Adıvar, *Ateşten Gömlek*, 117.

father and mother, so she is lonely and terrified, and at the same time unrequitedly in love with İhsan, who loves Ayşe. It causes a jealous outburst from the rural girl: when İhsan takes Ayşe to Eskişehir, Kezban cries and begs them to take her as well, because she does not have anybody in the world<sup>50</sup>. She tries to bribe İhsan into loving her, giving him fresh milk, fruit, or a yogurt<sup>51</sup>. However, he treats her like a sister. Ayşe is already a mature Turkish woman, she has undergone a change in her, and Kezban is just growing up to the role of a modern woman. This compilation, frequent in Halide's works, aims to highlight the desired characteristics. At this point, it is very clear how Halide is praising male qualities and condemning female qualities at the same time. Kezban is shown as emotional, madly in love and weak, so compared to Ayşe she is not mature enough. Ayşe is shown as so strong that despite the rape, the loss of her loved ones, she does not give up, but helps the wounded and is completely devoted to the cause, as if she had no emotions. Halide, like other Turkish writers of her period, tried to write very factually. Even in her biography, she gives dry facts and pays attention to political events rather than private ones, completely ignoring her feelings and emotions<sup>52</sup>.

These two women have nothing in common, except for the eye colour that symbolises Anatolia. Ayşe is devoted entirely to the War of Independence, putting her own emotions in the background. She is the symbol of the country and the entire nation; when Peyami sees her for the first time, he uses the phrase "İzmir comes"<sup>53</sup>. She experiences a powerful character arc from a woman taking care of a child to a woman who puts up a fight, learns how to ride a horse, and fights on the front line. Everything she does is connected with the fight for her nation, she gives lessons, does lace and sells it to earn money for the combat and in her spare time she makes socks for the children of refugees from her city<sup>54</sup>. Ayşe is a tragic figure; she promised to marry İhsan when the Turkish army entered Izmir, but they are both shot and they die next to each other in torment. It is interesting that Halide so emphasises the role of Ayşe at the same time very humbly writing about her role in the War for Independence. As if she considered herself unworthy of such a large role in the history of the world written by men. Speaking of her speech at the College of Girls, she called herself a "little shabby black figure", concealed under a *çarçaf*<sup>55</sup>.

Kezban takes part in the fight only to be closer to İhsan. Ayşe is an good, smart, elegant woman, for whom infatuated men fight. Kezban is presented as a rural woman who has to fight for the feeling of the man whom she loves. It seems that these characters are created to be the opposites of each other.

<sup>50</sup> Adıvar, *Ateşten Gömlek*, 93.

<sup>51</sup> Adıvar, *Ateşten Gömlek*, 90.

<sup>52</sup> Hülya Adak, "Suffragettes of the empire, daughters of the republic: women autobiographers narrate national history (1918–1935)," *New Perspectives on Turkey: Special Issue on Literature and the Nation* 36 (2017): 31.

<sup>53</sup> Adıvar, *Ateşten Gömlek*, 39.

<sup>54</sup> Adıvar, *Ateşten Gömlek*, 59.

<sup>55</sup> Halide Edip Adıvar, *The Turkish Ordeal* (New York: The Century Co., 1928), 18.

Halide Edib, like other Turkish nationalists, argued that women's rights were part of Turkish nationalism and the Turkish Revolution, therefore the Western feminist model was necessary to change women's lives<sup>56</sup>. But on this insight one can disagree with Durakbaşı, because the feminism depicted in this novel was not “Western” it was a demonstration of the sacrifice of conscious women who treat their homeland like a child and devote themselves entirely to it. It does not undermine the traditional role of women as wife and mother, but indicates that in order to be a good mother who brings up responsible children, women must be educated and socially and politically engaged.

The book “Ateşten Gömlek” was written during the War of Independence. Halide cleverly describes Turkish women and their concerns in a specifically male voice to make them more “audible”. In it, she shows the “birth” of a modern Turkish woman responsible for her homeland. Halide, however, creates women tailored to the “male pattern”, at the same time trying to match this pattern all the time. What is most puzzling, however, is that Halide writes in such a way that she ignores the involvement of other, contemporary women. As if everything would be focused on her. As a result, and her position in Turkey, it is often actually forgotten that, apart from her, there were also other Turkish women who were involved in the defence of the motherland.

## CONCLUSION

The War of Independence is also called the national war due to the great effort and devotion of the Turkish people, including Turkish women. Halide Edip Adivar showed by her life and her work that women were on the front line during the War of Independence and together with men they built the modern Republic of Turkey. The writer was a role model, but simultaneously she created other role models in her work. As a result, she created the characters of her novels to influence the reader and build their national identity. Halide, like many other authors and politicians of that period, idealised what was analytical, including Turkish women. During the War of Independence, they cut themselves off from their Ottomanness (as opposed to the broken and degenerated ellipses close to the Sultan) and awakened their Turkish national feeling. Anatolian women were idealised as genuine, simple, upright, hardworking, morally pure and independent.

It was crucial to show that the new army as well as the new nation would be functioning without discrimination. The intellectualists would unite with the people from the countryside. Everybody could adopt the models of the “West” without losing their own values. It seems that Ayşe and Halide have much in common, they both fight, take part in the rallies, risk their life for victory. On the

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<sup>56</sup> Ayşe Durakbaşı, *Halide Edip Türk Modernleşmesi ve Feminizm* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2021), 196.

other hand, Ayşe is without doubt a tragic figure who loses her loved ones and finds her destiny in fighting; she devotes herself entirely to it, giving up her love (which depends on conquering Izmir). Finally, she dies, making a sacrifice of her own life. Halipe Edip created a heroine – a symbol and role model for future generations of Turkish women. Ayşe's opposition, Kezban, is a simple rural woman, good, but valuing more the love for the man rather than for the country. She is a secondary character, but it shows that despite the attempt to influence the entire society, in the novels of Halide Edip there were also many references to the life she knew.

Halide Edip writes a lot about women, as if giving them the floor, but at the same time she hardly mentions other women involved in the fight for independence or fighting for women's rights, as if she were the only feminist of her time and the only woman actively involved in the fight for independence. Realising this shows us Halide Edip in a different light, not as a fighter for women's rights, but as a woman who wanted to “grow up” to the male world and also jealously guarded her place in it. As if talking about other women working for the emancipation of women about her side took away her uniqueness.

The War of Independence was one of the most important events in the history of the Republic of Turkey and undoubtedly Halide Edip Adivar is one of its most significant writers. Her work “The Daughter of Smyrna” still strongly influences future generations of the Turkish people.

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