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## Halide Edib's Anti-War Stance in *Masks or Souls*

*Halide Edib'in Maske ve Ruh'taki Savaş Karşıtı Duruşu*

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## Abstract

In *Masks or Souls* written by a well-known woman novelist and feminist activist, Halide Edib Adivar in 1945, the world problems and threats encountered are approached from the perspective of Nasreddin Hodja, one of the important figures of Turkish humor and philosophy in the thirteenth-century. Her being influenced by the philosophy of Nasreddin Hodja in Akşehir inspired her to write such a work in this style. The major people in the play are William Shakespeare and Nasreddin Hodja. Halide Edib develops a fantasy about sending these two personalities to the world after death, and events develop in this direction. Consisting of a prologue and four acts, *Masks or Souls* is a work in which fragmentary expression is preferred, which does not depend on time and space elements. Spaces can be classified as earth and the hereafter or earth and sky in general. Criticizing the top-down structure of the reforms and westernization process that took place immediately after the declaration of the Turkish Republic in 1923 throughout the play, Halide Edib closely experienced the material and spiritual two-way nature of people in the war environment as a person who personally experienced the destructive effects of wars on the shaping of the soul and body. During the voluntary exile period that she preferred during her maturity years, she saw the east and the west on her trips to America and India and made a comparison. She wanted to bring together the writers and personalities she was influenced by and reveal the true face of the human being hidden behind masks because the meanings of the concepts of “good” and “bad” are intertwined. The objective of this paper is to show how *Masks or Souls* epitomizes Halide Edib’s anti-war stance and pacifist nationalism as an example of anti-war literature.

**Key Words:** Halide Edib, *Masks or Souls*, anti-war, modernization, racism, mechanization

## Öz

*Halide Edip Adivar'ın 1930'larda yazdığı Maske ve Ruh' ta, karşılaşılan dünya sorunları ve tehditlere Türk mizah ve felsefesinin önemli isimlerinden Nasreddin Hoca'nın bakış açısıyla yaklaşılır. Akşehir'de Nasreddin Hoca'nın felsefesinden etkilenmesi, ona bu üslupta böyle bir eser yazması için ilham vermiştir. Oyundaki başlıca isimler Shakespeare ve Nasreddin Hoca'dır. Halide Edip, bu iki kişiliği öldükten sonra dünyaya gönderme fantazisi geliştirir ve olaylar bu yönde gelişir. Bir önsöz ve dört perdeden oluşan Maske ve Ruh, zaman ve mekân unsurlarına bağlı olmayan, parçalı anlatımın tercih edildiği bir eserdir. Mekânlar, dünya ve ahiret veya genel olarak yeryüzü ve gökyüzü olarak sınıflandırılabilir. Oyun boyunca, 1923 yılında Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin ilanından hemen sonra meydana gelen tepeden inme reformları ve batılılaşma sürecini eleştiren Halide Edip, savaşların ruh ve bedenini şekillenmesindeki yıkıcı etkilerini bizzat tecrübe etmiş biri olarak, savaş ortamında insanların maddi ve manevi iki yönlü doğasını yakından tecrübe etmiştir. Olgunluk yıllarında tercih ettiği gönüllü sürgün döneminde Amerika ve Hindistan gezilerinde doğuyu ve batıyı görmüş ve bir karşılaştırma yapmıştır. Etkilendiği yazarları ve şahsiyetleri bir araya getirmek*

ve anlamları birbirine karışmış “iyi” ve “kötü” kavramlarına bağlı olarak maskelerin ardına gizlenmiş insanın gerçek yüzünü ortaya çıkarmak istemiştir. Bu makalenin amacı, savaş karşıtı edebiyatın bir örneği olarak *Maske ve Ruh*' un, Halide Edip'in savaş karşıtı duruşunu ve pasifist milliyetçiliğini nasıl örneklediğini göstermektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Halide Edip, *Maske ve Ruh*, savaş karşıtı, modernleşme, ırkçılık, makineleşme

### Halide Edib's Anti-War Stance in *Masks or Souls*

*Masks or Souls* was written as an absurdist play in 1945 and published in 1953 by a prominent woman novelist, playwright and feminist activist, Halide Edib Adıvar; however it was not staged. In the play, the world problems and threats encountered are approached from the perspective of Nasreddin Hodja, one of the important figures of Turkish humor and philosophy. Her being influenced by the philosophy of Nasreddin Hodja in Akşehir inspired Halide Edib to write such a work in this style. The major people in the play are Shakespeare and Nasreddin Hodja. Halide Edib develops a fantasy about sending these two personalities to the world after death, and events develop in this direction. Consisting of a prologue and four acts, *Masks or Souls* is a work in which fragmentary expression is preferred, which does not depend on time and space elements. Spaces can be classified as earth and the hereafter or earth and sky in general. Criticizing the top-down structure of the reforms and westernization process that took place immediately after the declaration of the Turkish Republic in 1923 throughout the play, Halide Edib closely experienced the material and spiritual two-way nature of people in the war environment as a person who personally experienced the destructive effects of wars on the shaping of the soul and body. During the voluntary exile period that she preferred during her maturity years, she saw the East and the West on her trips to America and India and made a comparison. She wanted to bring together the writers and personalities she was influenced by and reveal the true face of the human being hidden behind masks because the meanings of the concepts of “good” and “bad” are intertwined. The objective of this paper is to show how *Masks or Souls* epitomizes Halide Edib's anti-war stance and pacifist nationalism as an example of anti-war literature.

Although Halide Edib is a very well-known historical figure and one of the most distinguished intellectuals of the early Republic, very little research or analytic criticism has been directed toward her literary works and philosophical views. The unstaged play *Masks or Souls* is one of Halide Edib's lesser-known works. In her book *Biyografisine Sığmayan Kadın*, İpek Çalışlar indicates that Halide Edib sent her English friend, Arnold J. Toynbee her play *Masks or Souls* (to be translated as *Maske ve Ruh* into Turkish). She dreamed of having this play performed on European stages by a

name like Laurence Olivier. Halide Edib explained the play she wrote to Toynbee as follows:

In 1935, my publisher's opinion was that it was not of the kind to interest the English reader. I was told that both the Russians and the Germans were eager to buy the book. However, I refused, knowing that they would turn it into ideological propaganda. After my return to Turkey, a highly modified version of the play was serialized in the weekly magazine *Yedigün* in the year 1937-38 and it was published as a book in 1943 (Çalışlar, 2010: 443).

Halide Edib asked Toynbee his opinion about the staging of *Masks or Souls* in overseas countries as indicated by Çalışlar: “Now I feel that the psychological atmosphere is appropriate for such a play. I wonder if I asked you to read the play and express your opinion on this issue, would I be asking too much? If Laurence Olivier plays the Nasreddin Hodja or Shakespeare character of this play, would she not make a big success in England or America? (Çalışlar, 2010: 444) *Masks or Souls?* was to be published in England in 1953, but the staging of the play would remain a dream. *Masks or Souls?* reflects Halide Edib’s anti-war perspective regarding totalitarian regimes from the perspective of Nasreddin Hodja, the Turkish folkloric comic figure. Laughing is a salve to the alienation due to the mechanization of human beings. The binary opposition of ‘machine versus individual’ is a cornerstone of the play. Halide Edib uses wit and humour to elaborate her criticism of human problems, be they religious, political, social or cultural. As expressed by Hülya Adak in her article entitled “Unsettling the Canon of the Theatre of the Absurd: Halide Edib’s *Masks or Souls?* and Its Other Lives”, “every society on earth seems to be going through a disease of mechanization, homogenization, eradicating all creativity, subjectivity, individuality, and freedom of thought” (Adak, 2018: 278). Thus, this play has a symbolic relevance for Turkish and world literature.

The universal messages engage with various cultures, races or regimes in the play and impose a burden of representation. There is a stress on ‘peace’, as well as on criticisms of modern nation-states. The topics explored include modernization, resistance to totalitarian regimes, and binary oppositions in society. The inefficiency and absurdity of social reforms are discussed throughout. Indeed, the reforms were “meant to encompass all social and cultural practices, from bureaucratic correspondence to the language of education in secondary schools and universities. In time, however, literature was affected the most, for the obvious reason that the reform interfered with the medium of expression” (Parla 2008: 28). On the other hand, Halide Edib was worried that under the modernist *idée fixe* of the ‘single nation’ (or monoculturalism); the soul of humanity was endangered. Halide Edib thought that for ethnic and cultural diversity, Anatolia resembled India, and regarded the rich cultural

histories of both as threatened. Gandhi similarly considered a multi-cultural and multi-religious society as enriching (Saban, 2016: 47). The play also condemns Timur and Timurlane, whom Halide Edib uses to stand in for her critiques of the regime of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (the founder of modern Turkey) criticizing the autocratic rule and absolutism associated with it based on the language reform regarded as “catastrophic success” (Lewis 1999) by some scholars or historians. Combined with the principles of the Turkish History Thesis, the Alphabet Reform led to the obliteration of the Ottoman past. In accordance with the Turkish History Thesis,

The Turks were a white, Aryan people, originating in Central Asia, the cradle of all human civilization. Owing to the progressive desiccation of this area, the Turks had migrated in waves to various parts of Asia and Africa, carrying the arts of civilization with them. Chinese, Indian, and Middle Eastern civilizations had all been founded in this way, the pioneers in the last named being the Sumerians and Hittites, who were both Turkic peoples. Anatolia had thus been a Turkish land since antiquity (Lewis, 2002: 359).

As the historian Etienne Copeaux emphasizes, the “invention of history” is not a trivial issue in the history of Kemalism. Utterly distressed and ruined by a long period of wars and violence, the move of Anatolian people from Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic is associated with loss of territory. However, that loss meant more than only a loss of territory. Copeaux refers to the idea that “some form of accounting (or recounting) for that loss was needed. Kemalists thus promptly dug up an already existing historical account thought up by the first Nationalists, and used it as a reassuring rationale. They thus provided the remaining Anatolians with some *direction*, some *sense* to all this, although not by pointing towards a future, but towards a new past, which was supposed to permanently set a monolithic and deeply rooted Turkish identity” (Copeaux, 2016<sup>1</sup>). In 1935, the “Sun Language Theory”, which claimed that all the languages in the Eurasian continent were rooted from the Turkic, came as a perfect cap to the edifice of the “Turkish History Thesis”. Thus these theories meant a putsch in history studies while they required ahistoricizing history, with the invention of a new national history, including collective memories of heroic deeds (Copeaux, 2016). Through these theories Copeaux wanted to demonstrate how far nationalism can go in making use of history as in the example of that aspect of cultural Kemalism that aimed to legitimize Turkish nationalism.

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<sup>1</sup> Etienne Copeaux, “Turkish Nationalism and the Invention of History—Part 2,” *Repair*, October 19, 2016, <https://repairfuture.net/index.php/en/identity-other-standpoint/turkishnationalism-and-the-invention-of-history-part-2>.

*Masks or Souls* is a play that, as an example of anti-war literature, reflects Halide Edib's pacifist nationalism. Halide Edib was critical of Mustafa Kemal's regime in Turkey and opposed certain ideas present in the military and intellectual ruling circles. Through acerbic comments given to characters in her plays, she expressed opposition against the westernization process and the imposition of reforms that followed the declaration of the Turkish Republic in 1923. In her article entitled "Unsettling the Canon of the Theatre of the Absurd: Halide Edib's *Masks or Souls?* and Its Other Lives, Hülya Adak explores the various versions of *Masks or Souls?* by focusing particularly on their political content. She also provides new trajectories for studying absurdist drama and contextualizing the noncanonical *Masks or Souls* within the European and Ottoman Turkish contexts. Adak asserts that "through the Language Reform history is constructed and written anew, and all liberal thoughts are prohibited" (Adak, 2018: 286) and refers to a critique of the various regimes such as Stalinist totalitarianism, post-totalitarian states, European fascisms, and Turkish dictatorships through the character Mr. Timur representing Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in the English version of the play (*Masks or Souls?*) after the spirit of Timurlenk metempsychose into the body of Bay Timur:

Timur: We have already done it here. No one can read the old things. We have changed the script and refrained from putting the old into the new as much as we could. Our past culture lies in dusty collections of museums. . . .Twenty years of leisure and hard work won't suffice to decipher it. No mind has useless curiosities on the eve of the twenty-first century. . . . We control all thought, we even write the history we want to teach according to our own whims (Adivar, 1953: 84-85).

Language reform and the change of alphabet made Ottoman texts and Arabo-Persian scripts incomprehensible to Turkish readers. They all contributed to obliterating the Ottoman past and automatically led people to lose their sense of belonging and their connection to their own history as suggested by Halide Edib throughout the play. As referred by Jale Parla in her article entitled "Wounded Tongue: Turkey's Language Reform and the Canonicity of the Novel", an important modernizing project of the Kemalists was language reform, which had the object of severing the people's ties with the Ottoman past and constructing a new national identity based on a total embrace of Kemalist principles" and unfortunately "the project succeeded in obliterating the past by making it inaccessible to the generations born after 1925" (Parla, 2008: 28). Like Gandhi, Halide Edib was both a nationalist and a pacifist. Based on her internationalist pacifist stance, Edib's aim in her writings was also to create a compromise between the cultures of the East and the West. In addition, she constantly stresses the importance of the human soul and spiritualism, as opposed to extreme materialism and mechanization as hinted at in her interview with Gandhi. Halide Edib castigates racism, Europeanness and the modernization imposed on non-

western cultures, as well as criticizes oppressive social hierarchies. Halide Edib also analyses the ways in which oppression has alienated human beings from their individual and collective/cultural souls, the restoration of which she considered a necessary solution to humanity's problems, including depression, sadness and remorse. The conflict between the East and the West over the binary split between soul and matter is explored. The character Nasır, in his dialogue with Seyk, implies that the West and the East had changed their historic roles; while the West had become bored of matter and started to explore the soul, the East had resigned its intimacy with the soul and re-oriented itself towards matter. Halide Edib saw in this East-West dichotomy an analogy of the soul-machine for individuals, with the implication that, in an interdependent relationship, each required the other to progress and become successful. Halide Edib wanted to criticize the antagonism this construct drew, while also emphasizing the ambiguity between the two, drawing them closer to each other. The character of Nasr comes closest to representing Halide Edib's personal perspectives. Timur claims that humanity will reach happiness materially through a mechanistic governmental system based on science and technology. Seyk opposes his ideology and asserts that humanity's real ingenuity is in finding harmony between different opinions, rather than creating a soulless society that demands that individuals look alike or have the same ideas, seeing this as killing their souls and making them puppets amenable to manipulation by the machinery of the state. In Act IV, Scene I, Karel describes Christian civilization as one of mechanization and self-abasement, oriented towards satisfying the needs only of the stomach and the physical body. Karel warns Olga against imitating the artificial, soulless civilization of foreigners.

In Act IV, Scene V, Şekispir sarcastically expresses that the world is full of mechanized people wearing flesh masks, driven by their anxiety to feed their stomachs. In the twenty-first century, the belief in the 'soul' is regarded at a minimum as foolish, or even as a cause for alienation. The ways in which Halide Edib transliterates the names of her characters alludes to connections, comparisons and proximity between the eastern and western figures or personalities, in terms of their philosophies. Şekispir is Nasreddin Hodja's greatest supporter in defending the soul. The way in which the characters of Şekispir and Nasreddin Hodja are drawn indicates that Halide regarded the figure of Shakespeare as representing the East and the soul, despite wearing the mask of the West. Through Shakespeare's appearance to Şeyk, Halide Edib uses Shakespeare to express the adoption of eastern philosophy in preference to westernization. Nasreddin Hodja's appearance to Nasr illustrates her comparison between Nasr, who tries to serve the new order by vacillating between his soul and mask but fails to fulfil his duty, and Nasreddin Hodja, who succeeds.

In Act III, Scene I, the character of Ibn Khaldun explains that it is not possible to completely alienate mortals from their souls, because the soul is not a temporary germ or disease but the basis of existence. Human beings cannot survive without souls, as

they are part of invisible existence. The ability to create, develop and live lies in a person's soul. Ibn Khaldun stresses that the human soul has created the human world. The principal message to be given throughout the play is that masks are temporary, whereas souls are eternal. Although some characters like Remziye are inclined to ignore the past, old traditions, religious values or underestimate relics like Nasreddin Hodja's tomb for the sake of modernization, some characters like Selime favour maintaining their adherence to old traditions or customs for social and personal peace, happiness and satisfaction. Lady Remziye Bektay, the wife of Akşehir's governor, imitates the West and mixes being innovative with being a formalist. As she was biased against different cultures, she exhibits a racist attitude. She adopts changes without questioning or thinking a lot on them. While talking with her daughter Selime, Remziye reveals that she persuaded her husband to have the outdated tomb of Nasreddin Hodja transformed into a playground for children after a long period of insistence. However, Selime protests, saying that old people used to love the former appearance of the building. At this point, feelings surpass the desire for mechanization, which is the symbol of modernization. In response to this, Remziye says: "yes, old people always love useless things, bad things. The actual modern age will start when we are practically minded to get rid of not only the old, useless buildings, but also the old people" (Adıvar, 1968: 85). Suggesting she was not narrow-minded, Remziye asserts that she was in favour of new, modern things but that she was against superstitious ideas. She even talks scornfully: "then what I will have our Mr do next is to ban the gypsy dance, the gypsies from walking on streets. What is happening to these gypsy melodies when there is civilized music like jazz?" (Adıvar, 1968: 86). Sacrificed for a mechanized culture generation, gypsies symbolize a destroyed culture. Remziye associates the conversion of Nasreddin Hodja's tomb into a playground for children with how modernization ushers in a world wherein nature is devastated for the sake of technology.

It can be seen that Halide Edib was against this idea (robot humans) in her various novels, and this issue was best addressed in *Masks or Souls* (Enginün, 2007: 400-401). In the play, while discussing the meaning of soul and modernity with Selime, Nasir expresses that "there is a revolt against the material values, machine civilization all around the world" (Adıvar, 1968: 93). Sarcastically, Selime criticizes his way of talking: "right, there are writers who speak in this way here, but you cannot talk about it like that. (Mimicking the voice and condition of her mother) The machine is still the embodiment of the world and the uniform of civilization" (Adıvar, 1968: 93). Nasir responds: "you remind me of Seyk. He says that there is a secret power in the world which wants to transform people into automatons and kill the souls of people" (Adıvar, 1968: 93).

Furthermore, Halide Edib resorts to dialect in *Masks or Souls*, particularly in the character of Nasreddin Hodja. In this play, Halide Edib gave place to Nasreddin

Hodja's local speech and view of life from the perspective of the fourteenth century in defence of traditions, local culture and moral values as opposed to the sanctions of the materialist world. As regards the source of inspiration for *Masks or Souls*, Halide Edib said she was very influenced by Nasreddin Hodja's philosophy during her journey to Akşehir during the War of Independence, and years later, she wanted to write a play that looked at life from the perspective of Nasreddin Hodja. "The fatigue caused by the affairs that threatened the civilized world and civilization before the war gave me the desire to look at these through the gaze of Nasreddin Hodja" (Adivar, 1945: 38). The play fictionalizes events from the fourteenth and twenty-first centuries and deals with Nasreddin Hodja and Shakespeare as heroes, who together evaluate world affairs and the course of the age, and as representatives of the common values of humanity. By comparing the East and the West, they make a universal criticism of human history. Adak comments:

*Maske ve Ruh* tries to illustrate the absurdity of the human condition and the failure of mechanization and robotization with rational arguments [...] In the last scene of the play, the dialogue suggests the possibility that Şekispir and Hoca might return to earth to organize a soul revolution. At least, Şekispir's ability to appeal to audiences with a humanitarian mission and Hoca's didactic, satiric, and moralistic anecdotes have not yet become entirely meaningless. The possibility still exists that poet, playwright, and satirist carry the potential to communicate (Adak, 2018: 279-280).

In her article entitled "Dialogism between East and West: Halide Edib's *Masks or Souls*?" Bernadette Andrea also analyses Edib's choice of Shakespeare and Hoca as soul mates. Andrea asserts that Hodja's "sage humor enabled the synthesis of masks and souls that renders him the forebear of Shakespeare's wise fools" (Andrea, 2006: 6). Furthermore, towards the end of the play, the transposition of Shakespeare into the name "Shake" is no coincidence as it is a homonym for "Shaykh," which means a Sufi spiritual teacher. In this way, Halide Edib dialogically assimilates the English "Bard" into the Turkish Islamic idiom of Nasreddin Hodja (Andrea, 2006: 6). The Turkish humourist and folk philosopher Nasreddin Hodja is a constructive figure to restore hope and peace in *Masks or Souls*. The play depicts the disappearance of soul in the new world order in which material is in first place. In the play, which touches on the contradiction of masks and souls, the relation of traditionalism/modernity, the destruction of individuality, creativity and original thought, the mechanization and banality of men obsessed with order and the loss of soul, culture, traditions, and the enjoyment of life by creating uniform methods of behaviour and thinking are mentioned. In the play, the character of Shakespeare clearly reveals that he liked Nasreddin Hodja as he did not feel bored near him by referring to his witty intelligence (Adivar, 1968: 67), and he says he would liken Hodja to his Falstaff character if he had

a bigger stomach and a red face by confessing that Hodja looked like a strange guy (Adivar, 1968: 64). From this comparison between Shakespeare (his Falstaff character) and Nasreddin Hodja, it is obvious that Halide Edib was highly influenced by Shakespeare since she read and translated a great many of his works. In *Memoirs*, Halide Edib writes of him:

There is no Christian feeling in Shakespeare. He is a man, clearly chanting the creative manliness of his barbarian ancestors, toning them down to harmony, indeed bringing into formal beauty the chaotic ideals of their dreams and struggles, and painting them in terms with which every human being in every decade of history may become familiar (Adivar, 2005: 179)

*Masks or Souls* is very significant for noting Halide Edib Adivar's growth from a nationalist to a pacifist humanist perspective. In her article "An Epic For Peace" in the part "The Dialectics of National Struggle and International Peace", Hülya Adak relates that Halide Edib, who was considered to be on the line of ethnic nationalism in history and was always opposed monoculture, conflicted with Turans over many issues such as the 'Armenian relocation' and made a call for war because she regarded the War of Independence as an anti-imperialist struggle but with a pacifist approach by making humanist the many cases in which she had witnessed the brutality of war. In her article, Adak mentions that there are swings between military power and anti-war feelings in the writing of Halide Edib, giving important female writers like Virginia Woolf as examples. In both Adak and Boyd's related articles, it is said that Halide Edib adopted a completely pacifist attitude just before World War II, and these views are located in the English version of the play *Masks or Souls* and were already partly available in the earlier Turkish version. That is one of the last works of Halide Edib, who loved theatre, and the fact that she expressed her pacifist thoughts in a theatrical form should be considered.

The issue of dictatorship, which is one of the main themes of the play *Masks or Souls*, is about the changing world order after wars, in addition to being an expression of the problems the author experienced under the Kemalist regime. Autocracy, dictatorship, and leadership concerned Halide Edib not only as an activist, but also as a literary woman. Dictatorship is the other name of the encirclement that tries to capture the soul of man. The concept of dictatorship in the play is applied not by surrounding the world as it was in many cases in history, but by killing diversity in the human psyche and multiculturalism in the new order, where even the death penalty is removed. The concept of being the only leader in *Masks or Souls* is related to dominating or capturing the subtleties of the human soul, rather than dominating the whole world physically. In the version of the play *Masks or Souls* that was rewritten during World War II, the concept of dictatorship was identified with Mussolini and Hitler, but in its first version

it is expressed in a putatively democratic regime, endorsing multiculturalism and individuality.

The main conflict of the text, based on the story that Nasreddin Hodja wants to go back to the world one more time and take his donkey with him before going past heaven after his death, refers to the duality between the soul and the mask. The dichotomy, which is generally expressed as soul and body in philosophy and literature, is here discussed with the terms of soul and mask. The idea that it is not possible for the soul to disappear completely in the world but is frozen by being masked in one sense is dominant in the whole play. Modernization does not penetrate human spirit but eradicates all expressions about human being by covering the face of a person as a mask. Just as there is an intensive effort to mechanize human beings in the world, so there is an intense effort and power conflict not to abandon the world in the afterlife. The dramatic conflict of the play is not the conflict of people. The play will be interpreted in a deeper way if it is seen as a struggle of spirits that refuse to leave the world despite hostility and war. Nasreddin Hodja's philosophy is a symbol of tolerance, smiles, and lightness; the new regime is also hidden underneath this mask. He resorts to every method to keep spirits up. The most important of these methods are externalization, isolation and the imposition of a monolithic culture. Fertility, contrary to mythology, is not a symbol of blessing but of mechanization. Youth is not a reporter of change, but a persistent organizer of a strict order.

The theme of mechanization in the play is not based on just one type of thought and behaviour. The inability to speak one's own language, the inability to apply traditions, the impossibility to sing one's own songs, even not being able to dance in the way of one's own cultures, serving a will that one does not actually choose, are all extensions of mechanization. In the main conflict of the play, men conflict with the order that they themselves created. Moreover, since they are the victims of a machine that they themselves developed in this process, it is not easy to beat the enemy. Men have become the victims of the machine and dictator that they themselves created. Halide Edib embraced individualism and individual freedom as a world vision. In order to clearly understand the author's works and worldview in *Masks or Souls*, the idea of individualism needs to be investigated in detail. "Personality matters not only in *Masks or Souls* but in all her works. Personality means a person who does not consent to domination and pressure. The social commentary refers to democratic people who do not allow the totalitarian regime" (Enginün, 2000: 84). Nükhet Sirman depicts Halide Edib from a new perspective, saying: "the meta-narrative behind Halide Edib's novels and intellectual writings can be labelled as 'liberal humanism'. For Halide Edib, nationalism should be assessed as only one stop in this adventure" (Durakbaşa, 2000: 242). Durakbaşa underscores that Halide Edib defended the human and individual understanding of humanism and she thought that human values could be reached by knowing and internalizing one's own culture.

*Masks or Souls* was written in the period when the author oriented herself from nationalism to an anti-war attitude and, most importantly, when she believed most in individualism. She disagreed with Ziya Gökalp about Turanism and developed a different understanding of nationalism. In her understanding of the rights of the individual, the rights of minorities and the rights of women were always among the major issues under consideration. Halide Edib Adivar objected not only to westernization as an intellectual ideal, but also the creation of the confusion of concepts and the loss of the soul by mixing national and spiritual values with formality. Writing the preface to the second edition of Halide Edib Adivar's *Conflict of East and West in Turkey* in 1946, Dr. Ensari states that Halide Edib had an East/West dilemma. He articulates: "the main contention of Halide Hanum that the East has succumbed to Western aggression owing to its inability to organise its material and social life, cannot be challenged. And if she maintains that this has been one of the fatal consequences of the over-emphasis on spirit, she states no less clearly that over-emphasis on the material side of existence is proving equally disastrous for the West" (Adivar, 1935: iv).

The typical eastern house in which Halide Edib lived, the problems of her period and her education brought her faces to face with the West. Those who experienced this conflict personally either become the copies of the West by denying the East and their own culture, or take shelter in the old days, as they do not risk encountering new responsibilities. Halide Edib was thrown into battle and became victorious. She conceived the core values of the West. These are freedom, organization and social cooperation. In addition, she united these with the comprehension of the spiritual harmony whose foundation can only be in the East, the love behind every kind of hatred and the union beneath all the pieces. (Enginün, 2007: 397)

As humans are substances of matter as well as spirit, civilization, which owes its birth to the East, has risen with the values of the West. The play *Masks or Souls* was based on this perspective (Dicle, 2014) agreeing *Masks or Souls* emphasizes the danger of racism in the world. In the second act's first scene, Nasreddin Hodja talks with dark-skinned angels, and Halide Edib's script reads: "Angels sing songs, and the language of the song is just one language spoken in Heaven, so everybody can understand each other. The music recalls the hymns of African blacks that date from the time when they were captive, evoking a sadness that touches the heart" (Adivar, 1968: 57). Two angels with coffee-toned faces appear under a date tree, and Hodja asks them why that place is part of the old world. The angel answers: "here it is called the 'African Dream'" (Adivar, 1968: 58). When Hodja wonders why that place is full of black faces, the angel explains: "the black faces suffering from difficulties from white faces go to the land of white-faced angels which is the more luminous side after resting and get accustomed

to the air of heaven. Even we never leave here” (Adivar, 1968: 58). Expressing her dislike for the world, the angel tells Hodja that she had been born in a cotton field in the American South where black slaves toiled in captivity, and although a white man rescued them, she died (Adivar, 1968: 59). Halide Edib opposed racial discrimination and the murder of people because of their religion, race or origin. As she wrote in a letter to Crane in 1919, “I do not mind whether the names such as Enver and Talat are Turkish, the names such as General Antranik are Armenian, the names such as Venizelos are Greek. The murdered person is a murdered figure. Whether they are Turkish, Greek or Armenian, changes nothing. The anguish that people suffer does not change with race or creed” (Adivar, 1919). In Act II Scene II, the turquoise-winged angel introduces the representative of the black coloured ones to Nasreddin Hodja. Hodja asks the representative who has just visited the world: “what is going on in the World?” The representative narrates: “in the old days, there was a religion that separated human beings from each other in the World, but when they came here, that separation used to be lifted. Now a thousand diversities separate humans from each other. The biggest one is colour and race discrimination. The yellow man, the black man, Ari' Turani, I do not know what the named races are, all separate everybody from each other” (Adivar, 1968: 60-61). Hodja realizes that this representative is Bilal-i Habeşi when he suddenly starts the call to prayer.

In *Masks or Souls*, which can also be considered as an example of anti-war literature, we come across the war that Halide Edib fought against different ideologies such as racism, anti-imperialism and dictatorship within the military and intellectual milieu of Turkey as well as her critique of the reforms and the westernizing project that was carried out immediately after the declaration of the Turkish Republic in 1923. The play makes a criticism of not only contemporaneous governments in Europe but also the top-down nature of the reforms implemented by the Kemalist regime, which caused pessimism and frustration in Halide Edib. She criticizes the process of westernization and the structure of reforms through the comments of a surprising cast of characters, including Shakespeare, Socrates, Bay Timur, Ibn Khaldun and Tamerlane. Halide Edib uses the binary oppositions of soul and body to discuss the decreasing importance of the soul among mortals in the modern world from the perspectives of such historical personalities and existential philosophers as Socrates, Shakespeare, Ibn Khaldun and Nasreddin Hodja. She deals with the issue of the “human spirit” as the only concern of mortals now, and the *Baskan* (President) elucidates the problem of the whole world and reflects the removal of the soul either as the cause of the confusion in the world, according to the defenders of Plato, or as the only solution to get rid of worldly troubles, according to their opponents. After taking an active role as a fervent nationalist in Turkey's War of Independence, considered as an anti-imperialist struggle against the Allies by Halide Edib, Halide Edib transformed into a pacifist during World War II. Considering the gloomy

atmosphere in Europe and her own complicated feelings and experiences in war and exile, she intended to write this play from the perspective of the peacemaker Nasreddin Hodja. In his preface to Edib's lectures delivered at the Institute of Politics at Williamstown, Massachusetts, Edward Mead Earle explains Edib's views as follows: "Although she was a Turkish Nationalist—embracing nationalism as the only emotional and moral force capable of saving the Turkish people from complete domination by Allied and Greek imperialism—she is of the opinion that 'political nationalism is as ugly as any other creed which tends to make men exterminate each other'" (Adivar, 1930: xi).

The character of Nasreddin Hodja in *Masks or Souls* assumes the mission of connecting the cultures of the Islamic East and the Christian West with each other by enabling a cross-cultural dialogue. Throughout the play, we realize that Halide Edib creates contrasts, such as the spirit versus body/matter, culture versus technology, or traditions versus mechanization. In the symbolic city of robots and machines, Halide Edib draws the image of an ideal world just based on science. Especially in Act III Scene VII, Halide Edib creates a city made up of a nation which will crush the head of the dragon with seven heads called "the past" and which will adjust life according to the rules of science and technology. Mr Timur wants to send Nasır to Kalopatya, which is the city of machines and robots, for the purposes of exploration. Şeyk is also sent to this city for business, and he explains he will write an essay on this city after his exploration. Mahir asks Mr Timur to send Ms Zehra to this city as a typist. The Governor introduces Ms Zehra as a primary school teacher in Akşehir, and she spends her time making her students sing the song "I want to mechanize" in Akşehir Park every day. Zehra is a mechanical teacher who instructs her students to sing monotonous songs in the park, which had formerly been Nasreddin Hodja's tomb before the restoration. Mr Timur is associated with Timurlenk, but he does not accept this by claiming that Timurlenk was a ruler who wanted to see the world under his own feet by making everything depend on himself, and that he himself is more modern with his peaceful ideology that opposes wars and fights. He asserts that they encouraged cooperation and consensus among nations while they desire to establish a state mechanism that cares about the happiness of the people within the nation. Mr Timur imagines the mechanism of the state that he will lead as follows:

Dominating the world with swords and punches cannot be named 'modernity'. When they die, their works die with them, whereas the world we build will be a powerful state mechanism that is so far from personal and arbitrary influences and will be so based on the science and technique that it will not lose its form and strength as long as the world exists. We will not just give happiness to the people, but we will put a blessing on that happiness forever (Adivar, 1968: 102).

However, Şeyk opposes Mr Timur's ideal of the state by asserting that the world will be transformed continuously and that people will ask for very different and various things as long as the thing called 'spirit' remains everlasting in humans because future generations will find Mr Timur's state mechanism old-fashioned. According to Şeyk, "ingenuity is not to compare the thoughts of people to the series of articles that repeats itself as if people were twins born from a single womb and their faces are the same as if a mask made of flesh were put on them but to find a harmony between this otherness. The ingenuity is to murder the souls of the people without regarding them as puppets which the state mechanism plays with and pulls their strings behind them" (Adivar, 1968: 102). Adivar's treatment of Turkish folk figures such as Nasreddin Hodja referred to her romantic vision of folk tales, stories or jokes as profound expressions, and a humorous understanding of, the human condition.

## Conclusion

Adivar's *Masks or Souls* reflect both her anti-war attitude and her support of the ideals of individualism and individual freedom. She thought that the harmonious union of spiritual and material values was fundamental for civilizational development. She criticized formalism and imitation in reform movements seeking to transform society. Based on the principle of liberal humanism, she endorsed social reforms for the elevation of the living standards of people in an egalitarian society that has a balanced order between its material and spiritual values and promises its individuals more freedom in terms of rights, expression of opinion, and national independence. Halide Edib criticized the structure of the reforms through the comments of a surprising cast of historical figures in *Masks or Souls*. With her play *Masks or Souls*, Halide Edib both reflects her anti-war, pacifist stance in life and her outlook on totalitarian regimes from the perspective of the legendary Turkish comic figure Nasreddin Hodja. Referring to the pacifist aspect of her nationalism, the play questions racism, European identity, materialism and the modernization followed by non-western cultures, addressing all humanity in search of happiness. The main message of the play is that souls are eternal, while masks or bodies are temporary. The play contains Adivar's testimony, views and present-day prophecies related to the situation and matters of the world in a specific period of history and deserves closer attention as it presents us a different outlook on Edib's works exemplifying anti-war literature as well as being associated with nationalist discourse or women's literature. Halide Edib's intellectual connections, international exchanges or transnational intersections with prominent political figures or thinkers contributed to her depiction as a "pacifist and internationalist" (Hasan, 2010: 206), as portrayed by Mushirul Hasan in his recently published book entitled *Between Modernity and Nationalism: Halide Edip's Encounter with Gandhi's India*. Her stress on "keeping the soul" is a key point to defy mechanization in the process in

which “figures, machines, and a mind without a soul are at work” (Adivar, 1930: 246), in her words.

Even if *Masks or Souls* was not staged in the past, it bears great significance in terms of mirroring Halide Edib’s perspective on life, war and people hidden behind masks. Following after a gloomy atmosphere of war, Halide’s absolute nationalism were evolved into pacifist nationalism. Although *Masks or Souls* is one of Halide Edib’s lesser known works, it reflects her anti-war perspective from the perspective of Nasreddin Hodja, together with the character Şekispir, who represent the sublimity and superiority of the Eastern philosophy and the soul over the West and mask symbolizing extreme materialism and mechanization. Throughout the play Halide Edib wanted to communicate the principal message that souls are eternal, while masks are temporary. She questioned the meaning of soul and modernity in the face of machine civilization. Halide Edib makes a universal criticism of human history through characters from different centuries and countries. As soul mates the figures of Shakespeare and Nasreddin Hodja enabled the writer to make a synthesis of the East and the West. As regards the duality between the soul and mask, Halide Edib put individualism and individual freedom to the center of the play. The political critique of the play underscores the fiascos of European fascisms and the totalitarian regimes in the 1940s as well as Turkish dictatorships.

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