# TOWARDS A LITERATURE OF ABSENCE:

# LITERARY ENCOUNTERS WITH ZABEL YESAYAN AND HALİDE EDİB

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Thesis Abstract

Hazal Halavut, "Towards a Literature of Absence: Literary Encounters with Zabel Yesayan and Halide Edib

This study suggests considering Turkish literature as an *arkheion* and proposes that as *arkheion* it can be approached as a literature of Absence. Rather than what is referred to as Turkish literature today, under discussion is how literature was given a name in the years around the founding of the Republic of Turkey as a nation-state and how it was founded as *Turkish* literature. It was not Zabel Yeseyan and Halide Edib themselves, but rather my encounters with them that opened up the path of this study towards a literature of Absence.

Halide Edib and Zabel Yeseyan who were both born and raised in Istanbul at the end of the 1800's, and despite the disadvantage of their gender became leading figures though their careers as writers in their communities— the first in the Turkish and the latter in the Armenian community—are depicted in this study only through my personal encounters with them. Refusing to see Yesayan and Edib as *historical* figures, this study is the narrative of my refusal to compare them, or conduct a comparative analysis of them. This study which is about encounter and absence, and *approaching* these in the field of literature is a response to my literary encounters and the absence I came across while trying to respond to these encounters.

Instead of history's question "What happened in 1915?" I propose a new question to be taken up through literature: what did *not* happen in 1915? By primarily reading non-literary texts and reading Halide Edib's novel *The Shirt of Fire* in the light of those non-literary texts, I aim to lay bare the relationship between this foundational text and the textual foundation of the absence of Absence.

Tez Özeti

Hazal Halavut, "Yokluk Edebiyatına Doğru: Zabel Yesayan ve Halide Edib'le Edebi Karşılaşmalar"

Bu çalışma Türk edebiyatını *arkheion* olarak düşünmeyi ve bu *arkheion*'a Yokluk edebiyatı olarak yaklaşmayı önermektedir. Tartışma konusu olan, bugün Türk edebiyatı denildiğinde anlaşılan bütün bir edebiyat değil, bu edebiyatın Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin ulus-devlet olarak inşası sürecinde, nasıl *Türk* olarak adlandırıldığı ve kurulduğudur. Yokluk edebiyatına doğru bir adım atan bu çalışma Zabel Yesayan ve Halide Edib üzerine değil, benim onlarla karşılaşmalarım üzerine şekillenmiştir.

1800'lerin sonunda İstanbul'da doğup büyüyen, kadın olmalarının getirdiği tüm zorluklara rağmen, yazarlık kariyerleriyle biri Ermeni, diğeri Türk cemaatinin önde gelen figürleri olmayı başaran Zabel Yesayan ve Halide Edib, bu çalışmada yalnızca benim onlarla kişisel karşılaşmalarım üzerinden resmedilmiştir. Yesayan ve Edib'i tarihsel figürler olarak görmeyi reddeden bu çalışma, benim onları karşılaştırmayı ya da Yesayan ve Edib üzerine karşılaştırmalı bir analiz yapmayı reddedişimin anlatısıdır. Karşılaşma, yokluk, ve bunlara edebiyat alanında *yaklaşma* üzerine olan bu çalışma, benim edebi karşılaşmalarıma ve bu karşılaşmalara yanıt vermeye çalışırken karşılaştığım yokluğa bir yanıttır.

Bu çalışmayla Tarih'in sorusu olan "1915'te ne oldu?" yerine, edebiyattan doğru yeni bir soru sormayı öneriyorum: 1915'te ne olmadı? Öncelikle edebi olmayan metinleri, ardından Halide Edib'in romanı *Ateşten Gömlek*'i edebiyatın sınırları dışında yazılmış metinlerin ışığında okuyarak, bu kurucu edebiyat metniyle Yokluğun yokluğunun metinsel kuruluşu arasındaki ilişkiyi ortaya çıkarmayı hedefliyorum.

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Finally, I would like to thank and dedicate this study to my mother Fatma. In a previous "acknowledgement" written for my MA thesis at Boğaziçi University's Sociology Department, while dedicating that previous study to her I had written that "she is the one who taught me to listen to people, to hear them." Once again, this study is dedicated to her; she has always been my greatest supporter and teacher, who, through her unique way of living the life, besides teaching me to listen to and hear people, always reminded me to respond to what I hear.

*No matter how near you come, you will remain distant.*
*No matter how often you  are killed, you will live.*
*So do not think that you are dead there, and alive here.*
*Nothing proves this or that but metaphor.*
*Metaphors that teach beings the play of words.*
*Metaphors that form a geography from a shadow.*
*Metaphors that will gather you and your name.*

Mahmoud Darwish, *In the Presence of Absence*

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# INTRODUCTION

The title might be deceptive. This study is not about Zabel Yesayan. This study is not about Halide Edib. Neither is this study a comparative analysis of these two women writers' lives or literature. This study is only a response to my encounters.

I will repeat this many times. It all began when I encountered Zabel Yesayan. It began and could not begin with this encounter. That is how all the others started, all the other encounters, all the others' encounters. Then one by one, with each of them a new beginning came and could not begin. Yes. It all started like this; beginnings which could not begin. Now, when I look back, from the conclusion to here, to this introduction I also see that, the same way that the beginning did not begin, the ending also could not end. There is no conclusion. There is no introduction. There is text, however. And there are the rules of a text. An attempted academic text has more rules. Some, I obeyed, some I did not.

How can I possibly introduce what this text is about? I can focus on some topics that came to the fore in each chapter; and I will do that. But this will not tell you what this text is about. That is why I started by saying what this text is not about. I suppose, this will be an ongoing pattern in this study; telling you what I am not talking about, what I am not asking, what I am not aiming for; and I suppose this is the only way for what remains in between beginnings that could not begin and

endings that could not end. After all, encounters are all I have, for a textual foundation for which I am trying to assign a beginning and an end.

The only thing I can introduce in this introduction is that the form of this text bears some resemblance to its content. There is a construction, certainly, but the construction is constantly under construction; in each chapter, each section, in every single title that construction changes form. This is my response to the encounter. Each encounter asks for a different response and I tried to respond to each of them differently, contextually and particularly.

This study is not about Zabel Yesayan neither is it about Halide Edib. This study refuses to see them as historical figures. This study only attempts to approach them through personal encounters, literary ones, those taking place here and now. This study proposes to read my own personal encounters with texts as a text. After all, it all began when I encountered Zabel Yesayan, not her texts.

In the first chapter I will describe the debates, concerns, and issues that have articulated, emphasized and circulated around an attempt for a conference organization, *Ottoman Armenians during the Decline of the Empire: Issues of Scientific Responsibility and Democracy* that was held in Istanbul in 2005. The conference will provide me ground from which to view the basic elements of the context in which the "Armenian issue" figures in Turkey. I will reflect on why the name "Armenian issue" seems to have created a comfort zone in Turkey by enabling a mode of talking without talking about it. In this initial chapter entitled "In the Absence of Literature" by touching on political discourses that are circulating around the "Armenian issue" I will discuss the *historicity* of the issue and why it has been *made* a historical issue and is assumed and forced to be history's issue.

In Chapter 1, an introductory discussion about Derrida's definitions of the *arkheion* and the *archon* will generate a review of the archival debate in Turkey with regard to history and law. Thus, I will propose to set history's question "what has happened in 1915?" aside, and ask a new question through literature: what has not happened in 1915?

In Chapter 2, I will discuss my encounter with Zabel Yesayan which, as I have already said, is the initial and primary source that, in its very incompleteness, gave rise to this study. The essence of this encounter came about through what seems to be a language barrier —I cannot read Armenian and there is only one book in English and in Turkish containing only small pieces from that book, as representative of Yesayan's work. The question whether what seems like a language barrier is a barrier of language really or a barrier of greater things will only be responded to in the third chapter. However, in the presence of this unanswered question, in Chapter 2, I will continue my quest by asking question after question on encounter and on my encounter.

When I encountered Zabel Yesayan, not being able to find a satisfying answer to who Zabel Yesayan was, I had to turn my gaze on the encounter. Sara Ahmed, with her book *Strange Encounters* provided inspiration in terms of the primacy of encounter and the response it asks for. Thus, I will discuss the concept of encounter both as the theoretical and methodological ground of this study; and reflect on my conceptualizations of (inter)textual encounters, the reflexivity of the encounter and literarity of it.

In the chapter entitled "Literary Encounters" there will be a long narrative of me-encountering others' encounters with Zabel Yesayan. It is the story of my quest for filling in the blanks in my encounter with Zabel Yesayan, one cut halfway

through; and it is also a literature review on works about Yesayan written in Turkish and English. This long treatment of the collocation of work on Zabel Yesayan is needed for two reasons: first, in order to shed light on her discovery in Turkey (in the academic scene) and the increase in the attention that was paid her after 2005; and second, in order to interrogate the tendency to compare her with Halide Edib.

Entitled "Missed Encounters," Chapter 3 will basically paint a picture of a *façade* where the basic biographical elements of Zabel Yesayan and Halide Edib's lives will be aligned and an attempt will be made to find parallelisms and differences within this linearity. I will then deconstruct this *façade* that appears to trigger the impulse to compare Yesayan and Edib; and I will look to see what is behind the *façade* and what is behind that impulse. The tendency to draw a parallel between Halide Edib and Zabel Yesayan's lives, either in terms of their leading roles within their communities or with respect to the way they "delineated the Catastrophe" will be discussed in terms of how this tendency stems from a missed and dismissed encounter both with Yesayan and with Edib.

The *façade* I will describe creates an illusionary meeting of Halide Edib and Zabel Yesayan in the year of 1908 regarding their zeal to end the Hamidian dictatorship and begin a new era. That is why I will primarily focus on this year and the following one –which seems to mark a partition—and try to approach Yesayan's and Edib's imagination of the *new,* reading two texts Yesayan and Edib wrote after the massacre of Cilician Armenians. Halide Edib's article "Those Who Died, And Those Who Killed!" was published in *Tanin* on May 18, 1909, and as far as I know was not included in its entirety in any work on Edib or in any collection of her work. I transcribed the text from the original *Tanin*, written in Ottoman Turkish. This article is significant to this study because it is also a response to Marc Nichanian who

asked in *Edebiyat ve Felaket* if there was any response from "Turkish" citizens given to Zabel Yesayan who, in her preface to *Among the Ruins,* called on her Turkish and Armenian compatriots to respond to the massacre of Cilician Armenians (53). However this article of Halide Edib would only be a semi-response to Nichanian because it was written even before Yesayan went to Cilicia and witnessed what the massacre left in its wake.

There will also be another text included in this chapter, again, as far as I know it was not noticed before. A letter signed with the name "Srpuhi Makaryân" was published in *Tanin* on May 26, 1909 as an Armenian woman's response to Halide Edib. It was after encountering this letter that I was able to raise the questions: "what happened to Zabel Yesayan?" and "what happened to Srpuhi Makaryân?" In Chapter 3; I will insist on these questions rather than "what happened to Ottoman Armenians?" which is a question of history. Thus, the language barrier of the previous chapter will be discussed at length here and the need for wandering at the limits of the intangible in order to respond to the encounter will hopefully be manifested.

The last chapter "Shirts and Omissions of Fire," as the title hints, is an analysis of Halide Edib's *The Shirt of Fire* and a reflection on what is the omission regarding this text. However my reading of this novel is a very specific reading since I will not approach the text as a text in itself, but rather try to trace its relation with other texts Halide Edib wrote. Thus, I will finally ask "what is absent in *The Shirt of Fire*?" And I will try to lay bare the relationship between the foundational text and textual foundation. Through *The Shirt of Fire* the question of how Halide Edib accomplishes instituting literature as the site of history writing, will be asked.

Thinking *The Shirt of Fire* as a document in the *arkheion*, in conclusion, I will suggest to approach the *arkheion* as a literature of Absence.

I have already said that this introduction could not possibly tell what this study is about. But I did not say that this is one of the main concerns of this study, the difference between *revealing* something and *approaching* it. Approaching only proceeds gradually and cumulatively. Yet, I want to bring out one single issue that will only be reached at in the end of this study, in this introduction which is not introducing anything.

Who is the subject of absence? Is it the one who is absent? Or is it the one who *feels*, acknowledges the absence? This study has also been a quest for seeking these questions in the field of literature. The sentence is not wrong. Seeking questions rather than answers has been the main motive of this study. Not the questions that were asked, but the ones that could be asked, the questions that are absent were the quest. And once approached, the absence of the absent questions will be another issue to question. But let me return to the initial question of the conclusion now and end this introduction with it: Who is the subject of absence?

# CHAPTER 1

## IN THE ABSENCE OF LITERATURE

In 2005, a conference entitled *Ottoman Armenians during the Decline of the Empire: Issues of Scientific Responsibility and Democracy* was held at Bilgi University in Istanbul. Originally scheduled for May 23, the conference was first postponed after Turkey's then Minister of Justice, Cemil Çiçek's speech before the parliament accused those associated with the conference of "treason" and "stabbing their nation in the back." After strong criticism, especially from the representatives of the EU, with whom Turkey was holding membership talks at the time, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the President Abdullah Gül conveyed that they had no problem with the conference and that, according to the principles of "freedom of opinion," it should not be stopped.

However, the conference, rescheduled for 23-25 September at Boğaziçi University, was postponed for the second time on the eve of its opening, this time by a court order. It was the Union of Lawyers[1] who turned the conference into an occasion for prosecution with the claims of scientific invalidity and insufficient qualifications of its participants. The Union of Lawyers' main charge was that it was inappropriate for Boğaziçi, a public university, to be the venue for such a gathering, that "contravened its mission." Upon hearing this charge, the Istanbul

[1] A nationalist group led by a popular nationalist and racist lawyer named Kemal Kerinçsiz. Kerinçsiz and his group is famous for filling charges about writers, journalists, academicians, intellectuals mostly for "insulting Turkishness" which was a crime according to the article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code until 2008. On april 28, 2008 the article was *reformed* by changing the word "Turkishness" to "Turkish nation".

Administrative Court ruled that a legal investigation of the conference's validity should take place. The conference organizers were notified of the court decision only the day before the conference's opening, and had to make an immediate decision; for Boğaziçi could no longer host the conference without being held in contempt of the court's ruling. Thus organizers shifted the venue to Bilgi University so that the conference could proceed. After almost five months of decisive struggle against politicians, government officials, courts, after hard-liners' threats and public smear campaigns, the conference was at last held on September 24 and 25 at Bilgi.

This brief history of the abovementioned conference is significant for this study for several reasons. First, the conference was the first major academic event in Turkey dealing with the "Armenian issue." Academicians from Boğaziçi University, Bilgi University and Sabancı University—Turkey's three established higher-education institutions—organized the conference with the express goal of calling into question the official Turkish account of the events surrounding the fate of the Ottoman Armenians. The then Minister of Justice, Cemil Çiçek, many other politicians from various political parties, nationalist groups such as the Union of Lawyers, a significant number of press and media members, the protestors in front of the conference building, and many other opponents of the conference were actually shocked by the so called "treason" of Turkey's leading academicians. But here the important point is that the "treason" did not lie with the acknowledgement of the "Armenian issue" as an issue. Individuals or small-groups who try to bring the issue to public discussion have always been confronted and marginalized as traitors trying to harm the country; and they were either underestimated or suppressed by the authorities, but such a discussion never made this much public impact on Turkish politics before.

The impact of the conference and the attempts to stop it lie with the presumed source; in other words the source of the "treason" multiplied the effect of allowing or preventing it from taking place. The official complaint of the Union of Lawyers about the conference reveals this aspect clearly: "the university was contravening its mission." The university, the academy which is supposed to prove and justify the official Turkish account of every event, was avowedly questioning those accounts of the "Armenian issue." The "treason" was not only coming from but also lay at the heart of the Republic, which has made a major nationalist investment on education. [2]

Cemil Çiçek's parliament speech accusing the organizers with "stabbing their nation in the back" also draws on the same idea: Academicians, social scientists who are supposed to use their science on behalf of the nation, who were considered to be the loyal servants of the nation's social engineering project all throughout the history of the Republic, were contravening their mission. Needless to say, the goal and the content, even the name of the conference, was proof of betrayal. Each item in the conference title was a betrayal in itself: "Ottoman Armenians," "decline of the empire," "scientific responsibility." The Turkish nation-state—built on an "amnesia" regarding the existence of Ottoman Armenians, on a selective memory of the Empire that retains only the glorious victories while filtering out all failures including the decline, and on the ideology that each citizen's first responsibility is to the state and nation—was under attack by the "Ottoman Armenians during the Decline of the Empire: Issues of Scientific Responsibility and Democracy" conference. The nationalist backlash was triggered by this illusion of attack.

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[2] It must be noted that before the 2005 conference, there were of course many academicians and academic works questioning the official Turkish account of the events about Ottoman Armenians. However, those were individual works and the accusation of treason was directed to these individual persons conducting the work. When these individuals came together under the motto of "scientific responsibility," it suddenly became an organized attempt of treason in the eyes of the Turkish nationalists.

Issues and the Issue

For days, the conference made headlines in almost all the newspapers. The President and Prime Minister, in each televised interview, underscored that although they do not agree with the arguments articulated in the conference, they continued to stand behind their promise of "freedom of opinion," thanks to membership negotiations with the EU that were taking place simultaneously. But what were the arguments articulated at the conference that occupied Turkey's agenda for months, forced the top officials of the government to comment, made the headline in all newspapers and took the top place in every news bulletin? Ironically it was not the arguments articulated at the conference that created this tremendous impact; the possibility of articulating of a single word shattered the scene. Not surprisingly the word was genocide.

Did Turks commit genocide against Armenians? No, the question was not that. Were the Ottoman Armenians victims of a genocide? Not even that. Was there a genocide? Yes, this was the question haunting everyone. Not the perpetrator, not the victims, not even the true meaning of the act but only the word, "genocide," occupied the agenda, as has always been the case, not only in Turkey but, as Marc Nichanian shows in several works (most extensively in *The Historiographic Perversion*) as in the case of France, the United States, and so on. in the history-dominated world of ours. Naming seems to be the major –and for a significant sum, the sole—problem in relation to what happened to Ottoman Armenians.

For now, leaving the discussions of the West aside, let me return to the naming debate in the Turkish context, which mostly relies on the argument that the debate itself is imposed by the West and is triggered by Armenian lobbies and their traitor allies within Turkey. This is still the dominant opinion articulated in the public

arena whenever an event re-awakens the debate about the "Armenian issue." Whether it is an academic conference, a public apology from intellectuals, a Nobel-winner writer's comments at an interview, the French Parliament's controversial bills, official visits from the US government, will President Clinton or President Bush or President Obama say the 'G' word? madness and so on. The dominant belief is that these responses are deliberately planned and organized by the enemies of Turkey to damage Turkey. We—as citizens of Turkey—all know, from the first steps to elementary school on, that these enemies can be "malevolent people both at home and abroad."[3] Thus, we have a scenario at hand. When an event "triggered by the malevolent people at home or abroad" re-awakens the debate on the "Armenian issue," the dominant approach is to question the intent of those who are associated with the event, mainly for two reasons. First, if the Armenians were deported abroad, it was because they were "malevolent people at home." Second, this deportation, which happened in the Ottoman past, should not be an issue of debate in the Republican present. In sum, the "Armenian issue" is a *historical* issue which should be evaluated within a *historical* context.

In terms of naming, the name "Armenian issue" seems to cover all these arguments without articulating the "G" word. In fact "the issue," *mesele*, is almost a comfort zone in Turkey: the Armenian issue, the Kurdish issue, the Alevi issue, the woman issue. Apart from the Kurdish issue, each is marked in the public sphere by a sudden debate triggered by an event and then left to be forgotten until remembered

[3] "In the future, too, there will be malevolent people at home and abroad who will wish to deprive you of this treasure" is the fifth line of "Ataturk's Address to the Youth" which, as a framed notice, is hanged on the wall in every class room at schools, beside a photo of his. The treasure Mustafa Kemal refers to, in this 1927 speech, is "the very foundation" of the Turkish youth's "existence and future" that is their "prior duty to preserve and to defend Turkish Independence and the Turkish Republic forever".

by another event.[4] "The issue" operates as a mode of talking about an issue without saying what the issue is. A vivid example from contemporary politics may reveal this mode of talking without saying more clearly.

Only a few months after taking the office, in December 2002, during his visit to Moscow, the Prime Minister responded to a worker who wanted him "to solve the Kurdish issue" with this since-famous aphorism: "if you do not think that there is an issue then there is no issue." Three years later, in 2005, *Hürriyet*'s[5] front page quoted Prime Minister Erdoğan who, in a public speech made in Diyarbakır: "People ask me 'what is going happen about the Kurdish issue?' I say "Don't worry. The Kurdish issue, before anyone else, is my issue" (August 12, 2005.) This speech by Erdoğan made the headlines not only in *Hürriyet*, but in almost all papers, since it was an act of official acknowledgement of the Kurds. Even acknowledging the existence of Kurds –not people from the East of Turkey, not some of the old Turkish tribes who used to live in the mountains, but Kurds as Kurds—was big news. The Prime Minister's articulation of the "Kurdish issue" –not as a terror problem, not as a problem of terrorists aiming to split the country, but as the "Kurdish issue"—made the news even more sweeping. A few years later, Erdoğan continued crafting this speech by saying "'There is no 'Kurdish issue'. Kurdish citizens have issues about their rights." However the quote from the 2012 Diyarbakır speech that made the

[4] In terms of being debatable only after triggering events, the "Kurdish issue" is not in the same category with other issues. The ongoing war between PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) and the Turkish state for the last 30 years and the Kurdish political struggle have sufficiently made the "Kurdish issue" a constant and prior debate on Turkey's agenda. Also the "woman issue" is distinctive among the others with regard to certain aspects. Although it is named as the "woman issue" very often, the nature of the issue shows changes according to the context. Since issues regarding women have not been seen as identity issues, in other words due to the lack of acknowledgment that women are facing these issues because they are women, the naming of "woman issue" refers to various issues triggered by periodical discourses or events. For example, education which has been the major "woman issue" since the early years of the Republic, although remains valid to a certain degree, is not a priority issue nowadays compared to violence against women. Here again, feminists' political struggles determine the content of "the issue," adding their own agenda to the general agenda of Turkey from time to time.

[5] *Hürriyet* is one of the mainstream national newspapers.

headlines was “there is no Kurdish issue for me anymore. There is a PKK issue. There is a terror issue” (June 2, 2012.)

This very brief history of AKP’s discourse on “the Kurdish issue” (not the actual issue, but the naming of it) reveals how the phrase “the issue” constitutes a comfort zone into which one can slide from one discourse to another, each time making it a different issue. As mentioned above, Turkey has lots of “issues.” However the "Armenian issue” is probably the one that has shown the least change in terms of the discourses surrounding it. Again, the reason for its distinctive stability is its being *historical.* All the other issues are about present situations surrounding present people, even though they have a history behind them, whereas the term “Armenian issue” never enters the discussion with respect to the Armenian citizens of Turkey.[6] It is not articulated in the context of citizenship, ethnic and cultural rights, or in debates about equality. We have never heard the Prime Minister say “Armenian citizens have issues” or “the Armenian issue is my issue” or “the Armenian issue is over.” Rather we have only heard him talking about the history and the archives; because the “Armenian issue” is only a historical issue. It is an issue of history, and, as Derrida names it, of *mal d’archive* and as Marc Nichanian takes it further, of *historiographic perversion*.

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[6] There was one exception, after a US committee and Sweden passed votes to call the 1915 events genocide in 2005: the Prime Minister threatened to deport the Armenian immigrants who worked in Turkey. *Reuters* quoted him as saying "There are currently 170,000 Armenians living in our country. Only 70,000 of them are Turkish citizens, but we are tolerating the remaining 100,000. If necessary, I may have to tell these 100,000 to go back to their country because they are not my citizens. I don't have to keep them in my country” (March 17, 2010). But here, the Prime Minister is not referring to Armenian citizens but to Armenian immigrants. The malevolent Armenians of the Ottoman Empire or the illegal Armenian immigrants of the Turkish Republic, come to public attention as threatened with "deportation” from time to time. Current Armenian citizens? We never hear about them unless, as was the case of Hrant Dink, a well-known journalist is murdered on the street and for days we see the pictures of his covered dead body on the street in newspapers and on television. Only after then, do we hear words from official mouths about Armenian citizens. But what do the words say? The whole process of Hrant Dink’s murder trial is replete with words could possibly "tell."

## Concerns

At the beginning, I wrote that Prime Minister Erdoğan and President Gül did not oppose the conference but expressed their concerns about it. What were these concerns?

> Conferences, symposiums may be held. These are not in my area of interest. I am not a person uncomfortable with these issues. The only thing that I am uncomfortable with is this: if the people of this country who should be protecting their nation's values more than everyone, evaluate the issue without relying on the archives, on documents, without a scientific perspective, but only through rambling interpretations, this would be a disrespect to our country's and nation's past. And on *this issue*, the state has opened all its archives to the public. The Turkish Armed Forces, again, is opening its archives. I think that if work is conducted by relying on these, it would be more appropriate because we should have a few words to say against those who are trying to create a conflict between Turkey and its history. So I say 'the archives.' (Prime Minister Erdoğan, May 28, 2005)

Here we do not have to enter into a philosophical discussion about "the archive" that has kept many Western thinkers busy in the last several decades. We are not even at the first step of approaching what the "archive" is. On the other hand, we are very close to determining what the archive is about. Prime Minister Erdoğan points at the root of the word archive, which is *arkheion*. Derrida begins his *Archive Fever* by taking the word archive to its Greek root. *Arkheion* is "initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded. (…) On account of their publicly recognized authority, it is at their home, in that place which is their house (private house, family house, or employee's house), that official documents are filed." (2) Thus, two aspects of the archive are revealed: one to do with the place and the other, with the law because the *archons* not only guarded archived documents' physical security; but they also possessed the power to interpret them, which Derrida calls the "hermeneutic right": "to be

guarded; thus, in the jurisdiction of this *speaking the law*, they needed at once a guardian and a localization" (2).

The discussion of the archive goes much further in both Derrida's and many others' work. However, in order to understand Prime Minister Erdoğan's concerns we do not need to go that far, since where he is inviting us to is the *arkheion*. The locations of the archive are clear; so are the guardians. The state and the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) are the two *archons* of the archive. The documents about "the issue" are filed in their houses. They shelter and guard the documents. However, the state and the TSK differ from the Greek *archons* at a significant point. Although they possess the hermeneutic rights on the archive, they are willing to share, moreover, they are willing to transfer their rights to scientists. And which scientists would you expect them to be?

"'The issue should be researched not by politicians, but by historians,' Turkish Parliament Speaker Cemil Cicek said," reports *CNN International*'s website, in an account about reactions against the French parliament's legislation which would criminalize any public denial of the Armenian Genocide (December 22, 2011). This time, Cemil Çicek is not declaring his personal opinion as he was considered to be doing during the Conference period. Rather, he is articulating the official Turkish discourse that the "Armenian issue" should not be an issue of politics; it is an issue of history and must be handled by historians. Hundreds of times the same words have been articulated by different state persons. But, do you remember the same Cemil Çicek accusing the conference organizers with "stabbing their nation in the back" for contravening their mission, the academy's mission, the university's mission? What is astonishing here is that we are able to trace the relationship between history and law only through the discourses of the state. The *archons* of modern Turkey, as they

continue to shelter and guide the documents in the *arkheion* transferred the right and the power to interpret them to historians. At this point a clarification seems necessary. Which "history" are we talking about? Which historian, and which archive is it that we are mentioning?

First of all, the archive we are talking about is not the one Derrida provides a tremendous amount of discussion about.[7] The archive that we are talking about, the one that the Prime Minister invites us to, the archive that for years has been a tool for politics of negotiation around the "G" word, consists of official documents only. It is the house of the modern *archon* that shelters and guides only the state's documents, i.e. only the papers signed by the state. But still, the modern *archon* is differentiated from its ancient counterpart by being willing to transfer his hermeneutic right to historians. Which historians would those be, since there are many historians who question the Turkish account of events, who stab their nation in the back?

I argue that the historian they refer to is an idea—in other words an idea of the historian and an idea of history enable Erdoğan, Cemil Çicek and other state officials, authorities, *archons*, power-holders, victors to assign the task of interpreting the archive to historians. And I would say that the idea they have in mind is very close to the general idea of history. In *The Historiographic Perversion*, Marc Nichanian conveys the Western historians' discussions about what has really happened to the Ottoman Armenians. The "Western" account of the debate seems to have stuck with the word genocide, too. Nichanian responds to quite a number of historians who seek proof of the Armenian genocide, by saying that genocide is all about the annihilation of proof. Nichanian suggests that history needs facts but the

[7] Since testimony, memory or experience are not in the picture we are not even close to the archive that is the object of Derrida's work. As I said before, we are only in the first step of Derrida's discussion because official state discourse on the archive does not go beyond this very step on the Greek origin of archive.

genocidal will is to destruct the fact, the destruction of the factuality of the fact; history needs archives but the essence of genocide is the very destruction of the archive; history rejects the totality of the testimonies and witness' witnessing as proof of the genocide; but, always, genocide is already the destruction of the possibility to testify or witness.

Derrida says "nothing is more troubled and more troubling today than the concept archived in the word 'archive'" (90). What he calls "the trouble of the archive" is articulated in Nichanian's work more directly, that the trouble of archive is *historical*, and that "this trouble is produced at some point in history *and* it also concerns the history that is written" (37).[8] However these are again Western thinkers' arguments about Western notions of the archive and history. And much of this literature stems from the Holocaust. The historians' discussions about whether the 1915 events qualified as a genocide or not, which Marc Nichanian dwells on, touch the Holocaust at one point or another. Not only addressing historians, Nichanian addresses the totality of Western thought by revealing the relationship between historians', philosophers', and political scientists' accounts of "what genocide is" and how these accounts are constructed through Western thought and reconstruct Western thought. In *The Historiographic Perversion*, this argument finds its clearest articulation as a response to Lacoue-Labarthe on the Holocaust: "The only collective murder that was purely nonsacrificial is also the only one that was purely without motive, as well as the only one to have 'a metaphysical significance,' which means significance in the history of the West as the history of metaphysics" (53).

[8] This quotation is from Marc Nichanian's third piece on the archive. The article "On the Archive III. The Secret or: Borges at Yale" will be published in French in 2013, in the book entitled *Le Sujet de l'histoire,* by Lignes publishing. Nichanian very generously sent me the English translation of his unpublished article after a short conversation at the Hrant Dink Memorial Workshop in 2010, when I told him about my interest in the subject.

At this point let me offer this reminder that the concepts of testimony and witnessing lie at the heart of the abovementioned discussions. Although somehow — in the absence of witnessing and testimony as a matter of discussion— when we attempt to analyze the discourse surrounding the "Armenian issue" in Turkey's context, we arrive at the same basic elements of the discussion, such as the archive and history, we have to take these into consideration from a different perspective, one that is relying on Turkey's context. Still, it is ironic to see that the "Armenian issue" occupies the agenda of the West with the same negotiationist approach: Was it a genocide or not? However by taking into account the official concerns directed at discussing and interpreting "the issue" through Western-imposed malevolent ideas, let me return to the scientific perspective which the Prime Minister asks for.

I had said that while insisting that the archives should be interpreted by the historians, the state officials have a general idea of the historian and history in mind. And the scientific perspective which is very obvious in Erdoğan's sentences is to write history according to the archives, the documents. Then it is not only "in the historian they trust", but also the archive. And obviously this confidence does not stem from what is present within the archive, rather it lies in what is *absent* within it. Scientific perspective then is, not to interpret, but to explain the issues according to the *arkheion* and to its guard *archon*; scientific perspective then is to stick to the presence, solely and only to the material presence.

## Context

The conference entitled *Ottoman Armenians during the Decline of the Empire: Issues of Scientific Responsibility and Democracy* provided me a ground from which to overview the basic elements of the context in Turkey about the "Armenian issue". Even though the "western" debates are shaped around the naming of the events, the name "Armenian issue" seems to have solved the problem in Turkey by enabling a mode of talking without talking (about) it. Nevertheless, even though it is not articulated, the word Genocide is at the heart of the issue; in fact, genocide is what the "Armenian issue" is all about—that is, why it is a historical issue and is assumed and forced to be history's issue. The issue should be evaluated with respect to the nation's past and with the scientific perspective which begins and ends in the archives.

The source of the harsh reactions against the conference can be better understood within this context. The "scientific responsibility" phrase in the title was on the one hand threatening the rule that one's prior responsibility is to one's nation, while on the other hand, challenging the official definition of science. This challenge was of course predicted by careful eyes taking a quick glance at the organizers' names and the universities they were associated with.[9] The phrase "scientific responsibility" shadowed forth something ethical, something about the ethics. And this sensation itself was threatening for science could only speak to and speak for the law.

[9] Bogazici and Bilgi Universities are often portrayed as the venues for potential treason. The notion of the "westernized intellectual" which refers to breaking from the Turkish national(ist) values is often articulated by nationalists, and these universities, which have relatively liberal images in the public scene, are presented as the house of these betrayers.

I will not give space to the actual conference, to what happened within the walls during those two days, what was discussed, suggested, and how "the issue" was evaluated through various perspectives. First, I was not there. Although I have read most of the conference proceedings and listened to many stories about it, the atmosphere within the conference room, I suppose, with all those protestors and press waiting on the outside, can only be known to the attendees. Second, this study is not about the particular conference or the "Armenian issue" nor is it about contemporary politics in Turkey. This study is on encounter, absence, on possibilities for an ethical response, for new ways of engaging with "issues" with regard to literature, the field which seems to have least relation to politics, especially contemporary politics. However this study is also an attempt to break this seeming un-relatedness. It is an attempt to understand literature in relation to this given social and political context; but more importantly to approach this context through literature.

In the absence of literature, by only dwelling on political discourses that circulated at a conference organization, we have covered a certain distance in order to reveal the main elements of a discussion. The discussion is how to *name* the events that happened ninety-seven years ago. The "Armenian issue" is all about naming. Politicians, of course, always have their own agenda about such issues. We have seen a vivid example of it. But still the "Armenian issue" is distinctive among all the others, even for the politicians. They do not see themselves as the *addressee* of the issue, rather they *address* historians, since the "past" is their field; and nobody seems to have any doubt that the issue—whatever it is—happened in the past. Thus, in the absence of literature we have come this far.

However, revealing something or approaching it are two, very different things. And without the intent to approach, there is nothing to be revealed. I argue that it is through literature that we can *approach* whatever this discussion seems to be about. And only by approaching it, can we reveal that it is not about anything that happened sometime in the past, ninety-seven years ago; rather, all this turmoil is about today, here and now. In order to approach, then, we need to stop asking "what happened in 1915?" Literature presents us a better question: what has not happened in 1915?

# CHAPTER 2

## LITERARY ENCOUNTERS

I can't remember my first encounter with her name. Did I read it somewhere, did I hear it from a friend or at a lecture maybe? It is always like this, in terms of my reading experience at least. It is always as if a book, a writer, a piece of literature has its own time to be read, and when the time comes you know you are going to read it/her. At the very moment that I decide to read that certain piece of literature, I find myself thinking, how do I know the things I know about it? Then I know. It has been a while since I solved this problem. I do it through coincidental knowledge marshaled together unconsciously, collected, accumulated and having acquired a maturity.

I am thinking of the other writers whom I have not yet read but wait for the right time to engage with. In my mind, each has a colour, an atmosphere, a feeling assisting her name; some almost come with a smell in the air. I'm not talking about the ones you *should* read for the purposes of "intelligentsia", or the ones you *have to* read in terms of academic/ vocational/ social necessities, nor the ones you *could* read in your spare time. No. The ones I mention are the writers that you deeply want to read; those even (though you don't know how you know) you know, *feel* the world they promise; the writers that you want to *touch*. Yes. She had become one of those for me, for some time. But I cannot remember the initial encounter.

Maybe I read her name in the footnotes of an article, and then met her again in a newspaper column or on a web site. Her name might have attracted my attention during a quick glance at a bibliography. Or maybe I picked up her name from a conversation between two friends and placed it my mind's "to search" section. Was I ashamed to ask my friends who it was that they were talking about? Maybe. Or maybe at the university, one of the professors referred to her, in god knows whatever context. It could also be during a private meeting with a professor. Maybe someone suggested that I read her work, maybe she (I am assuming it was a *she*) pronounced the letters of her name one by one directly to my face. Maybe I was too lazy to note down her name and I thought I would remember it. But I did not. Or maybe worse, I could not hear, did not understand clearly what her name was, but I missed the right moment of asking. Could you repeat please? No. I would have asked that. Or maybe not. I'm not sure.

I want to remember, I really want to. When was the first time she acquired a *presence* in my mind. When did I come to know a writer named Zabel Yesayan? Did I know she was Armenian at the first moment of this encounter? I must have known. What about the period? Maybe I thought she was a contemporary writer. Did I realize that she was an Ottoman Armenian woman the moment I learned her name? I might have waited until the second encounter for that. Anyway, what did I know about Armenian literature before her? Funny question. What do I know now? I know quite a lot about her (I mean, I'm assuming so)—but not about her literature.

So I don't remember my first encounter with her; but at least I encountered her. Didn't I? I mean I encountered something, for sure. But was it really her that I encountered? Silly question. Do you encounter Dostoyevsky when you read Dostoyevsky? Yes, I would say, Dostoyevsky and many other things. Ok, this was

easy, here comes the tough one: can you encounter Dostoyevsky without reading his literature? Maybe. It could have been a semi-encounter. It is not that I haven't read anything at all from Zabel. I read pieces from her novels, paragraphs from her articles, and sentences from her letters. This would count as an encounter, at least a semi-encounter, wouldn't it?

But I am still missing the initial encounter. Apparently it happened at one of those "moments of non-being" as Woolf would say. There are things I do remember though. I remember wondering what Üsküdar looked like at Zabel's time; and it must have been some time after I learned she was born there. Then maybe it was through *The Gardens of Silihdar* that I first encountered her. Okay, let's not invent history out of assumptions. We really do not need more history. Still, Üsküdar seems to be a part of my encounter. What else? If I'm not making it up—though I might be—I was associating her name in my mind along with a photo of hers. Yes. I remember this. I'm not sure about the chronology, but at some point I knew that she was a beautiful woman. I remember thinking about this. If my first encounter with her was through *The Gardens of Silihdar*, it must be the Turkish version of the book. The English one does not include any photos.

Thus, the primal knowledge was that Zabel Yesayan was a beautiful Ottoman Armenian woman, a writer who lived in, and wrote about, Üsküdar up until 1915. The easy way out? No. I know I must make a choice. Pick one: the deportation of Armenians, the Disaster or disaster, the genocide, Catastrophe or the great catastrophe, events happened during World War I. Before my encounter with Zabel—or with the thing I encountered while trying to fill in the blanks at my semi-encounter with her—it was easy. I used to name it the "Armenian Genocide" without hesitation. I thought it was the right thing to do, in a place where people cannot bear

to hear the word genocide. I thought it was a political act. But after encountering her and the other ones that came after her, it is not that easy to decide what the right name is, either as a political act or as an ethical one. Responsibility? No. Rather, response, I would say.

Why did I say "the other ones"? They were not intended encounters. I mean, of course they were, since I searched for them, I found them, I read them. But all of it was just to get in closer, to touch Zabel. It was a crazy drive to find the missing part in my encounter with her. As if there was anything to be found. Thus, the others were not encounters in themselves. Not like Zabel. Still, they were my path to Zabel. I thought so. But the path led me somewhere I did not expect.

So, here I am now, unable to find the right word for the events that ninety-seven years ago determined the nature of my encounter with Zabel and that continue to determine the essence of every possible encounter with her and in fact, the very possibility of encounter. "Genocide" cannot be the word any more, not in the context of this wish to respond to my encounter, not after all the negotiations and fights around the word, and for sure not after the history behind it which reduced it into a technical term. "The history behind it." Yes, this might be the answer I'm seeking; "the history" which, once upon a time an angel saw as "one single catastrophe." *Catastrophe*. I think I will follow Benjamin at that; but I reserve the right to name it as genocide in needed moments and places. There will be so many.

It is strange though. The things that I remember start with my insistence on encountering. I do remember very well the moment I made a conscious decision to read her work. It was a full "moment-of-being." I also remember wondering: how come I haven't read anything from Armenian literature until now? In a craftily

concealed section of my mind another question which I hesitated to voice repeated itself: which Armenian literature?

Another "moment-of-being": I entered the bookstore and asked for a Zabel Yesayan book, any book she wrote. The man working in the store said "I don't think we have any. I've never heard of this author", but nevertheless walked to the table to check her name at the computer. "How do you spell the name?" The name? It was a small book store after all. I went to another one. Almost the same scenario. Another one. Same answer. No, we don't have any. No, it is not in the list. I'm sorry, no. Which publisher did you say published it? The quest in neighborhood book stores was short and sad.

But I was lucky on online stores. At the first attempt, I came across *Silahtar'ın Bahçeleri*, ordered it in a few minutes and got it in three days. It all started after that. The book was thin; the content page, brusque, noting that Yesayan's three novels, her testimony after the Adana massacre and her travel notes were *present* in it. I read: thirty-eight pages of *The Gardens of Silihdar*, six pages from the novel *Fake Geniuses*, five pages from *Shirt of Fire*, ten pages from her Soviet impressions *Prometheus Unchained* and eighteen pages from *Among the Ruins*. The rest of the pages were *absent.* No. It wasn't anything like Calvino's novel. Yet I understood the irresistible drive behind the journey to find the missing pages of a book. However, the pages of my book were not missing or lost, they were *absent*. Absent in the way all absent things are; you know they exist, but they just don't exist at the moment; you know they were once there but not any more; or you feel that they should be there, but someone has decided that they would better not be there any more. The absent pages of my book were absent this way. The *selector* probably made a selection, according to his or her preferences, of the parts, sections,

pages that they would want to be *present* in the book, the parts they found most beneficial, most serving their purpose. However the decision about what or which would be *present* is always a decision about what or which would be *absent*. Isn't it?

## Encounter

Encounter is the basis of this study; both theoretically and methodologically. It is upon my personal encounters and my response to these encounters that this study is built upon—it is "constructed" in two senses. On the one hand it is built upon a desire to respond to my encounters, on the other hand the construction of this text as a whole is enabled by bringing certain texts I encountered together.

While looking for Zabel Yesayan, trying to approach her, to get closer, to *touch* her, what was it that I encountered? I already said that the concept of encounter provides both the theoretical and methodological ground of this study. Then, what is encounter? In *Strange Encounters*, Sara Ahmed writes "the term encounter suggests a meeting, but a meeting which involves surprise and conflict" (6). In the long narrative above, in my experience of encountering, yes, there is surprise and there is conflict, both of which increase as my insistence on meeting increased. Why? What was the surprise? What was the conflict?

The source of the surprise and conflict was in fact the same—not being able to recognize what I was encountering. We are habituated to think of encounters as between *subjects*. At least we expect one conscious subject in the encounter; so that though it might not be reciprocal, one side is always aware of the encounter taking place and with *whom* or *what* she is encountering. Even if this would be the case—

though it is not, since encounter implies the coming together of at least two *elements*, although not necessarily human beings—it does not mean the "conscious subject" of the encounter really *knows* what she is encountering. Yet she always has an assumption, a general idea about the encountered one, which makes her confident about *knowing* them. This is because attention is always on the "other" that which is encountered, rather than the encounter itself. The "other" as being anyone or anything "other than myself" has long been considered the prior issue to consider, whether in terms of othering the other, judging, alienating, segregating, oppressing, subordinating, ruling, annihilating or responding responsibly to the other as the core of the whole tradition of ethics in the Western thought, as most acutely articulated in Levinas. Either the question of "I" as a being or with the concern of being on the other's side, the otherness of the other is taken for granted. However Sara Ahmed states "given the fact that the subject comes into existence as an entity only through encounters with others, then the subject's existence cannot be separated from the others who are encountered. As such, the encounter itself is ontologically prior to the question of ontology (the question of the being who encounters)" (7).

The initial surprise and conflict in my experience of encountering Zabel Yesayan, on the one hand, stem from this regular habit of focusing on the "who"—who encounters? and who is encountered?—rather than the encounter itself. However, not being able to grasp a satisfying answer—who Zabel Yesayan was—I had to turn my gaze on the encounter. In other words, it was the nature of my encounter which forced me to think about encounter. When I asked the first question: "what is it that I am encountering?" I was not after a recognizable, definable "other" because the more I tried to get closer to Zabel, the more my encounter became incomplete, lacking, and ambiguous. She was not graspable even as an "other"; the

more I tried to approach her, the more she acquired an *absence* in my world, rather than *presence*.

But I left the story of my encounter with Zabel Yesayan in the middle. We are only at the beginning of absence; let the absent pages be the initial markers of that encounter for now. The rest of the story needs to be told before going deeper into a discussion of absence.

If we must return to the second pillar that this study rests on, I must tell why I suggest encounter as a methodology. Though I think how encounter works as a methodology can be better addressed when reading this text from the end point—i.e. when the parts of encounters reach a significant whole—I want to dwell on some aspects that at first hand make encounter a preferable methodology for this study.

In itself, thinking about encounter already contains a kind of reflexivity which has the potential to reveal many other encounters that have taken place in a broader context. Take my encounter with Zabel Yesayan; in order to approach an understanding of what this encounter is, in order to respond to this encounter, I have to take account of and work through a set of other encounters that are prior to my encounter with Zabel, yet still frame it in a certain way. But the traces of these prior encounters are concealed, hidden behind Zabel. Zabel Yesayan, not her corporeal existence but the very perception of who Zabel Yesayan is or was, has been *made* through those prior, *historical* encounters, both the present and the absent ones.

In the previous chapter, I tried to portray some aspects of the trouble with history in terms of an "issue" being considered to be historical and also history's issue in the absence of literature. This time I am suggesting that history is making a claim on each and every encounter by rendering itself and its role invisible in the determination of *how* we perceive the person or thing that we encounter. This is

different from saying that history determines every relationship between this and that; rather, I am saying that though history makes a claim on every relationship, it is through *encounter* that one can reveal its claims. That is to say "rethinking the primacy of encounter over ontology is also a means by which we can introduce historicity, as the very absence of any totality that governs the encounter" (Ahmed 10).

By constituting this text through the collation of other texts, by trying to approach my encounter with Zabel Yesayan through many other encounters and others' encounters, I aim to lay history's claim on my encounter bare and to dismiss it. However, this potential that encounter calls into being can only be realized if I intend to give an ethical response to it. The discussion about response and the ethics of response has to wait until the next chapter, after covering others' encounters with Yesayan; but still I want to establish that my intention is not to discover any unethical aspects in the others' works, but rather to reveal that, by missing the priority of encounter, what it is that they missed and dismissed.

I must also clarify at this point that when I say encounter also works as the methodological ground for this study, that I in fact think that the obverse is simply not possible. Sara Ahmed, from whom I borrowed the concept of encounter, in her book *Strange Encounters*, aims at revealing the ways in which the figure of stranger is produced. Her analysis of strange encounters in many various contexts enables her to "address how the encounters that produce 'the stranger' as a figure that has linguistic and bodily integrity are determined "(13). Another thing that she displays is "the ways in which contemporary discourses of globalization and multiculturalism involve the reproduction of the figure of the stranger, and the enforcement of the boundaries, through the very emphasis on becoming, hybridity and inbetweenness"

(13). Here, I seem to have borrowed only one pillar of the double pillared tower which Ahmed built carefully and inspiringly. The concept of the stranger, the figure of stranger, will not have a significant space in this study because, instead, I am interested in how focusing on the encounter we can overcome this stranger fetishism. I am more interested in the ways in which we can respond to our encounters and by responding—or by attempting to respond—how we can find and deepen the potentials that our encounters bring about. Thus I use the term encounter in tandem with the response it is asking for. That is why I think it is impossible to separate encounter as a theory and methodology. They always come and depart together. If there is encounter there is a need to respond to it; and if you miss responding to it that means you are also missing the encounter.

## (Inter) textual Encounters

Intertextuality, which was introduced in the late sixties as a concept by Julia Kristeva in her essay "Word, Dialogue and Novel," has been a much used and much appreciated term both in literature and in social sciences since then. In the abovementioned essay, Kristeva stated that "any text is constructed of a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (66). However it was another theorist who worked on the same concept almost at the same time who brought it fame. Roland Barthes, declaring the "Death of the Author" in 1968 suggested that "… a text is made from multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused, and that place is the reader, not, as hitherto said, the author" (148). Certainly Barthes was attacking the notion of a "fixed

meaning" and any meaning that is placed into the text by the author. That is why he differentiated the terms "the text" and "the work." According to Barthes, while the work was the material held in the hand, the text was the very act of writing.

> Any text is a new tissue of past citations. Bits of code, formulae, rhythmic models, fragments of social languages, etc., pass into the text and are redistributed within it, for there is always language before and around the text. Intertextuality, the condition of any text whatsoever, cannot, of course, be reduced to a problem of sources or influences; the intertext is a general field of anonymous formulae whose origin can scarcely ever be located; of unconscious or automatic quotations, given without quotation marks. (39)

Thus intertextual theory is also a theory about meaning. According to the above arguments about the intertextual nature of the text, the meaning of a text or the meanings within a text cannot be coming from the author's intention any more nor can they be considered as the author's property. As Graham Allan comments on Barthes, "the modern scriptor, when s/he writes, is always already in a process of reading and re-writing. Meaning comes not from the author but from language viewed intertextually" (74).

However, although the concept of intertextuality undermined the author's position, provisioned the production and circulation of many theoretical works on meaning and engendered a vast archive of studies aiming to show, prove, and discuss the intertextuality of texts with regard to many various contexts, the death of the author did not lead to "the birth of the reader" as Barthes has suggested. Rather it simply augmented the position of the text. One of the architects of this "birth of the text" as emancipated from its author is of course Paul Ricœur. In *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, he asserts that texts offer their meaning "to an indefinite number of readers and, therefore, [offer a number of] of interpretations" (31). The interpretation which is also emancipated from the author, for Ricœur, is an act of confrontation with what the text says.

At this point Ricœur strongly opposes Barthes, and insists on considering the text as a "work"; which is to say that the text as an object works to produce meanings. Ricœur cites Barthes as saying "A narrative does not show anything, (…) What happens is language alone, the adventure of language" (cited in Ricœur 1975, 51); and Ricœur criticizes him for the "fallacy of absolute text." He writes "Discourse cannot fail to be about something". Here lies the most significant distinction between these two conceptualizations of what is a text. Although both theories start with the emancipation of the text from its author and raise questions of meaning with regard to this liberated text, the question of discourse separates them very distinctively. Barthes gives absolute autonomy to the text by peeling it from the discursive world, whereas Ricœur argues that it is impossible to deny or ignore the fact that the text is written by someone who intended to convey a certain meaning with it. For Ricœur, it is one thing to read the text against this intention, however for him the text is always discourse; and its autonomy "cannot abolish the dimension of discourse" (67).

The reason I have referred to this specific discussion very briefly is that I want to clarify my consideration of the text. While encountering texts, bringing them together, and creating another text through them, I am relying on the conceptualization of intertextuality by Barthes, but also the textuality of Ricœur. Thus, (inter)textuality in this study refers both to a text emancipated from its author's intentions, as well as to a text written through numerous encounters with other texts, a material "at work" which produces meanings but still *is* a piece of discourse sheltering many discourses in it *and* the act of writing. In fact in terms of intertextual encounters, when one gives priority to the encounter, this conceptualization of (inter)textuality almost spontaneously comes into the picture.

If we take reading as the primary (inter)textual encounter, it is a meeting between a reader and a text or texts. Instead of fixing the reader or the text within this encounter, when encounter is considered to be constitutive for both the reader and the text, then it is not that easy anymore to depict the reader as someone before and outside of the text, nor the text outside of the reader. Sara Ahmed argues that "to make the encounter prior to the form of the text (what the text would be in itself) is, not only to refuse to assume that the text or reader have an independent existence, but also to suggest that it is through being read that the text comes to be thinkable as having an existence in the first place" (7). And when the reader reads the text in this very specific encounter, that encounter has always already framed by numerous prior encounters with other texts. Both the reader and the text are passed and arrive at their current state of being through these previous encounters, yet it is still the specific encounter they are in that will produce its own meaning.

My encounter with Zabel Yesayan, which lacked the reading of a text written by her in its entirety, led me to many other encounters with various texts written by different people. The intertextuality of those texts will be revealed when they are mentioned. But the (inter)textuality of my encounters is another issue. I argue that my encounter with Zabel Yesayan, correlated with the response that encounter is asking for, was predestined to be an (inter)textual one since all the texts that I encountered during my quest to approach Zabel Yesayan were also formed through encounters with other texts. And by bringing those together in a specific sequence, in this act of writing a text through them, I certainly intend to convey a message, a meaning. Therefore, there is a hidden agenda behind my every act of referring, bringing together, grouping and sequencing; that is to say, if my encounter with Zabel Yesayan is the starting point for this study, the meaning that this encounter has

produced within my world is the ending point. But the reading of this text that I am writing will be another one's encounter and also again an (inter)textual one. It will have its own beginning and ending points; and although my text will be "at work" to produce meaning, the encounter will produce its own meaning.

## (Me) Encounter-ing

While the concept of *encounter* provides the theoretical and methodological ground of this study, "encountering me", i.e. my narrative of certain encounters is included in the study for the purposes of "reflexivity". The pieces of texts that are brought together and sequenced constitute my narrative of encounter-ing.

I want to emphasize and in a way materialize my involvement in this study, not as an interpreter of certain texts—although my act involves interpretation, too—but rather as the writer of this text that is built on other texts. As Ricœur puts it clearly in "Narrative Time," "the configurational arrangement" of a narrative "makes the succession of events into significant wholes that are the correlate of the act of grouping together" (175). Rather than events, the succession of my encounters with certain texts constitutes the configurational arrangement of this study, certainly along the wish to reach a "significant whole".

Literary studies often focus on the encounters between texts and other texts. Comparative literature does not necessarily compare but at least reveals or constitutes certain relationalities between texts and texts, between particular texts and general texts, between singular texts and grand texts. The work is considered to be at its best if the texts that are brought together seem as if they are talking to each other, responding to each other. And this is more so, after the discovery of intertextuality in the late 60's. However, the researcher's or critic's subjective experience with those

texts, her encounter with the texts she analyses is left outside of the work most of the time. These personal encounters are usually absent within the body of the work for several reasons. First, they are personal; personal issues are not considered to be a topic of investigation, and they are underestimated. Second, they are personal; and personal involvement, which means subjective comments and subjective interpretations, overshadows the rule of objectivity. Third, they are personal; and literature is the field of texts not persons.

Certainly literary studies, too, have passed through the self-questioning phase of the objectivity-subjectivity debate, as all humanities have. But concluding that there is no objective interpretation or possibility for objectiveness in any work of interpretation is different than including subjective experience within the study. For the latter, one more step is needed; and I suggest that this step is the consideration and evaluation of one's own encounter with texts as a text.

Self-reflexivity has been a popular concept within social sciences after the so-called "crisis of representation" of the sixties. (At this time,) it became a topic of discussion in the Western, and especially in the American context of social sciences, since anthropology as a discipline was at the heart of the discussion. The debate around self-reflexivity was more of a search for a solution and was correlated with a vast array of other discussions such as colonialism, subject/object dichotomy, objectification issues and lack of any subjectivity for the "researched" in the works conducted, the dominant approach as defined by the West, Orientalism, issues around the objectivity and subjectivity of the research, theories and methodologies and many more. Could the self-reflexivity of the researcher/ observer/ ethnographer bring some kind of a cure, at least to a certain extent, to the above written "troubles" of the social scientist? For some, it did offer a cure. For example in anthropology, the

discipline which needed the most cure but at the same time contemplated the "crisis of representation" the most, the self-reflexivity of the ethnographer within the study being conducted became a *must* for fieldwork and the writing of it. The ethnographer's own position–class, gender, race, ethnicity and all other elements that could have an effect on how she sees the things she sees—and her own experience of observing/researching/encountering people and things became a significant part of such studies, so much so that a new crisis appeared at the door, the "crisis of self-reflexivity." This time the problem was too much self-representation. New debates, new criticism, new approaches, new experimentations were made, brought into being and tried, and will continue to endure this critique. Self-reflexivity in this sense also operates as a discipline's labour of thinking about itself, in a way directing its gaze onto its own body of knowledge.

Every discipline within the social sciences has its own history of crises. For example, whether the literature is of a discipline within the social sciences has itself been a significant topic of debate within the academy. On the other hand, comparative literature as a discipline seems, in its relatively short history, to have been the most debated discipline since contemporary theorists of various disciplines have given over quite a large amount of time and space in their works to the role and significance of comparative literature. In 2003 Spivak announced *The Death of a Discipline.* In and despite her provocative title, she actually laid a political and ethical burden *on* comparative literature: to open up new trajectories within literary studies in the era of globalization, proposing to yoke it with area studies —in order to challenge the Euro-centrism of the field of literature, while teaching the latter to interpret the language and literary forms of the Other, instead of the language of the

Other. With the criticisms and responses to Spivak's work, the future of comparative literature started to occupy the agenda of textual theory more than before.

However literature as a discipline was never keen to borrow other disciplines' methods, not as much as disciplines within the social sciences that have a curious and ambitious eye on literature. The so-called textual turn of the 70's and 80's—which engendered a critical response by a "turn toward things" in the last decade—compelled all other disciplines, again mostly anthropology, to work with texts by reading every social, cultural, political act that produce meaning as a text; whereas literature as a discipline was more conservative about its boundaries. Since texts are the main material for literature to work with, the disciplines that literature is more responsive to seem to be philosophy and history.

However, by the narrative, "(me) encounter-ing", i.e my personal experience of encountering Zabel's texts, other texts, others' encounters with Zabel and her texts, by making my encounter a text to be analyzed and interpreted and by locating it in a broader body of text, my aim is to bring what I have learned from my encounters with(in) anthropolog—to read experience as text— and literature — to engage with the text, to approach it— together. Bringing anthropology and literature together would be a whole different task and I am not certain about its possibility. Besides, my interest in this study is not to develop a discussion about anthropology or literature as disciplines; rather my aim is to give an ethical response to my encounter, by relying on what I have at hand.

But I must note that my personal experience of these encounters is not included in this body of text for the sake of self-reflexivity (not in the way I briefly depicted its emergence as a crisis in the social sciences). Moreover my description was too brief to actually describe how self-reflexivity works within anthropology and

anthropological research. Within the process—and I have only pointed at the concerns that engendered it—the notions of reflexivity and self-reflexivity evolved, changed and more importantly differed from work to work, from writer to writer. Self-reflexivity is not a homogenous category after all; but my preference is to consider my narrative of "me-encountering" as reflexivity, rather than self-reflexivity. In *Signs* Merleau-Ponty states "Reflection must be aware of its object. Reflection is no longer the passage to a different order which reabsorbs the order of present things; it is first and foremost a more acute awareness of the way in which we are rooted in them" (105). It is this notion of reflection and reflexivity that leads me to suggest that personal encounters with texts must be evaluated and analyzed also as texts; because the way we analyze a text is never emancipated from our encounter with it. I hope to reveal all these points more clearly while explaining my encounters with others' encounters.

## Encountering Others' Encounters

Encountering others' encounters with Zabel Yesayan started after my encounter with the absent pages in the book I so excitedly bought. My experience with that book is made of complete confusion and frustration. It is very difficult to describe this book. Basically it was made to give the reader an idea about who Zabel Yesayan was.

The book was translated into Turkish from English, not Armenian; and my hope to find the absent pages in the English version died at the moment I found the book in the library. It was even thinner than the Turkish version. The absent pages of *The Gardens of Silihdar*, *Phony Geniuses*, *Shirt of Fire* and *Prometheus Unchained*

were also *absent* in the English version. *Among the Ruins* was completely absent. The editor of the book, Ara Baliozian, wrote in the preface: “The purpose of this volume is to introduce to the English reader, the worldview, style, and personality of this remarkable writer who is hardly known outside her country". It was an introductory book. I could not pass the “Introduction to Zabel Yesayan’s literature” level and was not getting any closer to *touching* Zabel. My encounters were ending with disappointment. But still I held on to another hope.

The English selection and translation by Ara Baliozan was published in 1982; the Turkish translation was published in 2006. There were additional sections in the Turkish version of the book. One of these was a section including pieces from *Among the Ruins*. Since there was no preface for the Turkish edition, a footnote was added to the Turkish translation of Baliozian’s preface. It said “As the Belge publishing house, we added a third section to the book which includes parts of Zabel Yesayan’s *Among the Ruins*, written after the 1909 Adana events. We thank dear Gobalyan who translated these parts from Armenian” (27). The other thing that was added to the Turkish version of the book was an article written by one of the most popular writers of Turkey, Elif Şafak. This article entitled “Constant Exile: An Analysis on Zabel Yesayan” was perplexingly located even before Baliozian’s preface. Actually the sequence was this: Elif Şafak’s article, a preface from Izabela Yesayan (this preface which is only a short paragraph does not exist in the English version), and another preface by Ara Baliozian (the Turkish translation of Baliozian’s preface involving some small changes). The strange sequence of the items, spelling mistakes, the quality of the paper that is used, the lack of a preface for the Turkish edition and the lack of any note informing the reader that the book was translated into Turkish from English, not Armenian, and that it comprised only a few

pages of each piece from Yesayan, gives the impression that the book was done as if in a hurry, without concern for precision.

Still, this was my only path to Zabel and the opening article of the book engendered new hope. Elif Şafak's article, which involved the biography and bibliography of Yesayan, was an analysis of Zabel Yesayan's literature based on her life experience. In the article, she referred to each and every work of Zabel Yesayan in relation to the changing contexts they were written in. Despite my personal opinion about Şafak's literature and her self-representation, I was surprised and impressed by the work she had done; and I was more surprised and impressed by the fact that she wanted to touch Zabel too. Besides, her article told me another thing: although Zabel Yesayan's works were not translated into Turkish, they must have been translated into English. I knew Elif Şafak was very fluent in English, so much so that she wrote one of her novels in English and I did not expect her to know Armenian. Still, I checked her website (which involves a very detailed biography) and there was nothing there about speaking or reading Armenian. In the reference section of her article however, where there were only English and Turkish works, Zabel's works were missing. I thought she only put the theoretical works in this section and skipped the main texts as she already explains them in detail within the preface. Thus my adventure of searching English translations started.

I searched the university libraries first, but nothing came out of it. I searched the internet, found websites involving any information about Zabel Yesayan. In many of them there were lists of her works. In these lists most of the book names had English translations. I thought if the names were in English, the books themselves must have been translated into English at some time. But I was not able to find any book in any online stores. Then, I thought, these translations might be out of date and

may not have been reprinted. This could be the reason they were not surfacing in internet searches. I contacted some institutes, organizations and libraries in different countries and asked for any English translation of Yesayan's works. One of these institutes, Zohrap Center, had an event calendar on its website which included an event called "April's Calamity." The event involved reading samples from the Armenian literature and Yesayan's books were among these samples. A footnote said "all texts are going to be read from the English." Taleen Babayan, who was in charge of the Center, was very helpful and responded to my email with a PDF attachment. The attachment contained an excerpt from the English translation of Yesayan's *Shirt of Fire*. My fleeting excitement faded away with the discovery that it was the same excerpt in Baliozian's selection.

For the last step in my search, I wrote emails to Armenian friends, asking for their help in finding the English translations of Zabel's books. Some did not know any, some promised to ask another, but none of them ended this unavailing search until Melissa Bilal, whom I knew from my MA years at Boğaziçi University's Sociology Department, wrote me that she was certain that there was no English translation other than Baliozian's selection. That was it. I stopped.

But something triggered me once again when I saw a notice on the web site of *Ermeni Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği* (Armenian Culture and Solidarity Organization); they were starting Armenian language classes. In just a few minutes, I signed up for the class. By the beginning of the classes, while struggling with the intimidating difficulty of the alphabet, the same drive to touch Zabel began again. Since I knew now there was no English or Turkish translations of her works, and since I was not going to be able to read her in Armenian in the close future—with only two hours of class a week I am assuming that this future is not that close—I

started to read everything that was written on Zabel Yesayan, everything I could find in English and Turkish. And a picture started to appear before my eyes, very slowly, but explicitly. As much as my incomplete encounter with Zabel, maybe more than that, encountering others' encounters with her, led to envisioning this study. Let me describe this picture I have in my mind a little bit, putting other's encounters with Zabel in a sequence. And like everything else in this study, it will be *my* sequence.

Elif Şafak was the first. She was the first one who introduced Zabel Yesayan to a relatively large audience in Turkey; and this took place at the conference entitled "Ottoman Armenians during the Decline of the Empire: Issues of Scientific Responsibility and Democracy" held at Bilgi University in September 2005, to which I gave quite a large amount of space in the previous chapter in terms of the discussions that were engendered and enabled by it. Elif Şafak was applauded by the conference attendees as it was a touching literary presentation and as the majority of the attendees were introduced to an Ottoman Armenian writer named Zabel Yesayan for the first time. But an important point was missed both in Şafak's presentation and in the credit she was given. How she had learned the things she presented was never mentioned. Elif Şafak's encounter with Yesayan, with her texts, with her literature; that was absent in her presentation. She seemed to make an "objective" analysis built upon Zabel's biography and bibliography, with no personal story of reading them, nor a subjective experience of encountering them. Elif Şafak herself, was absent in her presentation. But this was not a noticeable issue for the majority in the room. There were, however, also a few people at the conference who knew about or who read Yesayan before, but most importantly there were people who were in the process of publishing the first book in Turkish on Ottoman Armenian women writers, including Zabel Yesayan.

In the following year, in 2006 two books came out. One was *Bir Adalet Feryadı*: *Osmanlı'dan Türkiye'ye Beş Ermeni Feminist Yazar* (*A Cry for Justice: Five Armenian Feminist Writers from the Ottoman Empire to Turkey*) the other was *Silahtar'ın Bahçeleri*. I have already mentioned the latter and the strange way that it was designed. There is only one thing left to say about it. The article in the beginning of this book was Elif Şafak's presentation at the conference. She was confident enough to publish it as it was presented (and Belge publishing house had enough confidence in her to put it even before Baliozian's preface). The other book, *Bir Adalet Feryadı: Osmanlı'dan Türkiye'ye Beş Ermeni Feminist Yazar,* edited by Melissa Bilal and Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, was on the feminist perspectives and struggles of five Ottoman Armenian writers, seen through their life stories, activities and writings. Elbis Gesataratsyan, Sırpuhi Düsap, Zabel Asadur, Zabel Yesayan ,and Hayganuş Mark, were introduced to the reader in Turkish for the first time with their perspectives on, and contributions, to feminism.

There is an important difference between Elif Şafak's analysis which is published in *Silahtar'ın Bahçeleri* and Hasmik Khalapyan's article "Kendine Ait Bir Feminizm: Zabel Yesayan'ın Hayatı ve Faaliyetleri" (A Feminism of One's Own: Zabel Yesayan's Life and Activities) which constitutes the fourth section of *Bir Adalet Feryadı*. Beside the fact that Khalapyan focuses on Yesayan's feminism while Şafak concentrates on her literary ventures, it is only in Khalapyan's article that one is able to encounter knowledge about Yesayan's literary language. Elif Şafak does not make a single comment about language. This is surprising only until one encounters Marc Nichanian's works on Zabel Yesayan. In a section entitled "Zabel Yesayan: The End of Testimony and the Catastrophic Turnabout" in Nichanian's *Writers of Disaster*, one can find the entirety of Elif Şafak's article, copied and

pasted as selected paragraphs. No wonder she never mentions the literary language of Yesayan or her encounter with Yesayan's literature, as she never read her. I must note here that I am not interested in whether Şafak stole Nichanians's work or was inspired by him a little too much; rather what interests me is the absence of any attempt to make an ethical response to an encounter, in other words the absence of asking a simple question—what is it that I encounter when I try to approach Zabel?—and an absence of any attempt to provide a reply to it. One last thing to note about Şafak's article is that at the end of it she proposes several topics of investigation to the scholars working within the humanities fields. One of these, the third of six items, is to conduct a comparative analysis of Zabel Yesayan and Halide Edib "who used the same metaphors and in fact gave the same title to a novel, who were leading intellectuals within their communities' cultural élites, [and] who had critical approaches to women's issue and had feminist attitudes" (20). This suggestion is noted here just for the record; I will return to it in the next chapter.

In 2007, another article about Yesayan was published in the literature journal *Kitap-lık.* Mehmet Fatih Uslu who is an academician at Şehir University's Turkish Language and Literature Department is the writer of an article entitled "Silahtar'ı Hatırlamak". Although Uslu refers only to the Turkish translation of the book, we know through his other works on Armenian literature that he is perfectly literate in Armenian so I assume that he has already read the text in its original language. His article on the book is intended, first, to introduce Yesayan and her work, and, second, to draw attention to the necessity of examining Armenian literature, not only for the purposes of understanding Armenian literature but also for understanding Ottoman literature.

In 2009 two more works were presented in Turkey, one is Melissa Bilal's article in the online journal *Kültür ve Siyasette Feminist Yaklaşımlar* (*Feminist Approaches in Culture and Politics*) and the other is Hülya Adak's paper presented in the Hrant Dink Memorial Workshop 2009 (The papers presented in the workshop are published by Sabancı University in 2011.) Melissa Bilal, currently a PhD candidate in University of Chicago's Ethno-musicology Department wrote the article on Zabel's story *Pavagan e!* (*Enough,*) unnoticed before Bilal found it. Bilal's article "Pavagan e (Yeter!): Zabel Yesayan'ın Barış Çağrısını Duyabilmek" (Enough! Hearing Zabel Yesayan's Call for Peace) was an expanded version of the paper she presented in "Women in the Arts and Writing: Negotiating the Ottoman Public Sphere in the early 20th Centuries" conference that was held at Boğaziçi University the same year. In this article, Bilal reads *Pavagan e!* as a manifesto of Zabel Yesayan's anti-militarist and anti-racist political attitude. Revealing through this text Yesayan's opinions about fraternity and reconciliation, as well as the way she reflects on the issues of gender, class, race and war, Melissa Bilal shows "Zabel Yesayan as an Ottoman Armenian women writer who was one of the leading intellectuals of the feminist anti-militarist thought and movement."

On the other hand, Hülya Adak, an assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at Sabancı University's Cultural Studies Department, in fact presented a paper on Halide Edib. Her paper entitled "A Valediction to the 'Interdiction of Mourning' of World War I; or, Walking with Halide Edib through Ambiguous Terrains beyond the Catastrophic Divide" looks at the "public archives," —which are auto/biographical and fictional narratives according to Adak— in the context of World War I, asserting that Halide Edib's *Memoirs* and *The Turkish Ordeal: Being the Further memoirs of Halide Edib* "provide space for 'collective mourning'" (21).

Since the article gives responses and refers several times to Marc Nichanian and his conceptualization of mourning, interdiction of mourning, will to exterminate, testimony and archive, Hülya Adak concludes her article by writing that "Edib and Essayan meet where language ends" (27). Again, this suggestion, too, will be revisited in the following two chapters.

(I have to start a huge parentheses here. In Adak's article, one encounters Sima Aprahamian's name. Adak refers to her paper presented at the roundtable discussion of "Different Approaches to Halide Edib" at the Middle East Studies Association of North America meeting, held in Washington D.C. in 2008. The title of the paper, as Adak refers to it, is "Feminism(s) and Representations: Halide Edib Adıvar and Zabel Yeseyian". Unfortunately this encounter of mine is limited only to the name of the paper. I could not find it online or in any publication; but while searching for it, I ran into another paper that was presented a year before it, in 2007, at The Society for Armenian Studies' (SAS) annual meeting in Montreal in conjunction with the Middle East Studies Association (MESA). Victoria Rowe presented a paper entitled "*Gardens of Silihdar* and *Shirts of Flame*: The Writings of Zabel Yesayian and Halide Edib Adivar" in a panel named "Ottoman Women's Movements and Print Cultures (Global Armenian Heritage website). Unfortunately this encounter too, is only limited to the name of the work. But this does not seem to remain so. In 2010 an article that was published in Turkey ushered in Sima Aprahamian and Victoria Rowe's forthcoming book.)

Hülya Adak and Ayşegül Altınay wrote an introduction for the forty-second issue of the academic journal *New Perspectives on Turkey* as guest editors of the "dossier on gender, ethnicity and the nation-state." In their introduction entitled "Guest editors' introduction: At the crossroads of gender and ethnicity: Moving

beyond the national imaginaire," they refer to Zabel Yesayan a few times as one of the articles in the dossier was written by Marc Nichanian on Yesayan. Other than this article, they, too, refer to the Hrant Dink Memorial Workshop of 2009; for there had been a panel named "Ottoman Women Writers: Zabel Yesayan and Halide Edib on Gender, Ethnicity and Violence" in which İpek Çalışlar and Hülya Adak presented their work. In the proceedings of the workshop however, Hülya Adak seems to have talked in a panel entitled "Gender, Ethnicity, History." Then, I am assuming that the workshop proceeding that was published in 2011 is different from the actual workshop program that took place in 2009. In Adak's and Altınay's "Introduction" we also see a reference to the forthcoming book edited by Sima Aprahamian and Victoria Rowe, entitled *Ottoman Women's Movements*; and Hülya Adak's above mentioned article appears in this book. Then, again, I am assuming this article is an expanded version of the one in the workshop proceedings. There is only a little change in the title, in one entitled "A Valediction to the 'Interdiction of Mourning' of World War I; or, Walking with Turkish Jeanne D'Arc (Halide Edib) through Ambiguous Terrains beyond the Catastrophic Divide." The additional phrase in the title "Turkish Jeanne D'Arc" is a reference to Aghavnie Yeghenian, who wrote an article in the *New York Times* in September 17,1922 named "The Turkish Jeann D'Arc : An Armenian Picture of Remarkable Halide Edib Hanoum."

As with all these works on Yesayan, one wonders when Zabel Yesayan's works will be translated into Turkish. Then we encounter Kayuş Çalıkman who is currently translating *Among the Ruins* into Turkish. In 2011, she wrote an article entitled "Zabel" for the feminist journal *Feminist Politika* (Feminist Politics). This article again, aims at introducing Yesayan and her works to the reader, by reflecting on Yesayan's approach to gender issues. Some appear in Turkish, some in English

but these are the papers, publications, and academic works that were presented in Turkey—except for the long bracket, certainly—on Zabel Yesayan or at least involving an encounter with Zabel Yesayan. (There is also Marc Nichanian of course, but I will come to his works in the end.) One can see that there is increasing attention paid, after 2005, and also that there is a tendency to compare her with Halide Edib, both in and outside of Turkey. This tendency is the subject of next chapter. Let me now briefly cover the works on Yesayan, not necessarily presented in the context of Turkey.

*Finding Zabel Yesayan* is a documentary film that was shot in 2008, in Yerevan, İstanbul, Beirut, London, Berlin, Michigan, New York, and Toronto. Two directors of the film, Talin Suciyan and Lara Aharonian attempt to show the turning points of Yesayan's life within the framework of government archives, her own writings, tape recordings and the remarks of literary critics. The documentary starts with a scene in Yerevan. There, there is a street named after Zabel Yesayan. We can see it on the map, but nobody knows where it is. Asking random people on the street "where is the Zabel Yesayan Street?" we wander with the camera along Yerevan streets; and at last, in an old seeming neighborhood, the camera focuses on a sign, it says "Zabel Yesayan street"; but it is almost a lost sign, hanging high up, time-worn, hard to notice. An old lady complains about her street's name, wondering why an important man's name is not given to the street instead of Zabel's. As the name tells us, Suciyan and Aharonian started this project as a response to their encounters with Zabel Yesayan and to raise the question, why should Yesayan still need to be found (in Armenia and in the Diaspora)? The documentary was screened at the *Ermeni Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği* (Armenian Culture and Solidarity Organization) with its directors in attendance in 2012.

As far as my insistence upon encountering others' encounters with Zabel Yesayan, other than those I have mentioned, there are two writers' published works on Yesayan in English. One is Victoria Rowe and the other is Marc Nichanian. Victoria Rowe's book *A History of Armenian Women's Writing: 1880-1922* which was published in 2003, has a chapter in it entitled "Exile and Genocide: Zabel Yeseian." (We are informed that her next book with Aprahamianis is forthcoming.) Her chapter on Yesayan gives the most detailed account of Yesayan's works in terms of her gender perspective.

After all these encounters, now we have finally arrived at Marc Nichanian. He was the first one I encountered and the one I repeatedly encountered among all the others. My encounter with his works has been very truly constitutive encounters, most importantly in terms of how to *approach* an encounter. Since there will be many references to his works within the body of this text, I will not describe each of them here. Still, identifying them is necessary because I am not the only one who was impressed by his work. Many of the works I have mentioned up till now, refer to him at one point or another. Besides, he has had a significant impact on the scene I have been depicting as a sudden and increasing attention to Zabel Yesayan and Armenian literature since 2005. Nichanian has many more works than I will refer to; but since I cannot read his French or Armenian publications, my encounter starts with *Writers of Disaster* that was published in 2002. A whole chapter in it is named "Zabel Yesayan: The End of Testimony and the Catastrophic Turnabout." In a book dated 2003, *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, edited by David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, one encounters two articles by him: "Catastrophic Mourning," and "Between Genocide and Catastrophe" (the second one is presented as Kazanjian's interview with Nichanian.) Then, in 2007, *The Armenian Genocide,* edited by

Richard Hovanissian includes Nichanian's article "Testimony: From Document to Monument." Two years later, in 2009, Nichanian's book, *The Historiographic Perversion,* was published by Columbia University Press.

In 2009 Marc Nichanian was invited to İstanbul to a series of conferences in collaboration with *Anadolu Kültür*[10] and Sabancı University. It was not anything Elif Şafak expected I suppose; while making a presentation of Nichanian's work in 2005 she must have thought that Nichanian would remain a stranger to Turkey's academic and intellectual scene. However, he did not. After intensive attention to the conference series, Marc Nichanian also held a position as a visiting Professor in Sabancı University's Cultural Studies Department for two semesters. In addition, he participated in several workshops and conferences. His article "Zabel Yesayan, Woman and Witness, or the Truth of the Mask" was published in *New Perspectives on Turkey*'s abovementioned issue; and the Turkish translation of his conference series' notes was published as a book entitled *Edebiyat ve Felaket* in 2011, by İletişim publishing.

I think that is all. This very long collation of works on Zabel Yesayan that I have encountered was needed for two reasons: first, in order to reveal her discovery in Turkey (in the academic scene) and the increased attention that has been paid to her after 2005, and second, to unmask the tendency to compare her with Halide Edib. After this long narrative of encountering others' encounters with Zabel, before ending this chapter, one last question needs to be answered: Why are these encounters literary? Where does the literarity come from?

[10] Anadolu Kültür is a well-known NGO formed in 2002.

## Literarity of Encounters

The literarity of encounters is again something that can be revealed only by the entirety of this study. But here I will touch only on the source of my understanding of literarity. In an interview conducted with Derrida in 1989 and translated into English in 1991 with the title *Acts of Literature,* he is quoted as saying:

> …there is no text which is literary *in itself*. Literarity is not a natural essence, an intrinsic property of the text. It is the correlative of an intentional relation to the text, an intentional relation which integrates in itself, as a component or an intentional layer, the more or less implicit consciousness of rules which are conventional or institutional – social, in any case. Of course, this does not mean that literarity is merely projective or subjective – in the sense of the empirical subjectivity or caprice of the reader. The literary character of the text is inscribed on the side of the intentional object, in its noematic structure, one could say, and not on the subjective side of the noetic act. There are "in" the text features which call for the literary reading and recall the convention, institution, or history of literature. This *noematic* structure is included (as "nonreal," in Husserl's terms) in subjectivity, but a subjectivity which is non-empirical and linked to an intersubjective and transcendental community. (44)

Here Derrida speaks of the literarity *of* the text, a piece of literature. However his view on the literarity of the text is also a reflection of the way I understand the literarity of the encounters in this study. Yet the encounters I have so far mentioned are not encounters with pieces of literature. Aside from the sections I could read in Zabel Yesayan's Turkish and English translations, all the others were literary studies, academic works. Throughout this thesis, only in the last chapter will I analyze a piece of literature, Halide Edib's *The Shirt of Fire*. However this study as a whole is an attempt to approach something *about* and *through* literature. In all of its sections, even in the first chapter entitled "In the Absence of Literature", my *intention* is to reach out to literature. Literary encounters firstly refer to this intentionality.

In the above quotation, Derrida locates literarity neither in the text nor in the reader. Referring to Husserl, he sees the literary character of a text as inscribed as the "object as perceived," rather than as the "act of perceiving." However, always this intentional object is already included in a subjectivity that linked to intersubjective and transcendental community. Thus, there is no literarity on its own, or there is no definable literarity as such. Rather there is an intention in literary reading, that is, there are "in" the text features calling for literary reading and this intention is linked to an intersubjective and transcendental community. Here, what Derrida describes as literarity seems to me to be the whole web of relations that are rooted in —and as we are rooted in them, as Merleau-Ponty states —and engendered by an *encounter*.

Thus by literary encounters, I am first referring to an intention about both literature and encounter. Second, I am referring to a call both "in" literature and "in" encounter, a call for response. And third, I am referring to a broader web of relations that are rooted in both literature and encounter; and which also can become recognizable through literary encounters.

# CHAPTER 3

## MISSED ENCOUNTERS

They were born in the same city on opposing shores of the Bosphorus: Zabel (born Hovhannissian) in Üsküdar, Halide Edib in Beşiktaş.[11] They were both born in February, Zabel in 1878; six years later, Halide in 1884[12]. Both Zabel's and Halide's families were respected in their communities; the first, in the Armenian community and the latter, in the Turkish community.[13] Zabel's family was not wealthy but would

[11] The biographical information in this section on both Zabel Yesayan and Halide Edib was gathered from several books and articles about them. The details I use here are the ones that are consistent in all of these publications. For the purposes of narrative flow, I will not give reference to them within the text unless there is a direct reference to a unique work. The works that the biographical information are gathered from: for Halide Edib: Halidé Edib, *The House the Wisteria: Memoirs of Turkey Old and New* (New Brunswick. N. J Transaction Publishers, 2003); Halidé Edib, *Memoirs of Halide Edib* (New York: The Century Co., 1926); İnci Enginün, *Halide Edib Adıvar'ın Eserlerinde Doğu ve Batı Meselesi* (İstanbul: M.E.B, 1995*);* Ayşe Durakbaşa, *Halide Edib: Türk Modernleşmesi ve Feminizm*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları 2009); Selim İleri (Haz.) *Halide Edib Adıvar*, (İstanbul: YKY Yayınları 1993); İpek Çalışlar, *Biyografisine Sığmayan Kadın* (İstanbul: Everest Yayınları 2010). And for Zabel Yesayan: Zabel Yessayan, *The Gardens of Silihdar and Other Writings,* selected and translated by Ara Boliazian (New York: Ashod Press 1982) ; Victoria Rowe, "Exile and Genocide: Zabel Yesayian" in *Armenian Women's Writing 1880-1992* (London: Cambridge Scholars Press 2003); Melissa Bilal, "Pavagan e (Yeter!): Zabel Yesayan'ın Barış Çağrısını Duyabilmek" in *Feminist Yaklaşımlar* (Sayı 07, 2009 Mart); Marc Nichanian "Zabel Yesayan: The End of Testimony and the Catastrophic Turnabout" in the *Writers of Disaster* (Princeteon; London: Gomidas Institute 2002) and "Catastrophic Mourning" in *Loss:The Politics of Mourning,* edited by David L. Eng and David Kazanjian (Berkeley: University of California Press 2003); and Hasmik Khalapyan "Kendine Ait Bir Feminizm: Zabel Yesayan'ın Hayatı ve Aktiviteleri" in *Bir Adalet Feryadı: Osmanlı'dan Türkiye'ye Beş Ermeni Feminist Yazar* (İstanbul: Aras Yayıncılık 2006).

[12] In several publications, Halide Edib's birth year is given as 1882. However Halide Edib's father, Edib Bey, had officially changed her daughter's birth year and made her seem two years older in order to register her at the *American College for Girls.*

[13] It must be noted here that Halide's father Edib Bey, came from a Jewish family. However, carefully ignoring her father's origins (they came from Spain and settled in Bursa in the sixteenth century), Edib, in her memoirs, only once refers to a man named Şeyh Mahmud as the person who raised her father in Selanik. Inci Enginün, notes that according to the documents in the Prime Ministry's Ottoman Archives, Mehmet Edib Bey seems to have been born in Selanik, to a father named Abdullah and a mother Ayşe (33). İpek Çalışlar, on the other hand tells us that according to oral narratives Edib Bey, was a Jewish convert to Islam. Çalışlar also notes that a love affair between Halide Edib and Yusuf Akçura—who was one of the theorists of Turkism—ended because of Halide's father's Jewish origins. Çalışlar quotes Akçura's account of that affair as "She was in love with me. And I was in love with her. But I decided I could not marry her, because of her father's origin" (99-100). This story

be considered a self sufficient family who managed to live well. Halide's father, on the other hand, worked at the Palace as a secretary to the Sultan, and that enabled Halide's household to be close to the Palace.

Both Zabel and Halide refer to their fathers as the source of their desire for knowledge, for reading and writing. Halide's mother died when she was only a few years old; and she depicts her mother only through her sickness and death, and with the feelings of fear and gloom in *House with Wisteria*. Zabel, on the other hand, in *The Gardens of Silihdar*, describes a childhood in which her mother suffered from a nervous breakdown. The family lost its entire savings and got into debt while seeking cure for this illness, which the doctors called "melancholia." After some time, Zabel's mother recovered; but nonetheless, in the lively world full of aunts, uncles and older family members that Zabel depicts, it was her father who took the main role in directing Zabel to reading and writing.

Zabel lived in the district of Silahtar in Üsküdar and attended the well-known primary school *Surp Khaç*; Halide first attended a Greek nursery school in her own neighborhood, then was educated at home by private tutors according to English manners, and was at last registered at the *American College for Girls* in Üsküdar.

In 1892 Zabel graduated from *Surph Khaç*. A year later, in 1893 Halide moved to Üsküdar's İcadiye district with her grandparents so that she could be closer to the school. In that year, 1893, the two women lived in nearby neighborhoods in Üsküdar, walked the same roads, wandered on the same streets. At the time that Zabel was making plans with her father about how to continue her education, Halide

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seems to explain why Halide Edib was so careful about not mentioning her father's origins.. There is no single reference in her works to an ethnic identity other than Turkishness. However, she often writes of her mother's father, who according to Halide Edib's memoirs, was from "the East", from Kemah. Halide explains her sympathy for the culture and traditions of "the East" through her love for her grandfather. She does not mention whether Ali Efendi was a Kurd. But Halide's mother Bedrifem was first married to the Kurdish Bey Bedirhan Paşa's son, Ali Şamil. She had a daughter from this marriage and was divorced after a while at her parents' insistence. Her second marriage was with Halide's father, Edib Bey. Mahmure, Halide's stepsister, was always an important figure in her life.

was busy getting used to school life. Sultan Abdülhamid was opposed to "Turks being educated in foreign schools" (in Halide's words); and that is why after her first year at the *American College* she was taken out by a notice, sent from the Palace. Halide moved back to the house with wisteria in Beşiktaş—but continued to visit her grandparent's house in Üsküdar regularly—and started to be educated at home by private tutors, until her father registered her at the *American College* again, in 1899.

By the time Halide returned to the school in Üsküdar, it had been three years since Zabel went abroad for her education. She went to Paris to study literature and philosophy at the Sorbonne in 1895. Victoria Rowe notes that "she was sent abroad by her father, as he feared for her safety, following the Bab-ı Ali demonstrations, as Yesayan was known to frequent salons where politics and the platforms of the Hnchak and Dashnak parties were discussed." (200-201)

Zabel's professional career started in 1895, the same year she went to Paris, with the publication of her first narrative poem "Yerk ar Kisher" (Ode to the Night) in the Armenian journal, *Dzağig* (Flower). In her Paris years she had already made a name for herself with her articles written in Armenian and French. Melissa Bilal tells us that Yesayan made her living in Paris by editing the French-Armenian dictionary prepared by Guy de Lusignan and also wrote for literature journals such as *Mercure de France*, *Humanité nouvelle*, *Ecrit pour l'Art*, and *La Grande France*. In Paris, Zabel got married to a painter named Dikran Yesayan. It was 1900. Later on, they had a son and a daughter.

Halide, who was awarded the Order of Charity (Şefkat Nişanı) at the age of thirteen, by Sultan Abdülhamid, for her translation of Jacob Abbott's *Mother*, graduated from the *American College for Girls* in 1901 as the first Muslim student of

the College to earn a BA degree. Right after her graduation she married the famous mathematician Salih Zeki, who was also Halide's private tutor in mathematics.

The marriages of these two women affected their carriers differently. Zabel Yesayan was very productive and successful in the first years of her career whereas Halide Edib (she was using the *Salih* surname) was stuck in the marriage, and dealing with Salih Zeki who turned to be quite a cruel husband. During the first years of their marriage she even abandoned her plans for writing and an intellectual career, suffering both from various sicknesses and from Salih Zeki's attitudes. Later on, especially after giving birth to her first son, she regained her strength and took up her intellectual carrier again. Halide had to wait until 1908 to come to the fore and acquire some fame.

In 1902 Zabel Yesayan returned to İstanbul with her husband. She continued her writing career and worked as a teacher in Armenian schools. By 1902 she was already a well-known figure in the Armenian community. In the years 1903 and 1904 she prepared the women's page in *Dzağiğ*; and she also wrote numerous articles, especially on women's issues, for this journal, in addition to writing for other Armenian newspapers and journals. In 1903, she published her first novel *Isbasman Sırahin Meç* (*In the Waiting Room)*, in serial form in *Dzağig*. Her second novel *Geğdz Hancarner* (*Fake Geniuses*) was published in 1905, this time in *Arevelyan Mamul* (Eastern Press) in serial form.

Hasmik Khalapyan attests that Zabel and Dikran Yesayan went back to Paris in 1905 because they could not afford to live in İstanbul; this caused a big debate in the Armenian press, accusing the Armenian community of not supporting the Yesayans sufficiently (168.) Following her trail from her personal letters, Melissa Bilal states that Zabel Yesayan stayed in Italy for a while in 1906, travelled to Cairo,

İstanbul, Sis (Kozan-Adana,) and Paris in 1907. She also published her third novel *Şınorhkov Martig* [*Respectable People*] in that year.) Like many other Armenian intellectuals, she returned to Istanbul in 1908 with tremendous enthusiasm, for the declaration of the second Constitutional government.

1908 *seems* like the year that these two women got closest to each other, not materially but in terms of their agendas, enthusiasm for the Revolution, their desire to be at the heart of the changing scene, to participate in—and contribute to—the newly emerging path of freedom, through their writing, publishing, speaking at gatherings and meetings, and most importantly their common (also too-soon) hopes for *change*[14].

After returning to İstanbul, Zabel Yesayan was engaged in all sorts of intellectual activities. She was writing, attending meetings, giving speeches. Melissa Bilal states that in this period Zabel Yesayan gave speeches at *Dignants Miutyun* (Women's Association) in Üsküdar, *Azkanıver Hayuhyats Ingerutyun* (Patriotic Armenian Women's Organization) and *Ashkadanki Dun* (Labour House). Another important issue which we find mentioned in Bilal's work is that some articles of Zabel Yesayan were translated into Ottoman Turkish. Bilal refers to a letter Zabel wrote to her husband, saying that one of her texts was translated into Ottoman Turkish and published in *Şura-yı Ümmet*, and that it received good criticisms and reviews. Some of these were published in *İkdam*, in addition to a text she wrote

[14] I must note here that *change* is the only word that can be used for their common hopes since we can never know how close or far, how similar or different their hopes were. Freedom was one of the common themes of the enthusiasm that the Constitutional declaration engendered; but freedom is a dense concept and everyone's expectation as well as comprehension of it is different. Therefore the only common hope that could be mentioned that is shared both by Zabel Yesayan and Halide Edib in 1908 that there could be a change, a change in the existing situation, the existing rule, but one seen according to their own perspectives.

criticizing Armenian deputies in the Parliament—one that had been sent to them and had gained notice from both Armenians and Turks.

Meanwhile Halide Edib was becoming a rising star in the Turkish community. After the declaration of the Second Constitution, she was fully and enthusiastically engaged with politics and the reforms that should be made. She started to write in Tevfik Fikret's newspaper *Tanin*, mostly on women's and education issues, and became quite famous within a very short time through her talent and mastery of writing. In one of her first articles, she publicly thanked her teachers at the *American College* for "teaching her that neither sex and race nor occupation and religious sect could separate people" (Enginün 44). She also finished writing her first novel *Raik'in Annesi* (*Raik's Mother*) in the summer of 1908. (The novel would be published in its entirety a year later.) 1908 is also the year that Halide started publishing articles in English; the earlier ones were about women's issues and how they should be handled by the officials of the new regime. One of the articles that she wrote for the British journal *The Nation* was titled "The *Turkish* Woman's Future." (Çalışlar 56, [my emphasis])

Probably one of Zabel Yesayan's most attention-grabbing activities in this period was her attempt to start a solidarity organization involving both Armenian and Ottoman women. Hasmik Khalapyan explains that Zabel Yesayan, a member of *Alliance Universelle des Femmes pour la Paix par l'Education* (Women's Universal Alliance for Peace through Education) in France and was impressed by Marie Cheliga, the founder of this international women's solidarity organization, wanted to start a similar organization in İstanbul. Together with Hasan Fehmi's wife they worked on the idea of forming *La Ligue de Solidarité des dammes Ottomanes* (Ottoman Women's League for Solidarity) which Zabel imagined would be a

women's organization that was "supra-politics and supra-religion" and would establish peace among various nations within the Empire (191-192).

In April 1909 it was clearly understood that all these dreams of fraternity and equality were going to remain only dreams. On April 13 (March 31 on the Rumi calendar that was in use at the time) Istanbul was the scene for what is now called "The 31st of March Incident". It has been referred to in "official history" as a countercoup against the Young Turks' Revolution. On the other hand, beyond the "official history" and in "critical historiography" discourse it is considered to be a fight for power within the Army. These are not to be discussed within the scope or purpose of this study, however, my mention of it is still relevant, both for its effects on Halide's *and* Zabel's early understanding of the pending destructive events.

On April 13, Halide's father, Edib Bey, discovered that Halide was on the blacklist of the countercoup powers who reigned supreme in Istanbul for the following few days after April 13th. Halide, who underestimated the threatening letters she received because of her articles in *Tanin*, was faced with danger and genuine threat for the first time. She took refuge and hid in her school, the *American College* that night. On the morning of the next day, on April 14, the news about the massacre targeting Armenians in the Cilicia region reached Istanbul. The news was not earth-shattering; it was not the first pogrom against Armenians and it would not be the last.

## The *Façade*

If 1908 was the year that *seems* to mark a "getting closer" for Zabel Yesayan and Halide Edib in terms of their enthusiasms and activities for the *new* era, 1909 was the year which *seems* to mark a "turning away from each other." Both of these "getting closer to" and "turning away from" have their own controversial aspects.

While these two women were terribly busy in 1908, one can see that they shared a mood, a state of mind about contributing to the *new* era that began in the Empire. The Young Turks Revolution and the declaration of constitutionalism engendered this state of mind both for Armenians and Turks; but this was not because, as Turkish official history claims, everyone in the Empire including the subject nations pinned their hopes on CUP (Committee of Union and Progress.) Rather it was because there was an ongoing struggle of Ottoman oppositional groups against the regime of Abdülhamid II. Since the first Ottoman opposition group's Congress, held in Paris in 1902, each opposition group, differing in their respective agendas and from time to time having very tense conflicts between each other attempted to cooperate in ending Abdülhamid's regime. Not to emphasize any particular historical issue here, nonetheless this point is significant in understanding the enthusiasms Halide and Zabel shared for the 1908 revolution.

While the relationship between the Young Turks and Armenians was tense during this first Congress, according to Şükrü Hanioğlu, it was a result of Prince Sabaheddin's efforts that these relations were improved between 1905-1907 and the Armenian party *Dashnaktsutiun* took a more active role in the second Congress of Ottoman opposition parties that was held in 1907 (*Preparation for Revolution* 139). The 1908 revolution did not happen spontaneously or all of a sudden; neither was it solely the Young Turks who opposed Abdülhamid and struggled for the restoration

of the Constitution. Armenians were actively involved in the opposition movement, too. Halide Edib's and Zabel Yesayan's enthusiasm for the restoration of the Constitution should be evaluated within this context. Thus, we cannot possibly know if these two women were getting any closer in terms of a shared hope, vision, and agenda for the coming days. The only certainty in their shared enthusiasms lies in their opposition to Abdülhamid's regime and their hope for a *new* one.

As well as their "getting closer" in 1908, their "turning away from each other" in 1909 is also controversial. On the one hand, the Cilicia massacre is considered as a turning point in Zabel Yesayan's life; on the other hand, even after the massacre she seemed to keep her faith alive for a *new* fatherland in which all citizens would have equal rights (Nichanian 2002; 2010; Rowe 2003; Bilal 2009). From Halide's side, things seem very conflicting too; for, while cursing the massacre in an article she wrote for *Tanin* after the Adana bloodshed, she points to the idea of *new* fatherland and considers the spilled blood as a sacrifice for it, just like Yesayan. However, it provokes more blood. I will come to that soon and discuss in which arguments they held similar views and in which ones they held views totally different from one other. But before coming to that and explaining my objection to Adak's argument ("A Valediction…" 27) that "Edib and Essayan meet where language ends," I must first clarify certain aspects about these discourses on "meeting", "getting closer to" or "turning away from" each other.

A question to be asked is why these two women—about whom we have no proof of their ever hearing of each other—would be considered as getting closer to or moving away from each other with regard to the events which they experienced individually and separately that took place in the Ottoman era? My answer to this question will fully be revealed only in the conclusion of this study, because I aim to

re-raise this question after the discussion finalized in the next chapter; but let me reflect on the paths leading me to an answer.

Until now, I have tried to describe some aspects of Yesayan's and Edib's biographies as they related to one another. The places they were born and raised in, their educational accomplishments, their engagement with politics through writing, their early awareness about their desire for a career in literature, their ability and power to achieve all these despite the disadvantages of their gender, the respect they received from their communities after all those achievements, all show a seeming parallelism; or, to put it more correctly, these trigger a motive to draw such parallelism. This motive is the one that lies behind Elif Şafak's suggestion for a comparative analysis of Zabel Yesayan and Halide Edib. I am not opposed to such a comparative work. A work through reading Yesayan's and Edib's particular pieces from a comparative perspective would stimulate some very fruitful debates. Yet comparing these two women's life stories, without reading their literature, is a different issue. The parallelism Şafak draws between Yesayan and Edib with regard to their activities and leading roles in their communities is an illusionary one; and so is my hitherto narrative attempting to cover the main aspects of Yesayan's and Edib's biographies in relation to each other.

I am not going after an argument that will sift out an illusionary parallelism. Rather, my aim is to vividly portray the *façade* which triggers the motive to draw parallelisms between Zabel Yesayan and Halide Edip's lives, and then to look behind the *façade*, to see what is *present* there and what is *absent*.

When Hülya Adak claims "Edib's own inability to write or represent the horror she witnessed in 1915-1916 echoes Zabel Essayan's delineation of the Catastrophe( …)", her argument rests on Halide Edib's statements in her *Memoirs*

and *The Turkish Ordeal* ("A Valediction…" 27). Adak quotes Edib's statements on Talat Paşa and in a passage where she tells how she suffered during the World War I, especially "during two months from September to November 1916." I agree with the point that Halide Edib's attitude after 1915, and her narratives about it, are full of contradictions and inconsistencies; and even that there are parts in her narratives where she resists the official and hegemonic Republican account of events. However I argue that even if Halide Edib experienced a period of not being able "to write or represent the horror she witnessed in 1915-1916," there is no possibility for this inability to "echo Zabel Yesayan's delineation of the Catastrophe." Since I have not been able to read Yesayan's work in its entirety, I am not going to attempt to make any comment on the nature of her delineation which Nichanian depicts and Adak, by referring to him repeats as "infinitely indescribable, indefinable, and incompressible" (Nichanian "Catastrophic Mourning" 115; Adak "A Valediction 27). My objection for such an "echoing" does not stem from Yesayan's account; rather it stems from Halide Edib's account. I argue that Halide Edib had perfectly separated what Adak calls her "delineation of the Catastrophe" into two different accounts, two different narratives; and that neither of them can "provide space for 'collective mourning'" as Adak suggests, because of this very act of partition. Even though there are resistant, conflicting, contradictive sections in her non-fiction narratives, both written in English, Halide Edib was one of the first writers who institutionalized literature as the sovereign's and solely sovereign's space during the establishment of the *new* regime, the Turkish nation-state. I am aware of the need for clarification of these arguments but let me return to 1909 first, so as to be able to reflect, afterwards, upon the *absence* of its promises.

## From 1908 to 1909

After a series of pogroms that targeted the entire Armenian population living in the Cilicia region (the many provinces and villages of Adana, Mersin, Tarsus, and İskenderun) and which left thirty thousand Armenians dead, the Constantinople Patriarchate assigned a Commission to investigate the aftermath of the massacres and to aid the stricken. Zabel Yesayan journeyed to Adana as a part of this commission in June 1909. In the three months that she stayed in the region, her main duty was to organize the search for orphans. In *Writers of Disaster*, Nichanian writes, "She returned to Constantinople the third week of September 1909, although her mission was far from accomplished. Something in her head had broken down. Her correspondence suggests that her departure strongly resembled a flight, as though she could no longer bear the horror displayed by the survivors, on pain of renouncing her own self, her person, her psychic integrity" (189) .

*Among the Ruins*, which is considered to be among the greatest works of Western Armenian literature, is Zabel Yesayan's testimony on what she saw and heard in provinces and villages of Cilicia. After returning to Constantinople she started to write. She wrote for one and a half years. The book was published in 1911. I am not in a position to discuss the essence of this work as I was able to read only parts of it; but I need to reflect on some aspects of it that have been discussed in the works of several people mentioned in the previous chapter. A major part of my encounters with others' encounters with Zabel Yesayan, involved, touched upon and were surrounded by this work, *Among the Ruins*.

Marc Nichanian is the person who has been deeply engaged with this text. A discussion about *Among the Ruins* is included in almost all of his works from differing perspectives. The philosophical discussion about testimony and witnessing

in relation to the genocidal will—approaching disaster as an event-without-witness since survival is always already denial, a denial of the genocidal will; seeing disaster as the end of testimony because what is expected from the witnesses is to bear witness to their own death; and understanding disaster as this very impossibility of witnessing—all this lies at the heart of these works. However here I would like to bring another discussion into the picture, citizenship through sacrifice.

Zabel Yesayan writes in the preface of *Among the Ruins*:

> My project was therefore to communicate to those who belong to our people, but also to our [Ottoman][15] compatriots, who have remained strangers to our reactions and our sufferings, the infinite misery I contemplated in deepest darkness for a period of three months. If I have been able to depict what has become of a people driven mad by the terrors of blood and fire, a people who, given over to senseless decisions, flees the ancestral land, if I have been able to express these nightmares that darken and make dismal even the sky of the fatherland to eyes blinded by tears, that render the climate inhospitable, and the earth dry and sterile as the breast of a mother deprived of milk for these emaciated and defenseless bodies . . . if I have been able equally to say with sincerity that these backs hunched over from the whip of persecution still have within them the force to will and to feel, that these souls are full of a sacred flame, I believe I will have rendered my service to the fatherland. Indeed, no one will ever again dare to approach with contempt and hatred these humble people who, armed with an unshakable faith, despite the intolerable injustices, despite the gallows raised on still-smoking ruins, will offer blindly, instinctively, their blood-stained and crumbling existences to all the currents of progress, in order to rise against the greatest danger threatening the fatherland, against the return of dictatorship, in whatever form and behind whatever mask it manifests itself in the future.[16] (Cited in "Catastrophic Mourning" 104)

It is very obvious in the passage that what Yesayan calls the "fatherland" is the Ottoman fatherland. She thinks that Ottoman compatriots, when they learn about

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[15] This section of the preface is presented in several works of Nichaninan such as *Writers of Disaster*, "Catastrophic Mourning" and "Zabel Yesayan: Woman and Witness, or the Truth of the Mask." In the first two the word in parentheses is translated as (Turkish), in the last one it is (Ottoman.) I have taken this last one as a reference, since is it the most recent work.

[16] In the Turkish translation of *The Gardens of Silihdar*, this preface is present in its entirety; but I did not wish to translate other parts of it into English because I am not sure about the sufficiency of the translation. Even this part seems quite different in the Turkish translation. Another Turkish translation of a paragraph from this preface to which I am going to refer soon is presented in Melissa Bilal's article on "Pavagan e!"

what has happened in Cilicia, will see that the victims of the massacre died for the fatherland, that as if they sacrificed themselves and will sacrifice again "in order to rise up against the greatest danger threatening the fatherland, against the return of the dictatorship." It is in this part of Yesayan's preface, that Nichanian descusses testimony as a function of citizenship. In "Zabel Yesayan: Woman and Witness, or the Truth of the Mask," Nichanian says that the sacrifice Yeseyan speaks of is a sacrifice not for the fatherland, but for the *new* fatherland. "They were sacrificed to the *new* fatherland, the one in which all be equal, all will benefit from equal rights, all will be citizens, and none will be subjugating/subjugated people." (43)

Yesayan concludes her preface by saying:

> What I saw and heard was capable of shaking an entire state to its foundations… This is the main feeling which drove me to write without reserves of any kind, as a free citizen, as an authentic daughter of my country, with same rights and duties that everyone has. These pages should be read not as the fruit of an Armenian woman's hypersensitivity but as the spontaneous and sincere impressions of a human being on the same level as everyone else. (cited in *Writers of Disaster* 199-200)

In these entire sentences one can feel Yesayan's insistence on keeping her faith alive. She still tries to keep the faith in the promising discourses of fraternity and equality that the 1908 revolution brought about. "As a free citizen" she calls for her Turkish compatriots to see Armenian victims as the victims who died for the *new* fatherland. Nichanian responds to the question whether Yesayan really believed in what she wrote or wanted to believe in it, by saying that "in any case, by her very act of writing, she became a citizen of her 'own' country" (42).

These aspects of Yesayan's work needed to be discussed for two reasons. First, it serves to look behind the *façade* that has prompted a move to see Halide Edib and Zabel Yesayan's lives in a linearity of parallelism. Second, after all these discussions Marc Nichanian asks a question; and I want to respond to this question.

In *Edebiyat ve Felaket*, Marc Nichanian asks, "which 'citizen' could hear Yesayan in 1911?" and he adds "I do not even know whether dear citizens in 1911 said a word on this issue or not. I would like to hear an explicit response on that" (53, my translation). My response will unfortunately be a semi-response because the 'citizen' who not only said a word but published an article on the issue was Halide Edib. However she did not do that in response to Zabel Yesayan; her article was published even before Zabel's journey to Adana. Still, it is the most explicit response to the Adana massacre that was articulated by a "Turkish compatriot."

## Those Who Died, and Those Who Killed

On the night of April 13, Halide Edib took refuge in the *American College* and a few days later fled to Egypt with her two sons. Before leaving Istanbul, she heard the news about the massacres in Cilicia; and apparently later on she received more news. While in Egypt, she wrote an article for *Tanin* and sent it to Istanbul. When the article, entitled "Those Who Died, and Those Who Killed," was published in *Tanin* on May 18, she was already on her way to London. Edib's article remained unnoticed for all these years; one wonders if it was just missed or overlooked for a reason. As far as I know only İpek Çalışlar mentioned and included a small part of it into her biographical book on Halide Edip, published in 2010. I will give space to the entire article.

> To my Armenian compatriots,
>
> A bloody nightmare of thirty years, a nightmare in which Death, picking and clawing with its bony hands, has shredded the breast of the motherland over which it spread its wings. A nightmare that has

caused blood and red tears to flow incessantly from the places where its dark shadow was cast.

Now that foul tragedy is withdrawing, but in the places over which it passes, it leaves thousands of extinguished bloodlines, ruined households, charred and barren native lands, tattered piles of human bones!

My poor Armenian compatriots, you are the most wronged, the most forsaken victims of the Hamidian nightmare! The excitement of rejoicing that has awakened in my soul at the sacred freedom being established for all time is now like a tearful smile before the tragic fortune of your somber and obliterated native land, your bloody corpses, your destitute and dislodged children. This national joy passes into bewilderment before the dark calamity in the eyes of bereft mothers whose children have been torn from their bosoms.

Before the ruins of Anatolia, whose bloodline has been extinguished, which from one end to the other has become a graveyard at which not merely the Turkish community but all of humanity is shamed, along with the despair and disgrace of being a member of the party that killed, my soul aches and moans for you with the pain of a mother, with the torment and bereavement of a mother.

Afterwards, I come to you from our heroic compatriots who, believing human life to be sacred, avoid and abstain from killing even their enemies, but who are prepared to spill their own blood for their convictions and their motherland; from the young Turkish martyrs with rush mats pulled over them who have passed before my eyes; from the graves of distinguished young ones, whose shining aspirations and dedicated desires have been extinguished; from the sorrowful mothers writhing upon these graves; from the orphaned children. In the name of this esteemed element I have come to you, humble and suppliant, to beg your forgiveness for calamities the likes of which had never been seen. I feel the need to share the grief of each and every one of those who have buried their loved ones in this terrible tragedy, to kneel at those wretched graves, from the smallest to the largest, and cry with the tears of my soul in the name of the nation to which I belong. Oh! Be certain that my heart holds the remorse and shame of the entire community, and the black grieving of my native soil.

Now it is your turn to speak, oh great and young Ottoman community! O new element which has in its army magnificent advance guards such as the Niyazis, the Envers, the Selahaddins, the Sabris, and the Şevkets, which poured its most exceptional children onto this land for freedom! Now you bear the honor of the Turkish community upon your swords. In the same manner as you toppled a massive throne in an onslaught of iron to take revenge for your comrades in arms and preserve constitutional government, so can

> your pure swords clean the blood of our Armenian compatriots who remain in the hands of the Turkish and of the Ottoman community. My advanced compatriots, our Armenian brothers are the brothers of the comrades in arms who spilled their blood for freedom.
>
> If you do not take revenge for the blood of thousands of compatriots, for an entire habitation reduced to ash, for a land turned to a graveyard from end to end, for these Ottomans who have passed into the earth with their children and their women; if you do not punish those criminals who, having no shame before humanity, have stained your nation, I believe that an eternal spot of disgrace will remain upon the Turkish community. (*Tanin* May 18, 1909) [17]

It is difficult to put words in order after such a powerful, screaming text. This is very explicitly the most powerful acknowledgement and condemnation text written by a "Turkish compatriot" regarding the Cilicia massacres. But this text does much more than acknowledging and condemning. It gives a name to the perpetrator of the massacre. While begging for forgiveness for being "a member of the party that killed" it reveals the perpetrators as Turks. Then, it divides the Turks into two, as the Turks of the ancient regime and Turks of the new regime. It provokes the new regime's Turks to punish those associated with the ancient regime. It claims an Ottoman fraternity between Armenians and the new regime's Turks, a *new element*. It ascribes a meaning to the shedding blood of Armenian victims as if they died for the motherland, for national freedom, for the sake of the new regime. And it calls for revenge. It calls for blood for blood.

I argue that Halide Edib's conflicting statements which both affirm and challenge the official Republican account of 1915 events, can be seen as a possible "space for collective mourning" only in the absence of this article. In this article there is no hidden mourning to be found. We do not have to seek an acknowledgement of the massacre in between the lines. We do not have to go after a

[17]I could not dare to include my first version of the translation in this study. I would like to thank to Yener Koç and Gregory Allen Key, for their helps in transcription of the article from Ottoman Turkish to Turkish and then its translation into English. The original article in Ottoman Turkish and the Turkish transcription of it can be found in the appendixes.

clue, after a word to prove resistance. This article is itself proof of resistance. The only question that seems to be waiting for an answer is: what is it that Halide Edib is resisting against? I argue that the prospective few years sufficiently showed that it should be a *who* question, rather than what: who is it that Halide Edib is resisting?

In both Zabel Yesayan and Halide Edib's sentences one can see that Abdülhamid's regime and its supporters are held responsible for the massacre. The "Hamidian nightmare" says Halide Edib. Yesayan too, when she warns about the "the return of the dictatorship," when she names it as "the greatest danger threatening the fatherland," refers to the Hamidian regime, to Abdülhamid's regime. Halide Edib obviously tries to convince "Turkish compatriots" that the Armenians died for the values that the Young Turks were fighting for. She does more than that. She writes to provoke: "Now it is your turn to speak, O great and young Ottoman community!" and right after she adds "O new element which has in its army magnificent advance guards…" On the other hand Yesayan, too, tries to give sense to the annihilation as a sacrifice for the new regime in which all citizens will have equal rights; in fact in the very act of writing she makes it so. She could not be more explicit in that: "we clung to this idea: 'we too had had our victims; this time our blood flowed for our Turkish compatriots. This will be the last time.'"(Cited in "Catastrophic Mourning" 105) But Halide wants the Armenians' blood that "flowed for Turkish compatriots" to be cleaned by Turkish compatriots with the same decisiveness that they showed while ending Abdülhamid's dictatorship: "In the same manner as you toppled a massive throne in an onslaught of iron to take revenge for your comrades in arms and preserve constitutional government, so can your pure swords clean the blood of our Armenian compatriots who remain in the hands of the Turkish and of the Ottoman community." She wants the "stained" name of Turkish-ness to be cleaned, by blood.

Can we say that both Halide Edib and Zabel Yesayan hold only the ancient regime responsible for the annihilation of Cilicia Armenians? Nichanian's response is a "no", not in Yesayan's account. Whether Yesayan knew or doubted the Young Turks' involvement in the Cilician massacres at that time or not, and even though, in her letters, she expresses mistrust of the Young Turks and in the chapters of her book states that after the "new regime" resigned power in the region "the Armenians were imprisoned, prosecuted, judged, condemned and hanged," she still insists on addressing both her Turkish *and* Armenians compatriots because of her hope of establishing a new regime on the grounds of citizenship, rather than ethnicity (*Writers of Disaster* 201). Thus, while referring to a *new* regime, to a *new* fatherland Yesayan does not necessarily give reference the regime that the Young Turks wanted to establish.

While examining Halide Edib's and Zabel Yesayan's enthusiasm after the 1908 revolution and the restoration of the Constitution, I had noted that we could not possibly know whether these two women shared a common hope or not. The only certain shared enthusiasms of these two women were about the end of dictatorship and an establishment of a *new* regime. It is possible to see in Yesayan's and Edib's quoted statements regarding the Cilician massacre, that they do not refer to the same *new.*

While Halide Edib is calling for revenge, swords and blood, she addresses Young Turks; thus she actually makes them the subject of the new regime, establishers, protectors, guards, and punishers of the new regime. While telling them that their "Armenian brothers are the brothers of the comrades in arms who spilled their blood for freedom" she does not refer to an equal brotherhood, an equal fraternity. Rather, while acknowledging the calamity of the massacre, while naming

the Armenians as "the most wronged" of the Hamidian regime, she names the Young Turks as the subjects who will right the wrong and wronged; and thus she creates a "brotherhood" of a big brother who will protect, guard and fight, and a younger brother who is devastated, wronged, ruined and waits for his big brother to punish the perpetrators of his tragedy. Edib's article is a call for duty, reminding big brother what his duty is.

This does not diminish Halide Edib's acknowledgement of the calamity as a calamity. However she seems sure that the only responsibility for this calamity is with the Hamidian regime. This was the common belief in 1909: "The 'liberal' revolution of the Young Turks in 1908, the reactionary backlash of 1909, the victory against the reaction in the days that followed, in April 1909, fostered the illusion of a democratic and liberal state within the borders of the empire." (*Writers of Disaster* 201) Both Nichanian and Bilal draw attention to Yesayan's faith in the establishment of a just state and her very careful language, her careful sentences in the preface of *Among the Ruins,* directed to both Turkish and Armenian compatriots and stemming from her insistence in keeping this faith alive. She wrote "What I saw and heard was capable of shaking an entire state to its foundations." Even here she expresses her faith. She already knew that neither the state nor the people were shattered or shocked after the massacre; but, if they had known, if they had heard, if they had seen it with their own eyes, she insists in holding on to this idea: "…This is the main feeling which drove me to write without reserves of any kind, as a free citizen, as an authentic daughter of my country, with same rights and duties that everyone has." This was Zabel Yesayan's *new*. She not only assigned herself equal rights but also equal duties. There is no big brother to call on to do his duty, in Yesayan's statements. The new regime she refers to not only involves a demand for equality

through citizenship. Yesayan explicitly claims equal subjectivity in the establishment of the new regime she imagines. By writing her testimony on the Cilicia massacres, she fulfills a duty, the duty of a citizen.

We do not know if Zabel Yesayan read Halide Edib's article. But we do know that it was translated into Armenian because eight days after Halide's article, an appreciation letter was published in *Tanin*, written by an Armenian woman and addressed to Halide Edib (May 26). The writer signed the letter as Madam Srpuhi Makaryân.[18] The letter starts out:

> To Halide Salih Hanımefendi:
> Kadıköy 11-14 May 1909
>
> I read with utmost interest in the newspaper *Pozantiyon* the translation of the article you wrote under the title "Those Who Died, and Those Who Killed." I cannot describe how moved I was. I in fact wept, unable to contain my tears from my excess of grief, and I caused those around me to weep!
>
> Just as the wretched Armenians, who are "the most wronged of the Hamidian nightmare" and who sacrificed hundreds of thousands for freedom's sake were rejoicing with the hope that they would now be safe from all manner of assaults on account of the constitutional government that the glorious Ottoman army had achieved, and on account of Ottoman fraternity, and that they would be entirely in possession of their natural rights, the grievous Adana massacre came to pass.
> It was so great a calamity that it saddened and distressed all Ottomans, and grieved the realm of humanity; how did such a deplorable event occur amongst a motherland's children who, just three days prior, had been getting along with one another like brothers and going about their business, and who had vowed that they would spill their blood to the final drop in order to preserve the constitutional government?... (*Tanin* May 26, 1909)[19]

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[18] Unfortunately Madam Srpuhi Makaryân's identity remains a mystery. Only an internet website refers to this name in a sentence: "The Anatolian Girls' Boarding School Report for 1901 has recorded a Srpouhi Markarian (Residence: Marsovan), Upper Preparatory Class" (2000-names.com) I thank Melissa Bilal for her help during the search; however the name did not show up in resources in Armenian, either.

[19] It must be noted that there seems to be a mistake about the date Makaryân notes while beginning to her letter because Edib's article was published on May 18, so the response to it could not be written between 11-14 May. However, in the end of her letter Makaryân also notes that she wrote the letter in Armenian and the translation was done by another person. The mistake about the date may also be stemming from the translation process. The Ottoman Turkish original text, its transcription in Turkish and in the English translation of the entire letter can be found in appendixes.

The theme of sacrifice finds its most explicit articulation in this letter. Armenians, who are the most wronged of the ancient regime, were sacrificed for freedom's sake at the moment when they felt the comfort of being safe for the first time. "The Ottoman fraternity", "possession of natural rights", the relaxation of security that was felt the first time by the guarantee of the Constitution; one can see the irony in sequencing here. Calamity and safety, annihilation and freedom, (Armenian) wretchedness and (Ottoman) fraternity, possession of natural rights and massacre, all go hand in hand. Clearly, Makaryân is not only pointing that the massacre came when it was least expected but also offeres a reminder of the promises of the Constitutional revolution. She quotes Halide Edib's addressing "the Hamidian nightmare" as the name of the perpetrator; she does not make any other statement beyond that. However she also expresses her doubts in the form of a question "Why were the necessary precautions not taken in a timely fashion, and why was cause given to so much bloodshed? … Even though these things are unknown to us at present, they will surely become manifest at the end of a just investigation."

There is much to discuss in this letter. However, regarding the scope and purpose of this study, I must return to Halide Edib. Certainly, Edib's article was a promising text; her words were a reason to keep the faith alive, a hope to return to the promises of 1908. Makaryân was grateful to her for providing this hope:

> My dear lady! In days of grief and pain, one feels affection and gratitude towards her fellow sufferers and towards those who offer her comfort: In addition to being a mirror of such sublime sentiments as your refined compassion and great tenderness, the article that you wrote is also for us very much a comfort and a provider of hope in these gloomy days. Thus do I offer you my thanks, in the name of all Armenian women.

Here we have at last come to the primacy of *encounter* and all the concerns of this study about encounter which I narrated in the last chapter. After my unachievable encounter with Zabel Yesayan, it was this encounter with these sentences of Srpuhi Makaryân that led me to think: how can one respond to an encounter? As I read those words of Makaryân and tried to imagine the state of mind she was in while writing them, while addressing Halide Edib as "her fellow sufferer," and while offering her thanks to her "in the name of all Armenian women," I kept thinking, did she expect a similar cry from Halide Edib in 1915? Did she expect to see anything in the newspapers written by her? Did she even have time to expect anything? What happened to Srpuhi Makaryân? Yes. I insist on this question. What happened to Srpuhi Makaryân? What happened to Zabel Yesayan? I argue that an ethical response to these encounters starts with asking for names, rather than with history's "what happened to the Ottoman Armenians?" question.

## Behind the *Façade*

This entire chapter was built on a *façade.* Now it is time to look behind it. The need for a portrayal of this *façade* derived from the necessity to manifest the underlying reasons of the tendency to draw a parallelism between Halide Edib and Zabel Yesayan's lives, either in terms of their leading roles within their communities or regarding the way they "delineated the Catastrophe." Here one more time I want to underline that I am not talking about a parallelism that could be drawn with regard to their writing. Rather what I call a *façade* consists of everything concerning Yesayan's and Edib's lives, except their literature. And I think more or less I was

able to display the elements that motivate the comparison of Yesayan and Edib or to bring them together. When one brings the basic biographical elements of their lives in linearity and attempts to find the parallelisms and separations within this linearity, one can succeed in that. Convincing or not, sufficient or not, it is possible to draw such a parallel. The façade, as I name it, is constructed through the elements that make such a parallelism possible, starting from wandering in the Üsküdar streets, to their early careers in writing, from their educational adventures, to their enthusiasms about the Constitutional revolution—i.e. elements that make up the whole initial narrative of this chapter.

However, when one pays closer attention, it is hard not to notice what a great difference lies behind even the aspects that seem most certainly shared in their lives or approaches, such as their zeal about the *new* regime. I tried to show this by giving samples from their writings which mirror their attitudes after the Cilicia massacres. What is at stake here is that such notice, such questioning of the similarity of the appearance was only possible through close attention to their *writings*, through interpreting them. That is why I suggest, that any attempt to discuss or picture Zabel Yesayan and Halide Edib in a narrative of parallelism, without reading their work, would be an illusionary assemble. Yet this could be the purpose of a work and I have no objection to this.

On the other hand, I argue that an analysis of literary encounters rather than this itch for a comparative analysis, can tell much more than any act of short-cut assembling can. And the difference between those two leads us to the difference I pointed out while ending the first chapter; revealing something and approaching it are two very different things. Encounter, if one gives primacy to the encounter and intends to give an ethical response to it, engenders the potential to approach whatever

is at stake in the moment of encounter. Then, after all these three chapters, since I have claimed that the starting point of this study was my encounter with Zabel Yesayan, can I finally ask what it means to give primacy to the encounter, and what it means to give an ethical response to it? What is that was at stake in my encounter with Zabel?

If one attempts to respond to her encounter, an encounter like mine with Zabel, the first question that is waiting for one is "why can I not go the whole length of this encounter?" What is cut halfway through? This is a simple question. Somehow I encountered Zabel Yesayan. Somewhere I heard or read some things about her. Then I wanted to approach her, to take my encounter with her to the next step. I could not. Why? I cannot read Armenian. Her works are not translated into Turkish. This seems like a simple answer which does not necessitate any further discussion. I agree. It is a satisfying answer, when you focus on "the stranger" that you have encountered. She is predestined to remain a stranger to you, until one day someone translates her books into Turkish. Is that it? Will you call it a pity and leave that encounter where it is and move to another one?

Another way around is also possible. Even though you cannot approach the stranger you encountered, you can welcome her and think on, discuss or analyze her state of being a stranger, as a representation of some broader issues, like historical exclusions. Nevertheless, either way, I argue that you will be missing the encounter.

In *Strange Encounters*, Sara Ahmed states that "the figure of the stranger assumes a life of its own only insofar as it [is] cut off from the histories of its determination, and hence only insofar as it erases the very forms of difference that render impossible the formation of an inclusive community." (6) Therefore, making Zabel Yesayan a stranger by simply accepting the language barrier as a satisfying

reason for not trying to get any closer to the encounter that leaves one stuck at the "introduction to Yesayan's world" level; or ignoring the language barrier as ignoring the fact that you cannot read her writing and welcome her, who hitherto remained a stranger, as an important figure of history to be investigated are not that different from each other. Here, I am talking about my encounter certainly and encounters similar to mine, those which are shaped by not being able to read her works in Armenian. Then, it seems like we have returned to the above question. If all these issues stem mainly from a language barrier, what is there to discuss? I cannot read Armenian. Her works are not translated into Turkish. That seems like the end of the encounter. Is this really a satisfying end? Since we have come thus far it should not be. I have written and you have read three chapters so far, basically because such an end was not satisfying.

What is at stake here is that our topic of discussion is not simply a language barrier. Zabel Yesayan is not simply a woman who spoke and wrote in a language different than my mother tongue. She is a woman who lived in the city I am living in now. She was one of the first leading feminists of Ottoman society. She even tried to start a women's solidarity organization for peace. Participating in the feminist movement and in feminist organizations in today's Turkey, I find that these are reasons enough for her to matter to me. In *Among the Ruins* she wrote what she saw in Adana, Mersin and other provinces and villages of Cilicia in that disastrous year of 1909. Born in Mersin, yes, I want to know what she saw in the town almost eighty years before I was born. Are these concerns too personal? I do not think so.

The fact that none of Zabel Yesayan's writing was translated into Turkish until 2006 and that the only Turkish translation is *Silahtar'ın Bahçeleri* is proof that insufficiency of the good intentions is not personal. It is not personal that until very

recently nobody in Turkey except for Armenians, ever heard of the name of this woman who was born in Istanbul, wrote about this city, called on all of her fellow citizens, both Turkish and Armenian, to notice what she testified to in Cilicia, and then warned them carefully that what was thought to be a state of exception might be the rule. No, this is not personal. This is truly *historical*. This is what it takes for the *new* regime to be established and what the *new* regime is. History certainly has an answer: It is nobody's fault if Zabel Yesayan and Srpuhi Makaryân and whoever else misinterpreted the *new*, the *new* fatherland, the *new* regime, the *new* state. In that ambivalent period between the old and new, only the *old* was given a name. The regime of Abdülhamid was declared to be the old, ancient regime of a dictatorship, but who could know that the *new* would only be a change in the form of authority and a shift – in the name of dictatorship? History always has a chain of reasoning so that we possess a sense of a particular meaning of each event that has happened.

While asking the initial questions of encounter, I have been struggling with the anxiety of sounding too abstract, too intangible. After all, a simple fact seems to be the source of this entire discussion; a language barrier or a lack of translation. Then I remind myself that what seems so intangible now, building a study on not being able to encounter Zabel earlier or completely stems from something that a hundred years ago was not that abstract. When Zabel Yesayan called on her Turkish and Armenian compatriots in the preface of *Among the Ruins*, even after what she had witnessed in Cilicia, the idea of standing side by side was not that intangible or abstract. When she referred to a new fatherland shaped on the ground of equal citizenship not ethnicity, this idea was not that intangible either. And there was a possibility then that what she hoped for and demanded would come true. What would happen then? Would it be this difficult for a person living in the same city in which

she was born to encounter Zabel Yesayan? I know I must not make any argument out of imaginary and delusionary flashback projections. But my point is, not being able to read her work, not being able to approach her through an encounter can easily and simply be considered as a language barrier because Zabel Yesayan was wrong, mistaken, because what she expected turned out to be a nightmare. History proved her to be wrong. Thus, considering this entire issue as a language barrier is to accept history's claim on the encounter. Also ignoring it, ignoring the trouble of this particular encounter, and welcoming Yesayan as a significant figure of the Ottoman past and locating her in the general processes of formation and destruction is to accept history's claim. Hence, to force this encounter to its limits, is also recognizing the one hundred year process of making the once tangible, an intangible now. And an ethical response to the encounter necessitates wandering at the limits of the intangible.

Encountering Zabel Yesayan, in today's Turkey, without being able to read Armenian asks for an ethical response, as the way every encounter does. The question follows question. "Why did I not encounter you before?" comes right after "why is this encounter cut halfway through?" Not being able to find any of her works in Turkish is not an issue of language barrier. One can certainly overcome this barrier by learning Armenian. That is what I have been trying to do every Saturday from 12 to 2 pm. However, the barrier I have been trying to reflect upon on differing and ambivalent grounds is certainly not that of language. It is the barrier of total erasure. It is the barrier of absence, and not any absence or absence *as such*, but the absence of Absence. Yet there is an entire chapter before we come to that.

Looking for a reason why the name Zabel Yesayan was not out there, available anywhere for it to be encountered nor "in" any text written in Turkish that

could provide the possibility of an earlier encounter, forces one to ask new questions. In the chain of unanswered questions, one starts to ask the most crucial ones when one recognizes the (inter)textuality of encounter, by giving primacy to the encounter, instead of focusing on the encountered: In this very moment of encounter, other than my desire to approach her and her being unapproachable, what remains? What other, prior encounters, missed or fulfilled, shape my encounter? And what other encounters are concealed within my encounter?

In *Strange Encounters*, Sara Ahmed states:

> Encounter between embodied subjects always hesitate between the domain of the particular –the face to face of this encounter- and the general – the framing of the encounter by broader relationships of power and antagonism. The particular encounter hence always carries *traces* of those broader relationships. Differences, as markers of power, are not determined in the 'space' of the particular *or* the general, but in the very determination of their historical relation (a determination that is never final or complete, as it involves strange encounters). (8-9)

This is exactly where the trouble of history begins. My encounter with Zabel Yesayan certainly carries the traces of broader relationships that frame my encounter, such as the process through which one of the two women that this chapter started with, by narrating their biographies, became completely absent in school books, in library shelves, in any text of the *new* regime whereas the other acquired a monumental presence as the newest of the new women of the new regime. In the previous chapter, I have pointed at that history makes a claim on every encounter. It has the ability to conceal itself in the encounter as if the general processes and prior encounters do not frame the particular encounter in a certain way. Furthermore, it is as if my particular encounter is so particular that it cannot qualify to address the general domain of broader relationships. However Ahmed draws attention to the very relation between this particular encounter and the general processes which is a

*historical* relation, as "differences, markers of power" are determined in the very determination of this historical relation. She reminds us that, rather than revealing what determines the primacy of the encounter, it is necessary to ask how? How is it determined? And how does this determination operates? How is the relationship between my particular encounter with Zabel and the general processes, such as the establishment of the new regime, determined? How does this determination work?

## (Dis)missed Encounters

Zabel Yesayan was designated to be arrested in April 24, 1915; she was the only woman among those Armenian intellectuals who on that night in April were among the 250 Armenians scheduled were to be arrested. Yesayan managed to escape the arrest and hid for several weeks in Istanbul. Then, leaving her son and mother behind she fled to Bulgaria; and from Bulgaria she went east to the Caucasus. There she assisted in caring for Armenian refugees and orphans, and was fully committed to writing the experiences of the massacres. As Nichanian conveys, "at the end of 1916, Zabel Yesayan was practically the first Armenian to gather the testimonies about the annihilation of the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire" (*Writers of Disaster* 218). She and her son would reunite with their family in Paris only in 1919. She went to Cilicia again in 1920, to help the Armenian orphans. She returned to Paris and lived in France until she settled in Yerevan on the invitation from the Soviet Armenian government in 1933. Only four years later in 1937 she was on another blacklist. She was one of the Armenian intellectuals who were arrested by the Stalin regime. She died in prison in 1942 or 1943. The exact circumstances of her death remain unknown until this day.

I had asked "what happened to Zabel Yesayan?" The above paragraph seems as if it is saying something but actually it is only some biographical information which tells nothing. All the works I have read on Zabel Yesayan tell of the turnabout in her literature after 1915. I cannot know this. I cannot know how she delineated the Catastrophe in her literature. But I can know and I do know that there is no possibility that Halide Edib's inability of "writing or representing the horror of 1915" could "echo Yesayan's delineation of the Catastrophe," as Adak suggests and I have quoted on the previous pages.

Hülya Adak's article "A Valediction to the "Interdiction of Mourning" of World War I…" as I have mentioned before, suggests that Halide Edib's *Memoirs* and *The Turkish Ordeal* with their "albeit contradictions and inconsistencies (affirming and challenging the 'Republican defensive narrative'), provide space for 'collective mourning' "(21). I have already noted that I agree that in the mentioned works, Halide Edib both affirms and challenges the official accounts about the 1915 events. However I cannot see anything in her contradictory statements that provide a path that can lead us to a collective mourning. I do not even think that Halide Edib's reflections in those works could be named as reflections on the "Catastrophe." If one approaches the Turkish account of events in Turkish history, historiography or Turkish literature, the initial fact that one has to face is that there is no Catastrophe. And I do not mean by this that the Catastrophe is denied. Rather I argue that there is no experience of the Catastrophe.[20]

[20] My usage of the word Catastrophe follows Benjamin who in "The Theses on the Concept of History", wrote through the metaphor of the angel of history that "his face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe that keeps piling ruin upon ruin and hurls it in front of his feet." (*Illuminations* 257) This is probably the best-known and most referred to text of Benjamin, and doubtlessly gathers to it an immense array of discussions. However for the purpose of this study and in order to stay focused to its purpose, I have only brought it into the picture to note that by Catastrophe, I refer to what the angel of history sees while staring at it: "a chain of events" as it is presented by history in truth "one single Catastrophe" woven through ruin upon ruin, that is history. "The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned,

I will be more explicit: I argue that we all know well and at the same time do not know any thing at all about what happened to the Ottoman Armenians. I mean to say whether it is called genocide or not, whether it is justified by historical context or not, we in fact do know that Ottoman Armenians were expelled, murdered, destroyed, exterminated by the will of the government. However, we know nothing about the experience of being the object of this will to annihilate. Most of Turkey, as we know well again, does not see what has happened as a topic of discussion, for various reasons. However even when we attempt to understand what has happened, the dominance of history over everything else forces us to speak through its language, forces us to investigate what has happened to Ottoman Armenians, forces us to reveal some fact about it; but nothing about the experience is ever approached. I know that we will never know the experience of being the object of this will to annihilate, but is there no other experience that can be approached? This study is in fact a quest for seeking a response to this question.

While I am suggesting that there is no experience of Catastrophe to be found in Turkish history, historiography and literature, i.e., constitutive texts of the new regime, I am specifically referring to the lack of any attempt that questions the *historicity* of this *historical issue*, any attempt to approach the experience rather than history, any attempt to make an approach to understanding what has been happening since then, and what is happening today, instead of what happened in 1915. I argue that what is at stake in my encounter with Zabel Yesayan is an experience, an experience of no name, no definition, no recognition. Encounter, given its primacy,

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while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress." (258) The chain of events that history presents us within a linaearity of progress does not only refer to the fact that history only speaks through the victor's voice. What is at stake here is not only revealing that history makes the chain from past to future through only the victories of the victors, but rather to approach that the concept of history is itself historical.

enables the potential to approach this experience and to name it, since it is a particular encounter which carries traces of broader relationships.

The historical determination of the relation between the "particular" and the "general" works to neglect this experience. On the one hand, what I encounter now, today and here never becomes a topic of discussion; due to the hegemony of history and historicity, the Catastrophe is taken into consideration as a matter of what is past and as a matter to be revealed. On the other hand seeking the traces of the Catastrophe in Turkish texts –both grand and singular—is considered again as a matter to be revealed. When experience comes into the picture as an experience of the Catastrophe, as in Adak's suggestion, although the traces are searhed in a particular text in relation to a broader general context, what would be the trace, what would count as a trace is already historically determined. That is to say *revealing* the experience of the "Catastrophe" in Halide Edib's writing as an inability to write or represent the horror of 1915 and claiming this experience to be an echoing of Zabel's experience of the Catastrophe, is *not to approach* either Halide Edib's nor Zabel Yesayan's experiences because there is no Catastrophe *as such*. And there is no experience of the Catastrophe *as such*.

Sara Ahmed suggests that "an ethics [of encounter] that responds to each other *as if they were other in the same way* is inadequate. Rather than just thinking of ethics as hospitality to strangers, I argue that the ethical demand is to work with that which has been already assimilated, in order to work with that which fails to be assimilated (that which cannot be found in the figure of 'the stranger'" (16). An ethical response to the encounter starts with forcing the limits of hearing, listening to what that particular encounter is speaking of, both in its particularity and in the general domain of relationships that frame it. In this way an ethical response to the

encounter engenders the potential to *approach* the experience that makes that encounter a personal and communal experience at the same time.

Thus any narrative of linearity tends to reflect the similarities and differences, meetings and separations between Halide Edib and Zabel Yesayan's lives; and failing to look behind the *façade*, misses and dismisses the encounter. What it misses is to give an ethical response to the encounter, i.e. hearing and listening to what the encounter speaks of; and by missing to give an ethical response to it, it also misses and dismisses the potential which the encounter engenders; that is the potential to *approach* instead of *revealing*, and break history's claim on the encounter.

I argue that what encounter engenders in the particular context of this study is the potential to approach the experience of what did *not* happen in 1915, and what has been happening since then. If it is not an experience of the Disaster, not of the Catastrophe, not of the will to exterminate and certainly not of witnessing the Disaster, then what is it?

Ayşegül Altınay and Hülya Adak, in the "Guest Editors' Introduction" that they wrote for the forty-second issue of the *New Perspectives on Turkey* state that "When analyzed as monuments in their own right, Turkish memoirs and fiction do not singlehandedly sever the interest of the national imaginary. Even those that have been showcased as perfect examples of 'national literature' (for instance, Halide Edib's *Ateşten Gömlek* [Shirt of Fire]) harbor contradictions and inconsistencies that unsettle the 'Republican defensive narrative' of 1915." (26) In the next chapter I will engage with this foundational text, *The Shirt of Fire*, from a perspective filtered through all the encounters that have hitherto been discussed in this study, and try to approach the experience which has remained unnamed until now, with regards to what is *present* and what is *absent* in it.

# CHAPTER 4

## SHIRTS AND OMISSIONS OF FIRE

In the article by Elif Şafak that I have mentioned several times throughout this study, one of Şafak's suggestions to scholars working in various fields is to conduct a comparative analysis of Halide Edib and Zabel Yesayan. While depicting the parallelism she draws between Yesayan and Edib's lives, Şafak refers to the two women as the two leading intellectuals in their communities, using the same metaphors and even picking up the same title for their novels ("Sürekli Sürgün…" 20).

At the end of the last chapter I also noted Ayşegül Altınay and Hülya Adak's comments on *The Shirt of Fire,* viz., even through one of those show-cases of national literature, harbors "contradictions and inconsistencies that unsettle the 'Republican defensive narrative' of 1915" (26). In another article, Hülya Adak, —in the one referred to above in the context of bringing Edib and Yesayan together,—focuses on the first chapter of this novel and argues that this section of the novel reflects "how the foundational myth of Turkey was founded upon 'collective amnesia' regarding the Catastrophe." ("A Valediction.." 24)

As Altınay and Adak have stated, *The Shirt of Fire* is commonly referred as one of the foundational pieces of Turkish national literature. It is considered a novel of the "War of Independence" (Moran 156); one of the masterpieces of novels of the War of Independence (İleri 218); "the founding text of the 'Turkish Independence

War novels' sub-genre in Turkish" (Köroğlu 2007); an epic literature of "National Struggle" (Enginün 1998, 60); the first testimonial novel of the War of Independence and Halide Edib's own testimony about it (Naci 139). There are also analyses of the novel on grounds other than that of the "War of Independence." Jale Parla, in her article "From allegory to parable: "Inscriptions of Anatolia in the Turkish novel" reads *The Shirt of Fire* as "an allegorical tale of the reclamation of Anatolia as the homeland." (14)

However the primal reason that *The Shirt of Fire* is the focus of the last chapter of this study is an open letter that is affixed at the beginning of the novel both as a preface and an apology. Halide Edib, in this open letter, apologizes to Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu for stealing the title from him while explaining why she stole it. According to her narrative, during a conversation between the two, Yakup Kadri spoke of his idea to write an Anatolian novel under the title "The Shirt of Fire". When Halide Edib admires this title and tells him that she would write a novel under the same title, Yakup Kadri warns her not to. After conveying this conversation that took place between them, Halide Edib narrates why she could not give up this title and pick another one. For her, the most powerful metaphor that could symbolize the state Anatolia was passing through was *shirt of fire*. She ends her letter in this fashion:

> I ask your forgiveness, Yakub Kadri, for taking this name which in itself expresses so much. If the name is stronger than the book it is not my fault.
>
> If time does not extinguish my "Shirt of Flame," there will be two stories of the same name [among Turkish novels] and fifty years hence, on the same [library] shelf they may find their tongues like the toys in the story of Hans Andersen and relate to each other the days gone by. Who knows – perhaps the shirt of flame which the [Turkish]

> youth of the coming days may wear, will be different from ours.[21] (xxii)

I must start by saying that the shirt of fire that the Turkish youth (and everyone else living in Turkey) wears has something in its fabric woven through these sentences. Is it an irony that Yakup Kadri never wrote a *Shirt of Fire* but Zabel Yesayan did? Obviously it is not on the same shelf with Edib's novel, it is not on any shelf of any library in Turkey. If it was, as Halide Edib imagines, would it find its tongue and would these two *Shirt of Fire* narratives relate to each other the days gone by? What would they tell each other? We will never know; it is difficult to imagine. As I argued at the end of last chapter, if calling on her Turkish and Armenian compatriots for what Zabel Yesayan hoped and demanded in 1911 while writing the preface of *Among the Ruins* came true, this would not be an intangible imagination. Once again a hundred years proved sufficient to make the once near-at hand demand an intangible and delusional flashback.

Halide Edib, while writing those sentences, did not only imagine a literary future relationship between her and Yakup Kadri's novels; she also named what was already determined to be included in and excluded from the library. What is remarkable in her translation are the words she preferred not to include in the English translation: "among Turkish novels," "library,""Turkish." In the original text the story, the book, the novel, the library shelf; all are glued to Turkish-ness; however in the English translation she left it out. Why? If one could speculate, one could say that Edib knew that what she wrote was going to be a foundational text or she wrote it to

[21] All the quotations from the novel are based on the English translation *The Shirt of Flame*, New York: Duffiled & Company 1924. Halide Edib translated her novel into English herself. However from the Turkish original to the English translation, there are some missing words, even sentences. Although I am quoting from the English translation I will give the missing words in brackets, because it is important to see which words or sentences Halide Edib preferred to leave out in her work of translation. In her translation Halide Edib also translated the proper nouns into English, I will keep the Turkish names instead. One last thing about the quotations from the novel is that although Edib herself preferred to translate the name of the novel as *The Shirt of Flame*, I will use *The Shirt of Fire* in this text which I think is a more accurate translation for *Ateşten Gömlek.*

be so. That is why she emphasized its Turkish-ness as much as possible—to emphasize what was being founded. It was calling on Yakup Kadri's name but was addressing a Turkish audience and Turkish readership after all. When translating her text into English to be published in the United States in 1924, she left the ethnicity out. The novel had already made its point, that something was about to be founded, but she did not choose to articulate it loudly as Turkish-ness. "The youth of the coming days", and "the Turkish youth of the coming days" reflects her changing priorities according to the audiences she addresses.

Time did not extinguish Halide Edib's *The Shirt of Fire* (which was her concern.) Rather, time lent it a monumental presence: it is a foundation text and it is a textual foundation. We have never heard of Zabel Yesayan's *Shirt of Fire* on the other hand, as we have never heard her name. Again, this could be explained sufficiently by saying that we are in the realm of Turkish literature. Yes. We are in the realm of Turkish literature and only in that realm. We cannot even imagine the realm of literature without a reference to an ethnicity; and most of the time we cannot even recognize that the term "Turkish literature" refers to an ethnicity. After all this is how hegemony operates; by neutralizing itself. Commonly, even "Ottoman" is equated to "Turkish," because in this particular region of the earth, everything under the sun has always been Turkish. How did this happen? I argue that Halide Edib's *Shirt of Fire* provides a clear picture for the process of this formation.

## *The Shirt of Fire*

In 1920, Halide Edib left İstanbul behind and fled to Anatolia to join the "National Struggle." For the following few years when she was part of the National

Army, she served as a nurse, soldier, press advisor, translator and did all kinds of required work of writing. She continued to write novels in this period. In June 1922, when she published *The Shirt of Fire* (Ateşten Gömlek) in *İkdam* in a serial form, it received great attention. The novel was immediately turned into a screenplay. The first screening of the film that was directed by Muhsin Ertuğrul was in İstanbul. The premier date was set on April 23, 1923, for the third anniversary of the foundation of National Assembly. The film also marks a significant pioneering: Muslim women, who were not allowed to act in screen or on stage, broke the ban of the screen with this film. Bedia Muhavvit and Neyyire Neyir acted in the leading roles of *The Shirt of Fire*. İpek Çalışlar tells us that the film which made such a great success could not reach further generations because all the copies of the film were burned in a fire at the Municipality (295). In 1950 Vedat Örfi Bengü once more adapted the novel into a film. The novel itself also marks another pioneering event. It was the first Turkish novel that was translated into English (Akbatur 165). Halide Edib, translated her novel herself. This translation was published by Duffiel & Company in New York in 1924. The novel was re-translated into English by Muhammed Yakub Khan in 1941 under a very long title: *The Daughter of Smyrna: A Story of the Rise of Modern Turkey, on the Ashes of the Ottoman Empire—the Turk's Revolt against Western Domination, His Thrilling Adventures, Sufferings and Sacrifices in the Cause of National Honour and Independence*; and published in Lahore, India by Dar-ul-Kutub Islamia. As the title hints, Köroğlu states that "this re-translation included important and symptomatic omissions and alterations."[22]

[22] This quotation is from the abstract of a paper presentation: Erol Köroğlu "Lost in Nationalist Translation: Configurations, Appropriations and Translations of History in H. E. Adıvar's The Shirt of Fire," Nation and Translation Workshop, Europe in the Middle East-the Middle East in Europe Research Program, Berlin, 18-20 June 2007. If published, I could not reach the workshop proceedings, however abstracts of the papers that were presented on the website "www.eume-berlin-de"

*The Shirt of Fire* depicts a three-year period from September 1918 to September 1921. The protagonist of the novel Peyami, refers to a certain date for the beginning of the story: "The day that Cemal came, the day that my mother said, 'The Bulgarians have concluded an Armistice,' the first lines of my story formed themselves" (5). Thus one can give an exact date for its beginning, September 29, 1918; and the story that Peyami narrates ends on the most difficult day in the Battle of Sakarya, the retreat of the Greek Army in early September of 1921. The dedication in the beginning of the novel is not surprisingly to the Sakarya Army.

The plot of the novel is built upon an intertwining of love for the nation and love for a woman. The story begins with the arrival of Ayşe in İstanbul. After her family was killed by the Greeks in İzmir, wounded in both her arm and her soul, Ayşe comes to Istanbul to stay with her brother Cemal, and thus enters the lives of the main male characters of the novel İhsan and Peyami. After a short period of time in Istanbul, all these four characters flee to Anatolia and join the "War of Independence." Ayşe, having lost her family in İzmir, is the bravest and most patriotic among them all. İhsan and Peyami, on the other hand throughout the novel oscillate between their love for the nation and their love for Ayşe; Peyami's patriotic feelings emerge through the passion he feels for Ayşe whereas İhsan, even though a great soldier, is always ready to leave the fight for a little sign of being loved back by Ayşe. Both the form and content of the novel employs unconventional elements. Although the plot seems like the most cliché story of the War of Independence, Jale Parla suggests that "the title with its double reference complicated the story" because in the end "neither the shirt of patriotism nor that of passion reward these national heroes with any sense of fulfillment" ("From allegory…" 15).

# Peyami's Dream: A Cry for Recognition

The renowned Japanese director, Akira Kurosawa's 1990-film, *Dreams,* is based on the actual dreams he had in different periods of his life. One of the dreams in the movie, "the Tunnel," begins with the walk of a Japanese army officer along a deserted road. The army officer gives the impression that he is returning home after war; his uniform, his body, his posture, everything about him seems ruined. When the officer comes to a pedestrian tunnel, frightened and nervous, he slows his steps to enter into the tunnel. When he comes out to the daylight at the exit of the tunnel, suddenly another soldier appears behind him. Private Noguchi, whom the army officer commanded in the war, with his pale blue face wants to follow the officer; but there is a problem. The soldier is dead, although he does not recognize his deadness. After a short conversation the officer, who is horrified by this sight, convinces Private Noguchi to return to the tunnel. As Noguchi disappears into the tunnel an entire platoon appears marching with their pale blue faces. The officer tries to persuade them to recognize their deaths, cries with the guilt of having survived while they have all died, and tries to convince them that survival is as bad as death. However the platoon stays mute, unable to recognize either their deadness or the officer's aliveness. They just keep still. The officer, who clutches at straws while trying to convince them that they are dead and he is alive, finally commands them to return to the tunnel. The platoon marches back into the tunnel.

Peyami's dream is the reverse. We read the entire *The Shirt of Fire* as a memoir that Peyami keeps in his hospital bed in Ankara. His legs are cut off and there is a bullet in his head. He waits for the operation, but to take the bullet out is too risky. The story and events that are narrated in *The Shirt of Fire* are intertwined with Peyami's reflections on them. Peyami begins writing his memoir on November

3, 1921 and writes the last note on December 17, 1922. However after Peyami's last note, there is one more page before the end; and this page complicates the entire story and novel both in terms of form and regards to content. The last page of the novel is entitled "Hatime" (end, epilogue) in the original text, but not given under a title in the English translation. This third-person narration depicts a conversation between two doctors who talk about Peyami's memoir. We learn that Peyami has died and that the doctors have searched for the names in the memoir. However none of them were to be found. There wasn't any commander named İhsan in the regiment Peyami refers to, neither was there a nurse named Ayşe. The only consistent name was Peyami's cousin Cemal; however he has died in the war, the doctor says. It was also true that he had a sister, but no one knows her name or her address. The doctors conclude that the entire memoir was Peyami's hallucination, stemming from the bullet in his head. "And then the two doctors held a long and scientific discussion over Peyami, who died during the operation, and they gave a difficult Latin name to his Shirt of Flame" (267).

Selim İleri interprets this ending twist as an expression of Halide Edib's account of the war—that all the events narrated in the novel reflect the shameful face of the war; and Edib, by making it all a nightmare in the end, expresses her wish that neither humanity nor Turkey would be obliged to see the face of war again (229). This interpretation I think, is quite unfair to Halide Edib; for, by taking her and her writing too simplistically, that interpretation does not explain why Edib expressed this wish only at the end of the novel.

Another interpretation of this unconventional ending belongs to Jale Parla who interprets the novel as "an allegorical tale of the reclamation of Anatolia as the homeland." (14) Parla's interpretation relies on the two female characters'

figurations within the novel and their positions in the symbolic order constituted around Anatolia. Kezban, who appears in the novel as a village girl in Anatolia, falls in love with İhsan but cannot get the response she wants because İhsan cannot think of or see anyone other than Ayşe. Parla asserts that "Ayşe, as the symbol of Anatolia, represents something that does not exist. Just as the idea of the motherland is an illusion that the patriot has invented, so is Ayşe the representative of that illusion in her inaccessible perfection. Kezban is the reality of Anatolia. And the patriot is ready to turn his back on that reality." (15) The ending twist of the novel appears in Parla's interpretation as a caution taken by Halide Edib ; "since this is a quite risky message to give, Halide Edip ends her novel in a way that baffles many of her readers…" (15)

The point that I choose to focus on in terms of this baffling ending, is something different. Even if the whole story is a game, if the bullet in Peyami's head works through a series of hallucinations, even if it has nothing to do with reality, even if it is a dream, I argue that among all other themes, it is also a dream of recognition. The war dead, as in Kurosawa's dream, do not follow Peyami as he walks, but they haunt his mind and his soul as he lies down on the hospital bed. The dead patriots do not keep still and mute before Peyami; but if they do not, then Peyami grapples with the pain of non-recognition. It is not like Kurosawa's dream; Peyami does not strive to convince the dead that they are dead as the Japanese Army officer; and it is not the guilt of surviving that eats him up inside. Rather Peyami cries for the recognition of the bullet in his head, the absence of his legs, his body ruined from head to toe. However, the dead are not there to look; and it is not anyone else Peyami cries to for recognition : "'Oh! İhsan! Cemal! Look! My legs are torn off, my head is broken. There was something condescending in the love you bore me

those days! Why did you die without seeing me thus? I also have been torn for these same eternal things, for honor, for my flag!'" (19)

In among all particular stories included in the narrative, among all the themes such as Anatolia, the National Struggle, the "people's war" that the narrative involves and develops, Peyami's "insufficiency" is an ongoing one within the novel. From the beginning to the end of the novel, Peyami constantly compares himself with others and confronts that something is lacking in his personality, appearance, devotion to the National Struggle and so on. compared to the others. He is older than they are. He is not attractive at all. He is a bureaucrat; not a natural-born soldier like İhsan or Cemal. His expertise is in papers, signs and stamps. He is not brave, he is not lissome, he is not as tough as they are, not even as much as Ayşe. And more importantly he is lacking in understanding what matters. Ayşe, with whom he fell hopelessly in love is actually the girl her mother wanted him to marry twelve years ago: "O God! A girl from İzmir and named Ayşe!" was his answer and he runs to Europe as quickly as possible (7).

The whole plot develops through the arrival of Ayşe in İstanbul. Thus, Peyami's lack to think and act correctly and his missing the chance to marry Ayşe twelve years before the story starts have significance. When Peyami falls in love with Ayşe it is already too late and he is consigned to the position of watching İhsan's love for Ayşe and observing her clarity in her priorities, "it is not the time to think about love." Peyami's story is built upon his first mistake of looking down on Ayşe whose recognition he then begs for, for pages: "The lives of those who swore on their swords before her, have been crowned with golden poetic deeds of heroism which will pass into songs of the people of the land …Of my oath like my loss no one knew." (192)

Peyami is also late in understanding what the National Struggle is and how much it matters; he is the latest one among all the others, and his commitment to it which develops through his passion for Ayşe is from the beginning to the end an insufficient commitment. Ayşe warns him by her letters several times to recognize what his duty is. But even when Peyami does recognize his duty, and is fully committed to the struggle, he ends up being the only character that does not die at the battlefield.

As the protagonist of the story, Peyami is the man who left his legs on the battlefield and was shot in the head. By simply not dying while all the others ended in the grave, he proves to be "insufficient" one last time, insufficient even at death. But at least he gave something of himself. Not only the absence of his legs but his entire ruined body cries for recognition: "You do not know it even now. See! I have no legs, but I have yet two arms to fight. Open your eyes Ayşe, cover that red wound on your brow. I am not more spiritless than the martyrs lying by your side or those who have died around you." (50)

*The Shirt of Fire* as a foundational text and textual foundation is open to various different readings. Although it is a genre novel aiming at narrating the National Struggle, it is a surprisingly rich text. İhsan's, Ayşe's, and Peyami's complicated feelings for one another complicate a story that would otherwise be a cliché narrative of a "War of Independence." From the perspective I suggest, of locating Peyami at the center of the novel, the surprise ending does not really torque the issues more; even if the whole story that Peyami narrates in his memoir is just a mind game, a hallucination triggered by the bullet in his head, it is still a cry for recognition and a man's mourning at not being recognized. Peyami's shirt of fire—which the doctors, after a long scientific discussion, give a difficult Latin name—is

the impossibility of being recognized, since the recognition he seeks has to come from the dead. What is striking in his cry for recognition and Halide Edib's mastery in expressing the pain of non-recognition is that, on another level *The Shirt of Fire,* is the masterpiece of non-recognition and denial.

## Inner Necessity

Hülya Adak refers to the first chapter of *The Shirt of Fire* by asking "what foundational myth could be more cognizant of itself?" ("A Valediction 24) This question itself expresses the dazzling performance of the narrative of the foundation of a nation that is more or less the main "work" of the entire chapter. I will not re-narrate this narration; in one long quotation one can see the formation narrative in its perfectness.

> I think of the first days after the Armistice in Istanbul. The officers of the Café Meseret met in my house and we decided to create a true propaganda to make our righteous griefs known to European nations. (…)We thought propaganda was the only cure for our national malady. The old and dusty officials of the Sublime Porte, the princes, the Sultan, the Unionists and the Ententist Party all threw themselves into this movement. I remember those days with a cold tremor. All mankind put a black mark on our faces, and spat at it. They, (the victor's world,)[23] considered us not only as the assassins [massacres] of the Armenians but also as enemies of civilization because we went into the war with the Germans, destroyers of civilization. We were barbarous and tyrannical and it was the duty of civilized men to exterminate us. Under this heavy sentence we did not despair; in our naïve and childlike souls we decided to correct this black belief the entire world held concerning us. We thought that the moment we proved the falsity of all those calumnies, Europe would see the righteousness of our cause. We would put our demands into a humble and acceptable form. We would publish articles in our defense in the papers and we would translate and send them to Europe. We would seek out the foreigners who came to Istanbul and tell them the real state of things in Turkey. The [Turkish] youth of Istanbul tried to

[23] There is no phrase such as "the victors' world" in the original text. It is added to the English translation.

> come in contact with foreign correspondents; even a cultured woman tried to have a drawing room, where she could invite the foreigners and defend her country's righteous case. (…)None of us understood how childish and ridiculous we were. Even the newspaper of the rival political parties stopped for a minute their poisonous hatred of each other. But –those who suddenly discovered their non-Turkish origin kept aloof and sought to act as if they were foreigners. They joined (those Turkish citizens of the past,)[24] the native Greeks and Armenians, and all of these started quite a different and opposite propaganda and in every house in Istanbul this topic dominated. As I analyze those days now, I realize that all this was done to meet our own inner necessity. (…) Our group was putting forth strictly sober and true propaganda. In each gathering we discussed and compared notes on the doings of the civilized world, and found them our superiors in committing those very crimes and follies of which we were accused. Once convinced of this we separated with as quiet a conscience as if the world had heard and had absolved us from our sins. The more we felt the strength and the righteousness of our cause, the more we felt the world must already know it. Perhaps this was the only beautiful part of this childish and subjective propaganda. For to suffer what we have suffered and to be able to throw ourselves into the voluntary martyrdom of our great war of Independence we needed first and most to be convinced and to believe in ourselves. (20-23)

Where to start? There is a national malady and the only cure for it is propaganda. The national malady is the black mark cast by "all mankind" on the faces of all Turks and on the Turks as a nation. This black mark which the civilized world imposed on the Turks is the accusation of massacring the Armenians and allying with Germans, the destroyers of civilization. All Turks of Istanbul, even the groups that are in opposition to each other, came together and worked collectively to *remove* this black mark and prove that the accusations were not true. Everyone supporting the propaganda believed that when they express themselves well, European nations would understand that they were wrong about Turks. Then there begins a period of expressing this by every means possible—by articles, by interviews, by one-to-one interactions, through all possible techniques that Turks use to express themselves. Only the ones who suddenly discovered their non-Turkish origins after the Armistice

[24] This phrase is not from the original text either; it is an additional definiton in the English translation.

do not support the propaganda; rather, collaborating with Greeks and Armenians they initiate counter-propaganda. Peyami, reminiscing about those old days depicts this period as a naïve, childish effort. He notices the impossibility of the success of their goal. However, he also sees that the propaganda worked for another cause. It met the inner need of Turks to convince themselves to commit to the national struggle, to believe in themselves.

Where to start? Absence, I suggest, would be an appropriate point at which to start. In this long narrative of the collective effort to clean the stain on the name of Turks for being guilty of the massacres of Armenians and of being enemies of civilization, what is absent? The naming of the cleaning supplies. The propaganda narrative that continues for pages, only narrates different groups' efforts to express themselves as Turks to European nations and show that the accusations were not true; but it never refers to a single argument that was used as an expression of the innocence of Turks concerning the accusations. While the desire to "prove the falsity of all those calumnies" is repeated again and again, the narrative lacks even one single example of how that falsity would be proved to be one. Hence what the narrative of propaganda narrates is in fact a collective mobilization, through denial and of denial.

"All mankind put a black mark on our faces, and spat at us. They, [the victor's world,] considered us not only as the assassins [massacres] of the Armenians but also as enemies of civilization because we went into the war on the side of the Germans, destroyers of civilization." (20) In the Turkish original this phrase "the victors' world" is absent. The only addressee of the statement is "all mankind." How are we to understand this additional phrase affixed to the English translation? How does *all* mankind transform into "the victor's world?" And how does the phrase

"massacres of the Armenians" (Ermeni kıtalini yapan) get transformed into the assassins of Armenians? What is at stake in the use of these words is not an act of translation but also a work of transformation. Halide Edib certainly knew the differences between the words and phrases that were used for 1915 events, and what kinds of differences they referred to. After all, "naming" is not just a contemporary problem. Ayhan Aktar remarks that the Ottoman parliamentary debates of 1918 were shaped around the issue of terminology, too; and the articulated namings were *imha edilmek* (to be annihilated), *cinayet-i azime* (macabre murder), *Ermeni kıtali* (Armenian massacre) and *Ermeni faciası* (Armenian catastrophe) (163). Hence, it is obvious that while translating the massacre as assassin into English, Halide Edib's translation was operating as a softening, a softening of the sense and meaning of the crime that the Turks were charged with. Edib's act of translation was marking another denial.

Yet the narrative of propaganda also marks a hegemonic relation: there is a civilized world out there, and then there are barbarous and tyrannical Turks. Those Turks are striving to prove that they are not barbarous and tyrannical at all; rather they, too, are civilized members of a civilized nation who use civilized technologies to make their "righteous griefs known to European nations." The black mark cast by the victors' world on the faces of Turks also implies an expulsion from Europe, from the civilized world of which Turkish intellectuals considered themselves to be a part. The additional phrase "the victors' world" on the one hand evokes a hegemonic relationship, on the other hand serves Edib to make a political analysis of history. She expresses her understanding of the relationship between history and the victor. When, in the victors' world, someone is considered to be something, that particular someone eventually becomes that particular thing. Naming is what history does

through the victor's voice and victor's language. Thus, she refers to the victors' world as the world of history writers, name givers, definition producers; but once again, Edib makes this analysis only when it is not she who holds the power and sits on the victor's seat.

Another significant address within the narrative of propaganda is to "those who suddenly discovered their non-Turkish origin" and "kept aloof and sought to act as if they were foreigners. They joined [those Turkish citizens of the past,][25] the native Greeks and Armenians…" (22) Here one more time, there is an additional phrase at work to make a claim and a very foundational one. Greeks and Armenians appear to be Turkish citizens of the past. In the beginning of this chapter I noted how the word Turkish is equated with Ottoman in the contemporary realm. Here is the seed of this equation. Halide Edib started to write this text in 1921 and published it in 1922. The promises of the 1908 revolution and Halide Edib's own text "Those Who Died, and Those Who Killed" were not only forgotten in fifteen years but first replaced, then completely erased through instituting this Turkish base. Halide Edib who wrote a screaming text, mourning and condemning the Cilicia massacre, and which constituted both its mourning and condemnation on Ottoman soil (fatherland) and in Ottoman fraternity, here writes a denial of herself by claiming the Greeks and Armenians to be Turkish citizens prior to the Armistice. Thus she does not only erase the Ottoman citizenship, but also makes the Greeks and Armenian betrayers who stabbed the Turks in the back benefit from the Armistice, denying them Turkish citizenship, as if it was such before these foundational texts. Thus Greeks and Armenians and those who suddenly discovered their non-Turkish origins become the "malevolent people at home" that I focused on in the first chapter.

[25] This phrase is added into the English translation.

In sum, through this narrative of propaganda from chapter one of *The Shirt of Fire* Halide Edib already signs who is in, who should be out, and who the malevolent people are at home and abroad. Bringing all those sign and signatures of "Turk" together with collective mobilization through denial, and with the oscillating balance between the rage due to the expulsion from Europe and the desire to be a part of it, it all becomes crystal clear why *The Shirt of Fire* is a foundational text and a textual foundation. The most significant element in this narrative, however is its functioning to meet an inner need. "As I analyze those days now, I realize that all this was done to meet our own inner necessity" (21) As Hülya Adak puts it, how could it be more cognizant of itself? Fixing the elements of foundation, and expressing this fixation meets the inner need of Turks "to be convinced and to believe in" themselves in order to commit themselves to foundation. The text could not be more explicit and cognizant of itself.

## Other Necessities

Armenians are not only referred to with regard to the "unjust claims of massacre" in *The Shirt of Fire*; rather, there is a very consistent and elaborate picture of them, malevolent in every sense. Halide Edib's *The Shirt of Fire* is one of the pieces which reveal an animosity and a hostility for the entire non-Turkish population in the Empire's territory, in a very direct and harsh manner. As a reminder let me note that the novel was published in June 1922, and it was four months later, on November 1, 1922, that the newly established parliament in Ankara abolished the Sultanate to seize sovereignty for the new regime, the Turkish nation

state. The animosity and hostility —especially targeting the Christian population— expressed in the novel should be read in the context of the sign of the nation state.

The protagonist of the novel, Peyami, is very explicit in defining the malevolent people at home: "The uncleanest and deadliest poison flowed from the perfidious and insulting publications and deeds of the Native Christians who considered themselves the instrument chosen by the Allies to trample on the Turk." (33) The "perfidiousness" will be another theme which persists to this day, regarding the non-Muslim population in Turkey.

All these discourses of animosity and hostility are grounded in the text, as a reaction to the narrated hostility and animosity of these groups towards Turks. In other words, the antagonistic elements are Armenians and Greeks and all those who suddenly discovered their non-Turkish origins and who hold a grudge against Turks; by collaborating with imperial powers, they work against Turks and their "noble fight for independence." In *The Shirt of Fire*, the everyday life of Istanbul is portrayed as proving this perfidiousness: "How could we allow her to enter a tram while the Greek and Armenian conductors, sure of English protection, continually peered at the Turkish woman?" (31) Proving betrayal and malevolence, —instead of the grand narratives at the level of everyday life— these discourses on Armenians and Greeks also operate to prove the justness and nobility of the "War of Independence," since they work to show how things would be in the absence of "independence".

Although the story of the *The Shirt of Fire* is narrated by Peyami, Ayşe also participates in the narration through the letters she wrote to Peyami. Depicted as a victim of the Greek massacre, Ayşe, the most committed and patriotic of them all, in her articulation of the discourses on Armenians, is even more explicit.

> When Ahmed Aga came to inquire after my health I felt more than joyful. He was the head servant in the Foreign Office. The Armenians in the Russian army had massacred his wife and his babies in Erzurum and he vowed an eternal enmity to the great power who upheld the Armenians as 'a martyr race'. The 'extinguishers of Turkish hearts' he called them, picturesquely. (69)

> I veiled and opened the door. An Armenian interpreted for a whole legion of English officers he grinned with his mouth opening to his ears in great triumph. Poor Slave! I liked the Armenians even when they were in revolt against us, but when he is slave and servant of the English he is ridiculous. (73)

> He said that yesterday he had tried to come to my house but the Armenian and Greek children stoned him in uniform so that he could not proceed. (75)

So here are the seeds of all the contemporary discourses articulated in the public sphere and in official statements concerning the "Armenian issue." The Armenians started the massacres first. First they killed "us." Collaboratively with the Russians, they would have annihilated "us" all if we had not deported them. The deportation was a political necessity of war. They dismiss "us" with the lie of genocide so that they could play the victim. The genocide is just a matter of lobbying at the international level, being used as a trump against Turkey when it is necessary. Turks had never had hostile feelings against Armenians; the Ottoman Empire was a territory of fraternity; all the subject-nations were welcomed by ethnic and religious toleration, but "we" saw that they were all waiting for the right moment to stab "us" in the back. Whenever there is an opportunity they will prove their perfidiousness again. They raise their children as enemies of the Turks.

These are the discourses about Armenians that *The Shirt of Fire* deploys; and we have already seen that they worked well, not only in terms of comprising the "Armenian issue" pertaining to these discourses, but also constructing the "us" of the Turkish nation-state. However in terms of the purpose of this study there is yet something more significant that *The Shirt of Fire* institutes.

## On "Delineation of the Catastrophe"

In the last chapter following Hülya Adak's argument that "Edib's own inability to write or represent the horror she witnessed in 1915-1916 echoes Zabel Essayan's delineation of the Catastrophe …" I argued that Halide Edib had perfectly separated what Adak calls her "delineation of the Catastrophe" into two different accounts, two different narratives and that neither of them can "provide space for 'collective mourning'" as Adak suggests, due to this very act of division. Later on in the same chapter I also suggested that in Edib's contradictory statements about 1915 there is no path that can lead us to a collective mourning. Moreover I objected to the evaluation of Halide Edib's reflections on 1915 in her *Memoirs* and in *The Turkish Ordeal* as reflections of the Catastrophe. Finally, I am at the point of engaging these arguments.

In the article mentioned, Hülya Adak suggests, to scholars working on World War I that they analyze what she calls "public archives," i.e. auto/biographical and fictional narratives mainly for two reasons. She states that "Literature (both auto/biographical and fictional sources) could serve history first, crudely as historical evidence (or possibly 'fact' or as alternative sources of 'memory'), and second, as texts exploring sites of unfulfilled possibility and desire (utopia)." ("A Valediction…" 21) I have already explained that my perspective in this study is pretty much the opposite of Adak's suggestion—that is, despite history's blackmail of *revealing a matter* through facts, evidence, proof, to *approach a matter* through literature. Therefore from my perspective, history would be the last field that literature offers anything to; secondly, literature is the very field that could reclaim the approach to what has been distanced by history from sight and experience. This initial distinction between Adak's and my perspectives must be noted because the

reason why we interpret the same statements of Halide Edib differently most probably lies in this initial distinction.

Let me repeat Adak's aim in the article I have already quoted in the last chapter. Adak aims to show that the *Memoirs of Halide Edib* and *the Turkish Ordeal: Being the further Memories of Halide Edib* exemplify texts which, albeit with contradictions and inconsistencies affirm and challenge the 'Republican defensive narrative' and provide space for 'collective mourning.'" (21) Adak quotes two passages from Halide Edib's *Memoirs* that reflect her resistance to the "massacres of Armenians" from two different aspects. In the first passage Halide Edib conveys a conversation between her and Talat Paşa, and comments on it critically. Edib starts her narration with a clear definition: "There are two factors which lead man to the extermination of his own kind: the principles advocated by the idealists, and the material interests which the consequences of doing so afford certain classes." (387) Hülya Adak chooses this passage as an example for it shows Edib acknowledging that Armenians were exterminated and her disagreement with Talat Paşa on the need for this will to exterminate in the interest of national causes and priorities. I agree with that. It is one of the few passages in Halide Edib's *Memoirs* where she carefully distances and separates herself from the Unionists, whom she holds responsible for the massacre of Armenians. I also agree that, by starting her story with the explanation of the motive for "man's extermination of his kind", Halide Edib names and acknowledges the will to exterminate as a governmental will and expresses her disapproval for that kind of governance.

In the second passage that Adak quotes from the *Memoirs*, Halide Edib reveals her state of mind in the year of 1916:

> The two months from September to November 1916, were to me the most painful during the war. I was in utter despair; the great calamity and hopeless misery which overwhelmed my country seemed to be everlasting. The war seemed endless and human suffering unlimited. I was unable to write a line, if there had been a monastic life for women in Islam I should have entered it without hesitation. (*Memoirs* 431)

Upon this passage Hülya Adak claims that "if studied as 'monuments' as texts in their own right, and in their own complexities, not all Turkish egodocuments serve the 'seamless' Turkish public archive of 'non-event.' Rather, they serve as 'mausoleums' for the losses on the Turkish side and also on the Armenian, Kurdish, Greek sides." (27) One can see that Adak's text is directly addressing Marc Nichanian and responding to his analyses on the "destruction of the archive", "genocide as a non-event," "texts from document to monument" regarding the Armenian Catastrophe. I think one of the problems of Adak's analysis comes to the surface at this point.

What Blanchot discusses in *Writing of the Disaster* as a response to the Holocaust, whose factuality Lyotard questions in *The Differend: Phrases in Disputes,* or what Nichanian aims to approach in his works through Armenian literature is the experience of Disaster. Their motive is not to reveal the context but to approach the experience of it; and although each work is very different from the other, one common point in all these works arises as a result of this approach: it is the impossibility of an experience of Disaster, the impossibility of grasping what Disaster is, and the impossibility of narrating, picturing, representing it.

Throughout this study I have avoided entering into an argument regarding Disaster or Catastrophe because my aim is not to understand what Disaster or Catastrophe is. My encounter with Zabel Yesayan, which I have repeatedly claimed to be the starting point of this study, did not lead me to approach what Disaster is;

rather it led me to the experience that arises in the absence of Disaster. But at this point, since we have come to the "delineation of the Catastrophe" I have to touch what I have been avoiding and postponing for some time. I must note that I will dwell on some names and some works, if only to clarify my perspective on the concepts of Catastrophe and Disaster.

In the last chapter, I suggested that there is no Catastrophe *as such* and there is no experience of the Catastrophe *as such*. What I wanted to point to through this statement was that what makes the Catastrophe the Catastrophe is the experience of it which is an impossible experience. The Catastrophe is not a period of time, it is not an event in history, and it is not a fact among the other facts of the past. The word Catastrophe does not refer to the things that happened in 1915 either. The Catastrophe is an experience of the impossibility of experience; plenty of works have discussed this since the Holocaust. And numerous works among these works have reflected that the ones who have become the victims of a genocidal will, suffered the most severely from the impossibility of experience, and the impossibility of witnessing (see Blanchot, Lyotard, Derrida, Felman, Agamben, Nichanian.) Let me very briefly point to some milestones in this discussion upon which my perspective is based.

Levinisian ethics—which created an entire tradition of ethics and which is built upon the concept of the other, an ethics is only possible in relation to another—is itself born out of the experience of Disaster, namely the Holocaust. Maurice Blanchot, who wrote one of the massive texts of Disaster, wrote his book partially as a response to Levinas' late ethical philosophy that was presented in *Otherwise than Being*. In *Writing of the Disaster*, Blanchot stated that "...the disaster, unexperienced. It is that which escapes the very possibility of experience –it is the limit of writing.

This must be repeated: the disaster de-scribes. Which does not mean that the disaster, as the force of writing, is excluded from it, is beyond the pale of writing or extratextual." (7) Disaster as it appears in Blanchot's text is a phenomenon that is never present, which can never be isolated in a temporality or history. By the name "Disaster" Blanchot does not refer to a specific, determined disaster. Although the ground of the Holocaust is explicit in the book, Disaster contains some infinite Disaster in it.

Derrida also approaches Disaster as a "limit experience" between nothing and something; however, he gives a name to it. He refers to the Holocaust. Derrida's approach to Shoah finds its shape in the image and concept of cinder: "the name of trace, namely, something that remains without remaining, which is neither present nor absent, which destroys itself, which is totally consumed, which is a remainder without remainder. That is, something which is not" (Points ... Interviews 208). What Derrida depicts through the image of cinder is the disappearance of the presence of the event.

Lyotard on the other hand is one of the first philosophers who questioned the factuality of the fact regarding the Holocaust. In *Differend* he wrote: "Either the situation did not exist as such. Or else it did exist, in which case your informant' s testimony is false, either because he or she should have disappeared, or else because he or she can bear witness only to the particular experience he had, it remaining to be established whether this experience was a component of the situation in question." Disaster as the destruction of the fact and impossibility of witnessing was most explicitly articulated by Shoshana Felman. When she introduced the Holocaust "as the unprecedented, inconceivable, historical occurrence of 'an event without a witness'–an event eliminating its own witness" she laid bare that the witness

cannot bear witness "from either inside or outside the events of the Shoah" but can only bear witness to a breakdown of witnessing (*Testimony*… xvii).

Agamben, criticizing Felman for not interrogating "the threshold of indistinction between inside and outside," in *Remnants of Auschwitz*, in fact also arrives where Felman draws attention. He speaks of a lacuna—the missing part—which puts testimony as the disjunction between two impossibilities of bearing witness: "Language, in order to bear witness, must give way to a non-language in order to show the impossibility of bearing witness." (39)

Marc Nichanian, among all those mentioned, is the only philosopher who builds his work on the Armenian Catastrophe. I have already dwelt on his critique of western philosophy and ethics which approaches what is called Disaster or Catastrophe by only referring to the Holocaust, efforts that define the distinctive features of the concept of genocide on the ground of the Holocaust. Nichanian, on the other hand reflects on testimony and fact in regards to the "genocidal will." "The genocidal will, par excellence, that which compels the victim to prove, to have recourse to the discourse of evidence….In this originary matrix, in the very moment when testimony turns about and becomes a discourse of proof, the victim 'knows' that the genocidal machine that has crushed him had the goal of destroying the very notion of fact." (223)

This review is too brief to actually reveal anything about the point of the discussion. However I only intended to signify the sources that shaped my view and perspective on the concepts of Disaster and Catastrophe. Furthermore, my perception about these concepts and my preference for the dazzling concern for which word to use, which name to choose, are two different things. To be clearer, let me put it this way: I have a certain perception about the concepts of Disaster and

Catastrophe as they are used in the above mentioned literature. I have then, a preference to name what I once named Armenian Genocide as the Catastrophe. In the last chapter I had noted that my preference follows Benjamin who has given the most explicit picture of history as Catastrophe.

Thus, when I say there is no Catastrophe and there is no experience of Catastrophe *as such*, I am objecting to the equation that is assumed through bringing Zabel Yesayan and Halide Edib together, in terms of their "delineation of the Catastrophe"; I am objecting to any attempt which tries to understand, to approach what Disaster or the Disaster is through texts of the Turkish account –grand or particular— which tells nothing about the experience of being the object of a will to exterminate; and I am objecting to any attempt which tries to understand or approach the texts of the Turkish account, —again grand or particular—as evidence, proof of the Catastrophe.

Certainly there is an experience of what has happened and what has not happened *in* and after *1915* in the Turkish account. And this particular experience is what I am trying to approach. However this experience and the experience of those who have become victims of the genocidal will, in this case the Armenians' experience of the impossibility of experience are not the same and cannot be equated on any ground.

My point is, what the cited literary work is built on is quite different from developing an analysis of discursive statements concerning the "Catastrophe." I do not mean to say that kind of analysis is insufficient, lacking or unnecessary. Rather I think a discursive analysis through close reading of the narratives and statements on the massacres of Armenians in 1895, in 1909 or in 1915 may bring about fruitful debates. What I see as the insufficiency of such discursive analysis appears only

when it attempts to respond to the experience of the Disaster –which is the very impossibility of experience- by discourse.

And with this same reason I object to Adak's argument that "Edib's own inability to write or represent the horror she witnessed in 1915-1916 echoes Zabel Essayan's delineation of the Catastrophe as 'infinitely indescribable, indefinable, and incomprehensible (Nichanian, "Catastrophic Mourning" 115)." (Adak "A Valediction…" 27). Since Adak too, like me, is incapable of approaching Zabel through reading her works, what she knows about her "delineation of the Catastrophe" is from others' and especially Nichanian's reflection on it. And what Nichanian aims at is to approach Disaster through literature, through the limits of language. He reads Yesayan's works in their entirety and in their relation to other texts; and in these texts he reads repetitions, absences, grammatical peculiarities. What he states about Yesayan's delineation of the Catastrophe is filtered through this massive work of reading her, approaching her.

On the other hand, what Adak suggests as Halide Edib's inability to write and represent the horror of 1915 rests upon Halide Edib's own, single statement articulated in the ground of her memoir. How can those two be possibly brought together? How can one echo the other? Even if Adak was able to read Yesayan's works and even if she had developed her analysis on Halide Edib's delineation of the 1915 events through a holistic approach instead of a discursive analysis of one single statement, still Yesayan as a person, who experienced being the object of a genocidal will, the will to annihilate, and Edib knowing nothing at all about that experience, could not be brought together on the ground of echoing each other's "delineation of the Catastrophe."

Moreover if one wants to approach "the horror Halide Edib witnessed," there is a much more explicit text to look at. However, once acknowledged, the text I mention forces one to ask an inevitable question: how come this experience, this witnessing, is not transmitted in Halide Edib's literature? How come there is no sign of it? And to respond to this question, one has to think and rethink on what literature is, not any literature or literature as such, but Turkish literature and on its foundational relation with absence.

## "Having Lost Something in Life that Can Never be Regained"

Until now we have covered several absences. We have discussed the fact that the Prime Minister Erdoğan's and all Turkish officials' insistence on discussing the "Armenian issue" on the ground and within the frame of the archives, derives from their confidence in what is present and what is absent in the archives. Then, we have encountered the absent pages of my book through my own narrative of encountering Zabel Yesayan. The absence of Turkish translations of Yesayan's works and the absence of Yesayan's name in Turkey were also reviewed. Encounter as a key concept has been discussed in terms of the absence of recognition — the potential it engenders to dismiss history's claim. And in conjunction with that dismissal, the absence of response has been argued. We have also dwelled on the absence of personal experiences with texts in scholarly works. However none of those is the absence that this study aims to *approach*.

In the last chapter I brought up an article of Halide Edib on the Cilicia massacres which had remained unnoticed and which was in fact the most explicit

mourning and condemning narrative of the massacres, written by a "Turkish compatriot." This time I will refer to another text of Halide Edib which again has received almost no attention, a letter she wrote while in Syria to the Ottoman Minister of Finance, Cavid Bey.

When Cemal Paşa was inducted as governor for Syria in 1915, he summoned Halide Edib there to establish schools and orphanages. It was after about a year of her being in Syria, when she wrote this letter to Cavid Bey on March 1, 1917. The quotation below is from the part of her letter which she narrates the things she witnessed there.

> …I came to Syria when they were going through rather unfortunate times. That's why I have become so enamored of Syria and the Syrian people. In fact I have never seen a refined, unblemished country of such beauty. Its evenings make the horizon, mountains, seas, and human hearts weep, just as human eyes weep. Indeed, these days it seems that this country always brings people to tears. In their suffering, there is something so deep and downtrodden. Especially the Armenians, there are so many of them who, in their unfortunate circumstances, have only been able to find the right to live here in this place, and they swear by God and the saintly Cemal Paşa. There are many staying in one of the school buildings. They came here after surviving on weeds in the desert, and before they came, many of them lost mothers, fathers, and children. To put it more correctly, Cemal Paşa had them brought here. The municipality provides them with some food, and this is where they live now. These unfortunate souls and I immediately became fond of each other. I am busy attending to the women and children. We started a school for the young ones, and are giving them an education. A young schoolmistress, a Russian Turk I brought with me, has been working with them with the dedication and conviviality of an angel. A twelve year-old Armenian girl whose mother died of starvation and whose father was killed before her very eyes found refuge here. The aggrieved girl, with her doleful eyes, follows me around and weeps, kissing my hand. In the yard, another tragedy unfolds. There is a hapless victim who suddenly lost the power of speech when his son was killed in front of him, and he knows nothing about where they took his other son and the rest of his family. Barefoot and eyes burning with sorrow, he constantly makes signs about the calamity that befell him. Some nights, like a woman whose child has perished, he grieves and grieves, his head in his hands. Sometimes during the day as I write, I can hear him sobbing. I run to the window, and in the yard below he moves his

> hands, showing how his voice disappeared into the sky when the bullet pierced his son's heart. There are hundreds, thousands like this. The orphanages are filled with half-starved, destitute children who have lost something in life that can never be regained. The Armenians tell me, "We waited two sleepless months for you. Do something for us. In this world, we have just Cemal Paşa, and you." But what can I do? Wherever I go, they weep, showing me scenes of misery. In Damascus, after they had guided me around the narrow streets for an hour, they took me to a place when men and women told me of their suffering, and one particularly stoic looking man suddenly broke down in loud sobs. It is always like this! Can't the new cabinet do something at the very least to mitigate the grave consequences of this cruelty and murder? Can't the cabinet grant human rights to those who survive today? If I could pay with my own life for this calamity and hideousness, I would. But what is my life? Nothing, and not just that, but a petty, trifling nothing! (*Talat Paşa'nın Evrak-ı Metrukesi* 149)[26]

This letter is certainly witnessing something; but certainly it is not the Armenian Genocide, Disaster or Catastrophe that it witnesses. Halide Edib only depicts a slice of time of the Armenians' situation in Syria in 1917. In other words the witnessing that this letter conveys is of a very specific space and time.

What Halide Edib witnesses is the suffering of Armenians who "have only been able to find the right to live" in Syria. She is very clear in what she says: "right to live." They could only find that right in Syria which means they were deprived of the "right to live" where they came from. And it was not an easy journey that they made while seeking a place where they could have a "right to live." Most of them were not able to do it. Those who did "survived on weeds in the desert" and lost their families, saw death from starvation or murder before their very eyes. A barefoot man who lost the power of speech, the girl with doleful eyes weeping and kissing her hand, the stoic looking man who breaks down and sobs; Halide Edib narrates her encounters with them. This is completely different from generalities like the one

[26] As far as I know this letter was included in a book for the first time in 2000: İnci Enginün, *Araştırmalar ve Belgeler*, İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları. And in 2008 when Murat Bardakçı finally decided to publish the documents which he kept in his personal archive for years, he included this letter in the book *Talat Paşa'nın Evrak-ı Metrukesi* in its entirety.

quoted in her *Memoirs* in the previous pages, where she mentions the calamity of war.

This is a letter, after all, that she did not address to any public audience. She addresses it to Cavid Bey, who had just become the Minister of Finance for the fourth time. In the beginning of the letter, she congratulates him for his assignment. One feels the underlying vexation in her congratulation. She emphasizes that she did not believe when she heard Cavid Bey was assigned the Minister again; and she did not believe it even the second time she heard it. Then she saw it in the newspaper and she was very surprised. She does not hide this: "You must have considered this as beneficial for the country." She wishes him luck and adds "If you could enable a liberal change in terms of internal affairs," that would be a benefit.

One could say that this attitude of Halide Edib stems from her disapproval of the Unionists' policies regarding the Armenians depriving them of the "right to live." That is why there is an underlying resentment in her congratulation to Cavid Bey that he decided to stay "in" whereas she is "out." Halide Edib, in this letter clearly depicts herself as out, both left outside and remaining outside. At the end of her letter she even expresses her wish to find a secure home for her sons who are in Istanbul, as if she will never return to being "in." She emphasizes that the time in Syria proved to her that a person is always on her own in life, that the friends, the people who love her and whom she loved back are just a "fleeting imagination." She says "I have thought about this calmly, and accepted life as it is"; if only she could find a secure home for her sons, a place they can be safe in until they grow up. Clearly she wrote this letter from "outside" to "in."

Her resentment was expressed by her disbelief that Cavid Bey stayed in parliament for one more term, by her wish about the liberal change in internal

relations, and the narrative about her encounters with Armenians which came right after her wish, which could be interpreted as a sign of her critical position. However, as I have often stated, this interpretation would only be history's concern about Halide Edib, a historical figure. Besides if one is after a historical revelation like this, she or he has to take into account the statements and arguments that assess Edib's mission in Syria to be that of assimilating and converting Armenian orphans.

What matters for the purpose of this study are the encounters Halide Edib depicts, no matter how she depicted them or for whatever reason. It is through her encounters that Halide Edib articulates the closest perception that a witness, an outside witness could probably perceive of what she witnesses: "having lost something in life that can never be regained." The orphanages are filled with those children, Edip says; the children who are half-starved, destitute and "have lost something in life that can be never regained." I argue that here lies the significance of this letter. Instead of history's questions—whether Halide Edib acknowledges the Armenian genocide, whether she acknowledges the Unionists' intended genocide or whether her statements prove a resistance against official discourses—in this letter Halide Edib acknowledges the impossibility of grasping what Disaster is.

"Having lost something in life that can be never regained" not only refers to the irretrievability, irrevocability of what has happened but also expresses the inconceivability of it, the impossibility of perceiving what has happened. The "something" in her phrase underscores this. These children have lost something that *can be never regained*. Yes. But these children have also lost *something* that can be never regained. What was it that they lost? Halide Edib acknowledges that the answer is beyond her perception, beyond the nameble, the definable. That "something" comes through Halide Edib's encounters. It is the encounter that Halide

Edib approaches, in this letter; and it is the encounters –she depicts three specific ones—that enables her to approach her own position as an outside witness of an unnamable suffering. Not Armenians' experience, not genocide, not Catastrophe; she makes a move towards approaching her own out-ness, her own outsider-ness.

There are many more things to debate in this letter of course. The "right to live," "human rights," discourses on Armenians' faith in Cemal Paşa and in herself, attending women and children, paying for the calamity with one's own life, and the many words, sentences, expressions could be discussed from various perspectives. However, the relevance of the letter for this study is not what is present in it, but rather its absence. Its absence as an effect, as a trace, even the slightest sign that could be encountered in her literature; and the reason for that absence is what I have been trying to approach from the first page of this study until now.

## Encountering Absence

Blanchot writes: "the enigma (the secret) is precisely the absence of any question –where there is no room even to introduce a question—without, however, this absence providing the answer" (31). In the beginning of this chapter I suggested that Halide Edib's *The Shirt of Fire* provided a hint about how the social imaginary of today, about the territory in which we are living, constituted the understanding that everything here had always been Turkish. However the hint *The Shirt of Fire* gives is not the signifying of the new nation-state by Turks and the depiction of primarily Armenians and then Greeks and all "Native Christians" as malevolent people at home, as noted under the headings, "Inner Necessity" and "Other Necessities." Rather, I argue that Halide Edib's *The Shirt of Fire* is a foundational

text in which lies at its being a textual foundation for Turkish literature. In other words through *The Shirt of Fire* what Halide Edib accomplishes is to institute literature as the site of writing history, in the absence of her own history of encounters, witnessing, and recognitions in it.

What is absent in *The Shirt of Fire* is not Armenians, not their annihilation by governmental and genocidal will, not the depiction of one single Armenian or Greek or someone non-Turkish as a human being without a reference to the "perfidiousness" of their ethnicity. No, not these. Rather what is absent in this foundational piece of literature is Halide Edib's own experiences, encounters and witnessing which she had expressed in non-literary texts and contexts.

What is absent in *The Shirt of Fire*, are not the promises of Ottoman fraternity and equality which were tangible demands of a very recent past; rather it is Halide Edib's own recognition, belief and promise about those which she publicly claimed in that anguished article, "Those Who Died and Those Who Killed." What is absent in *The Shirt of Fire,* which depicts the suffering of a man, Peyami, in the absence of the recognition he asks for, so vividly, is any attempt or even discourse on the recognition of absence.

There are so many *why* and *how* questions. Why and how the Armenians whom Edib called the "most wronged of the Hamidian nightmare" in the article she wrote after the Cilician massacre," when they became the objects and victims of a much greater nightmare, and were deprived of their "right to live," (as Edib calls it in the letter she wrote to Cavid Bey,) are only represented as a dissembling "martyr race" who are the "extinguisher of Turkish hearts," as servants of the English, as a perfidious betrayer people and as enemies of the Turk? Why and how the Armenians, which Edib depicted in her letter about her encounters in Syria as surviving "on

weeds in the desert," destitute, witnessing their whole families' murder before their very eyes and "having lost something in life that can be never regained" is only mentioned in *The Shirt of Fire* as the people –collaboratively with "all mankind"— who put a black mark on the faces of Turk and Turks as a nation?

Why is the "massacre of Armenians" or, as Edib preferred to say in the English translation, the "assassinations of Armenians" only mentioned in *The Shirt of Fire* as a slander, calumny, a lie to "put a black mark on Turks to and spit on them." What happened to the "eternal spot of disgrace" that Halide Edib claimed would stay upon the Turkish community if those who were responsible for the massacres of Cilician Armenians were not punished? What happened to the "calamity and hideousness" that Halide Edib wanted in her letter to "pay for it with her own life" if her life would mean anything?

The answer is simple but not easy. All those experiences, recognitions, encounters were simply left outside of the borders of literature. Halide Edib, through *The Shirt of Fire*, not only draws the borders of the nation-state; she also draws the borders of literature. She determines the *in* and *out* of literature; those which serve the cause *are in*, and those which could create a confusion about the cause *are out*. Halide Edib establishes that literature is to "meet the inner necessity" which we have read of in Peyami's voice in the first section of the book; literature is one of those *technologies* to be used to express Turks' righteousness. It should not be surprising then, she did not translate her previous novels into English, but this one. It is a matter of propaganda.

However this simple answer is not what I am after. Literature has always been a means of propaganda for many people and many causes. What is compounded here is that the only realm that Halide Edib (as the author of the article, "Those Who

Died and Those Who Killed," the letter I quoted in the previous pages and the writer of the critical statements in her *Memoirs* and *the Turkish Ordeal*—which caused Hülya Adak and many scholars to investigate her resistant statements) is consistent and coherent in, in terms of her discourses, is literature. In other words, in her literature there is no room for conflict, contradiction or disapproval of the official discourses; she reserves those for non-literary contexts and texts.

But it is not same for every issue. For example gender, one of two main themes in her novels reflects much of Halid Edib's personal history, encounters, problems and world view. As a woman who entered a man's world at an early age and who made a claim on a man's world, who strived to prove herself to men, who struggled with them and who acquired a respected and powerful position in their world, Halide Edib depicted most of her women characters as educated, intellectual, brave and patriotic women, who in these qualities at least, could claim equality with men. Although throughout the novel these women characters learn how to relinquish their personal quests for national causes and their femininity for motherhood, sexuality for family, Halide Edib creates this literary world out of her experiences and troubles fitting into the social world surrounding her as a woman.

Some of her female characters display great similarities to herself (Enginün, Moran). The female characters of her first novels experienced similar problems as she struggled with, so much so that, for example, when *Seviye Talip* was published, the "intelligentsia" of the Turkish community was shaken by the rumor that Edib had fallen deadly ill because of Salih Zeki's extramarital affairs (Çalışlar 85). In her novels, we encounter two different kinds of female characters: the first one is conscious of her femininity and sexuality, passionate, struggling between her desires and social norms; and the second is patriotic, self-sacrificing, divested of sexual

desire and personal interests for the sake of national cause (Kandiyoti 160). From time to time, these two female characterizations also merge into one and form the ideal modern Turkish woman (Sirman 2004). In each case it is through a woman that the novel develops its discourse. Sirman points at how these gender depictions operate: "The modern Turkish woman is a subject with a specific kind of agency, a socially competent individual who, as a result of her education is able to cultivate her mind, but who also, through love, learns to sacrifice self and desire for the care and guidance of others in the family and in the nation" (2000 263).

What I want to point at is that in terms of gender –one of the two main themes in Edib's novels—one can see that the female characters and issues of gender that Halide Edib constructs in a literary world are built through thinking, imagining, idealizing, reproving, but definitely reflecting Edib's world and her world view. One can follow traces of Halide Edib in the main problem she sets up in the novel, and in the solution or transformation she points to for it. However when we come to the second theme that her novels are built around, this is not quite so. And I do not mean to say *The Shirt of Fire* does not reflect Halide Edib's own world view on nation and nationalism, but I argue that what is reflected is not a *worldly* view.

*The Shirt of Fire*, together with *The Clown and His Daughter* (Sinekli Bakkal) and *Thrash the Whore* (Vurun Kahpeye) is Halide Edib's most well-known novel; in fact it is almost exclusively through her nationalist novels that she is known and recognized. Her *Memoirs* and the second volume of them, *the Turkish Ordeal: Being the Further Memoirs of Halide Edib,* written in English, are not known at all. Besides, when *The Turkish Ordeal* which was published in 1928 was translated into Turkish in 1962 under the title *Türkün Ateşle İmtihanı*, there were many missing

parts, paragraphs, and modifications in it.[27] That is one of the reasons for which I disagree with Hülya Adak's suggestion to take these works into considerations as "public archives." Even if they would be considered as "archives" they are not public at all. What is public is *The Shirt of Fire*; and I will suggest that, rather than archive, it is a document in the *arkheion*.

In *The Shirt of Fire*, one cannot find any sign or any trace of Halide Edib's mental struggle with the issues of nation and nationalism which she tries to approach through the literary world she constructs, as she does about the issues of gender. One cannot find any inconsistency in her approach, any resistance or any kind of contradiction in the official discourses on the "Armenian issue." One cannot find any sign that there was a life once which was not solely Turkish and that she was born into and lived through that life, the life in *The House with Wisteria* that she depicted as a microcosm of coexistence: "Circassian Aunt Fikriyar, Albanian and Gypsy foster nurses, Kurdish relatives and servants; Islamic rituals of the Muslim world, Orthodox funerals take place side by side in the everyday life" of Istanbul (Aksoy 87). It is as if Armenian friends at the College and Greek nursery school and the never mentioned Jewish origin of her father were never once part of her experience of life.

In *The Shirt of Fire* one cannot see any trace of that terribly busy year of 1908, when the words of Ottoman fraternity, equality, freedom circulated in the air; one cannot even imagine that it is the same woman who begged Armenians' for forgiveness in 1909 for being a member of the party that killed them, who wrote this text. In *The Shirt of Fire* one cannot find any sign of Halide Edib's witnessing in Syria, not the barefoot man who lost the power of speech, not the girl with doleful

[27] In *Tarih-lenk*, Hakan Erdem gives the account of all the missing parts and alterations while the book was translated into Turkish. Hakan Erdem, *Tarih-lenk*. İstanbul: Doğan Yayınları. 2006

eyes weeping and kissing her hand, and not the stoic looking man who breaks down and sobs before her—no sign at all of her encounters, no sign of her inability to write due to the horror she witnessed.

All those people that Halide Edib encountered, knew of, spoke to, had a life with (or had at some point of her life); all those that she once imagined, demanded, witnessed and acknowledged are absent in *The Shirt of Fire*. More importantly their absence is absent. *The Shirt of Fire* is the point where the naming of the "Armenian issue" starts because Halide Edib manages to make it a *historical issue* only seven years after 1915. It is already an issue of calumny. It is already an issue of "all of mankind against Turks." It is already an issue of cleaning the stained name of Turks. It is already an issue of propaganda.

She accomplishes this by bringing all those particular absences together and making them absent altogether. If there was even one single acknowledgement of an absence—the absence of an Armenian friend, the absence of an ideal once she believed in, the absence of an encounter she might have missed, the absence of a promise she made, the absence of a condemnation she uttered—she would have to explain that absence. She would have to explain why something that was there once is not there anymore. She reserved these explanations for non-literary texts and contexts. She wrote them in her *Memoirs* in between paragraphs.[28] She implied them with a word, with an indirect reference. But literature has always been the realm of absence of absence. She separated out what Adak calls "her delineation of Catastrophe" (and what I prefer to call her delineation of the events of 1915) into two

[28] For example in her *Memoirs*, right after depicting her criticism for Talat Paşa and a speech she gave in Turk Ocağı (which Hülya Adak suggest proves a resistance) she says "I saw the Armenian question quite differently from the way I see it to-day." (387) Even this statement on changing her mind on an issue can speak of an absence. Let me simplify: it could be interpreted that what she says is, "yes, I thought this way at the time, but now this view is absent in my work because I changed my mind." Even this could be an acknowledgement of an absence. But literature lacks any recognition of absence.

different realms. She did this perfectly. Literature, in this division, became the realm of sovereignty, as Edib would call it, the realm belonging to the "victors' world." It became the realm of history writing. That is why it is a foundational text—not because it depicts the "War of Independence," not because it determines the new nation-state's in's and out's, not because it fixes the "all mankind is against Turks" discourse. No. It is a foundation text because in its textual foundation it conceals and constructs at the same time, foundation's initial step, that of making all absences, absent.

*The Shirt of Fire* is no public archive. It is a document in the *arkheion*, an utterance of the law. It "recalls the law, calls on and imposes the law" (Archive Fever 2). In the first chapter I argued that modern *archons* invite historians to the *arkheion* to reveal what has happened to Ottoman Armenians because they know there is nothing in it which can reveal anything. It is the same with *The Shirt of Fire*. There is nothing in it that can reveal what has happened to Ottoman Armenians, or what happened in 1915. But by reading *The Shirt of Fire* after and through all the encounters I have related in the previous chapters, another question is engendered: what has not happened in 1915? And the answer is bewildering: Some people suddenly became absent, but they left no absence behind them.

# CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A LITERATURE OF ABSENCE

Who is the subject of absence? Is it the one who is absent? Or is it the one who *feels*, acknowledges the absence? For a moment let's assume that the answer is the absent; that "the absent" is the subject of its absence; but still there must be someone who acknowledges the absence, because absence is not non-existence. Because absence defines a state of being that was "once there" but not any more. Because absence always necessitates someone that will acknowledge this un-being of once being. If "the absent" is the subject of its own absence, then, who is this someone and what is her relationship to absence, if not the subject of it?

Let's try the other way around. Let's assume the one that acknowledges the absence is the subject of absence. But then who is the one that became absent? (How, by the way, does someone become absent?) And what is the absent's relationship with its own absence, if she is not its subject? Is it that the absent is also deprived of being the subject of its own absence?

If absence is only possible to think and talk about with and through acknowledgement, then, it is acknowledgement what makes absence. Or is it? Then what happens when an absence is not recognized? What happens to "the absent" who cannot acknowledge their own absence and whose absence is not acknowledged by anyone?

Let's simplify this. Let's say I, as the author of these sentences, suddenly left a sentence in the middle and disappeared somehow. When I disappear do I become absent? This does not sound right. Only when someone notices my disappearance,

for example the ones who know me and who know my presence, when they encounter my not being present any more, I become absent. I become absent *for them*. They name me. But what if when I disappear, all those that could possibly acknowledge my absence, disappear with me? Maybe then, a mark of me in this world, anything, a mark marking that I was once present, will be waiting to be acknowledged; for example if one finds my sentence cut halfway through, then, I might be absent.

But, how can we possibly know whether the absence which one acknowledges is the absence that "the absent" left behind? How can the acknowledging subject acknowledge an absence which she cannot possibly perceive; prior to its absence what was its presence? This is the main recognition about absence that this study arrives at. There is no possibility for one's acknowledgement of absence to be the absence of the absent. These two cannot be equated. These two cannot overlap. This is where I am trying to go with all these questions on absence, with respect to the conclusion of this study. Probably there is nothing to conclude. It all started with Zabel Yesayan. It was a naïve wish. I wanted to *touch* her. And the more I wanted touch her, the more I touched her absence. But here started the complication. What I encountered as the absence of Zabel Yesayan, was not her absence. It was only my acknowledgment of an absence as her absence.

The question of "who is the subject of absence?" is not an attempt to assign a subject to absence nor is it an attempt to enter into a discussion about subjectivity at the end of this study. It is only an attempt to ask how "some people suddenly become absent; but they left no absence behind"? How can this be? How is it that no one in the Turkish account has talked about, written on, or narrated an absence that they *felt*, *experienced* regarding the Armenians which were *present* beside them for ages and

so suddenly became *absent*. Disaster was experienced by the Armenians. Yes. But why is there no sign of an experience in the Turkish account about what was left to them and with what they were left after the Disaster which targeted the Armenians?

There is nothing to conclude, only something to approach. What was at stake in my encounter with Zabel Yesayan was an experience, an experience with no name, no definition, no recognition. I argued that, encounter, given its primacy, engenders the potential to approach this experience, since it is a particular encounter which carries traces of broader relationships. And since we have come this far, I now can name it as the experience of absence, but not as Zabel's absence, not absence as such, rather the absence of Absence. (I will come to that capital A in a few minutes.)

When I asked the questions "what happened to Zabel Yesayan?" and "what happened to Srpuhi Makaryân?" instead of "what happened to the Ottoman Armenians?" I did not mean to deny that something happened to Ottoman Armenians. We all know what happened to them and at the same time we have no ideas about what happened to them. The whole turmoil around the "Armenian issue" as I reflected in the first chapter derives from this duality; knowing well and knowing nothing at all. We all know that they are absent; but there is no sign of their absence. By denying, by negotiating the "G" word, by organizing conferences at universities contravening the university's mission, by conducting historical research, by trying to prove it was a genocide or it was not a genocide, by opening archives, by threatening Armenian immigrants with deportation, by revealing historical texts as the delineation of the Catastrophe, there is one thing we know for sure: the ones who are called the Ottoman Armenians are absent. However there is no sign of their absence because one thing we know nothing at all about is the experience of absence; and that

we know, only asking by "what happened to Zabel Yesayan?" or "what happened to Srpuhi Makaryân?" instead of "what happened to Ottoman Armenians?"

Certainly there is an experience of what has happened and what has not happened *in* and *after* 1915 in the Turkish account. And this particular experience is what I tried to approach. However this experience and the experience of those who have become objects and victims of the genocidal will are not the same and cannot be equated in any ground. I object to the idea that the "Armenian issue" as it is named in Turkey has anything to do with "social amnesia" or "collective forgetfulness" about the Catastrophe which would mean that the Catastrophe was one recognized, grasped in consciousness and approached, and then somehow it disappeared from the social consciousness and conscience.

In *The Writing of the Disaster,* Maurice Blanchot states that "…even we boldly separate forgetfulness from memory, still we seek only an effect of forgetfulness (an effect of which forgetfulness is not the cause) – a sort of hidden elaboration *of* the hidden which would keep separate from the manifest…" (85). Rather than seeking the underlying reasons behind the hegemonic attitude of denying the genocidal will of 1915 and rather than holding on "collective forgetfulness" as an effect of this official and hegemonic attitude of neglecting, I argue that an effort to approach what is at stake, what resides in and what it is that *makes* the particular encounters of today can lead us to another question than what has happened to Ottoman Armenians.

I argue that what encounter engenders in the particular context of this study is the potential to approach the experience of what did *not* happen in 1915, and what has been happening since then. In the first chapter I stated that all the turmoil I described around a conference organization, all the turmoil about "what happened in

1915?" is not anything about the past, but rather the here and now. Encounter if not missed, enables one to understand this because encounter, if not missed, is the presence of an experience here and now. And it is that experience enables one to look behind the *façade.*

An ethical response to the encounter starts with forcing the limits of hearing, listening to what that particular encounter is speaking of, both in its particularity and in the general domain of relationships that frame it. In this way an ethical response to the encounter engenders the potential to *approach* the experience that makes that encounter a personal and communal experience at the same time. That is why it was through Halide Edib, that I came closest to understand what was at stake in my encounter with Zabel Yesayan. This is one thing that comparing these two women writers as two historical figures, could not possibly accomplish.

I read Halide Edib's *The Shirt of Fire* as a foundational text and as a textual foundation. But I read *The Shirt of Fire* in the presence of my entire encounters thus far up to reading *The Shirt of Fire*: the encounter with Zabel, with the ones that wrote about Zabel, the ones that mention Zabel in even a single sentence, with the temptation to compare Zabel and Halide, the motive to make them meet and separate in history, Zabel's call to her Turkish and Ottoman compatriots, Halide Edib's call of blood for blood to clean the stained name of Turkishness, her closest approach to Disaster, her perception of Armenians as "having lost something in life that can never be regained", her encounter which she reflected in nonliterary contexts and texts. I read *The Shirt of Fire* as an attempt to approach all these and literature.

When read in the presence of these encounters, *The Shirt of Fire* engenders an inevitable question: What is literature? Not literature in general, not literature as such, but the literature which Halide Edib founds by her text of foundation and the

very textual foundation of it? What is the literature that has no sign in it of the encounters and experiences of its writer which she expresses in non-literary texts? What does the absence of these personal encounters and experiences and also statements as an effect, as a trace, even as a slightest sign that can be encountered in her literature; and the reason of that absence tell us about literature?

From these questions I arrived at the argument that Halide Edib's *The Shirt of Fire*'s being a foundational text lies in its being a textual foundation of literature. In other words by *The Shirt of Fire* what Halide Edib accomplishes is instituting literature as the site of history writing, instituting it as the voice of the sovereign, instituting it as a realm of the victor's world. That literature only utters the law. That literature is a document in the *arkehion,* guarded and sheltered by the *archons*, given the hermeneutics right to whomever wants to interpret it, since not what is present in it but "in what is absent in it the *archons* trust."

Then what is the *arkehion* that *The Shirt of Fire* is a document in? This is the question I have postponed until now, although the answer for it is now quite apparent. The *arkehion* is the Turkish literature whose borders Halide Edib has drawn, that would include her and Yakup Kadri's *The Shirt of Fire* and have them relate the days gone by to each other, the *arkehion* that is initially the "house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded" (*Archive Fever* 2). Halide Edip, in writing that open letter to Yakup Kadri, was also consigning her novel to the *arkheion*. "Turkish novels," "Turkish youth", she stated in the original text but left the "Turkish" out in the English translation. The shirt of fire that she referred to, that the Turkish youth of the future and everyone else in this country wears has an essential part of its fabric that is woven by Turkish literature. Turkish literature in its being Turkish by making all the

non-Turks absent, and its being literature through erasing the absence of all absents and absences, is the landscape of absence. It is the landscape of the absence of Absence.

Marc Nichanian, first in *Writers of Disaster* and in his subsequent works explains why he uses the name Disaster. He conveys that in 1931 it was Hagop Oşagan who started systematically to use the word Disaster or Catastrophe which is *Ağed* in Armenian, while he was writing his novel *Mnatsortats*. (In 1911 Zabel Yesayan, too, was already—after the Cilician massacre—using the word *ağed*, but not with a capital A.) In an interview, while Oşagan explains the context and content of his novel, and while he refers to the event as *ağed* many times, only while explaining the purpose, the aim of his novel does he use *Ağed* (with a capital A). As Marc Nicahnian argues, Oşagan explains the purpose of his novel as *to approach Ağed* (*Edebiyat ve Felaket* 23).

Here I am following Nichanian (and thus Oşagan whom I know nothing about) while talking about the absence of Absence. It is nothing like Disaster, *Ağed*. It is the absence of the experience of what Disaster left behind in the Turkish account. I stated that there is certainly an experience of what has happened and what has not happened *in* and *after* 1915 in the Turkish account. But then I also argued that there is no sign of the absence that absents left behind because one thing we know nothing at all about is the experience of absence. This is because the experience of what has happened and what has not happened *in* and *after* 1915, is the lack of absence. Thus, what has not happened in 1915 is the encounter with absence; there is no sign in Turkish texts –particular or grand—that the absence of the absents was encountered, experienced, and responded to. And what has happened in and after

1915 is thus, instituting and concealing this absence of encountering, experiencing absence, as a historical issue, history's issue, and to name it, the "Armenian issue."

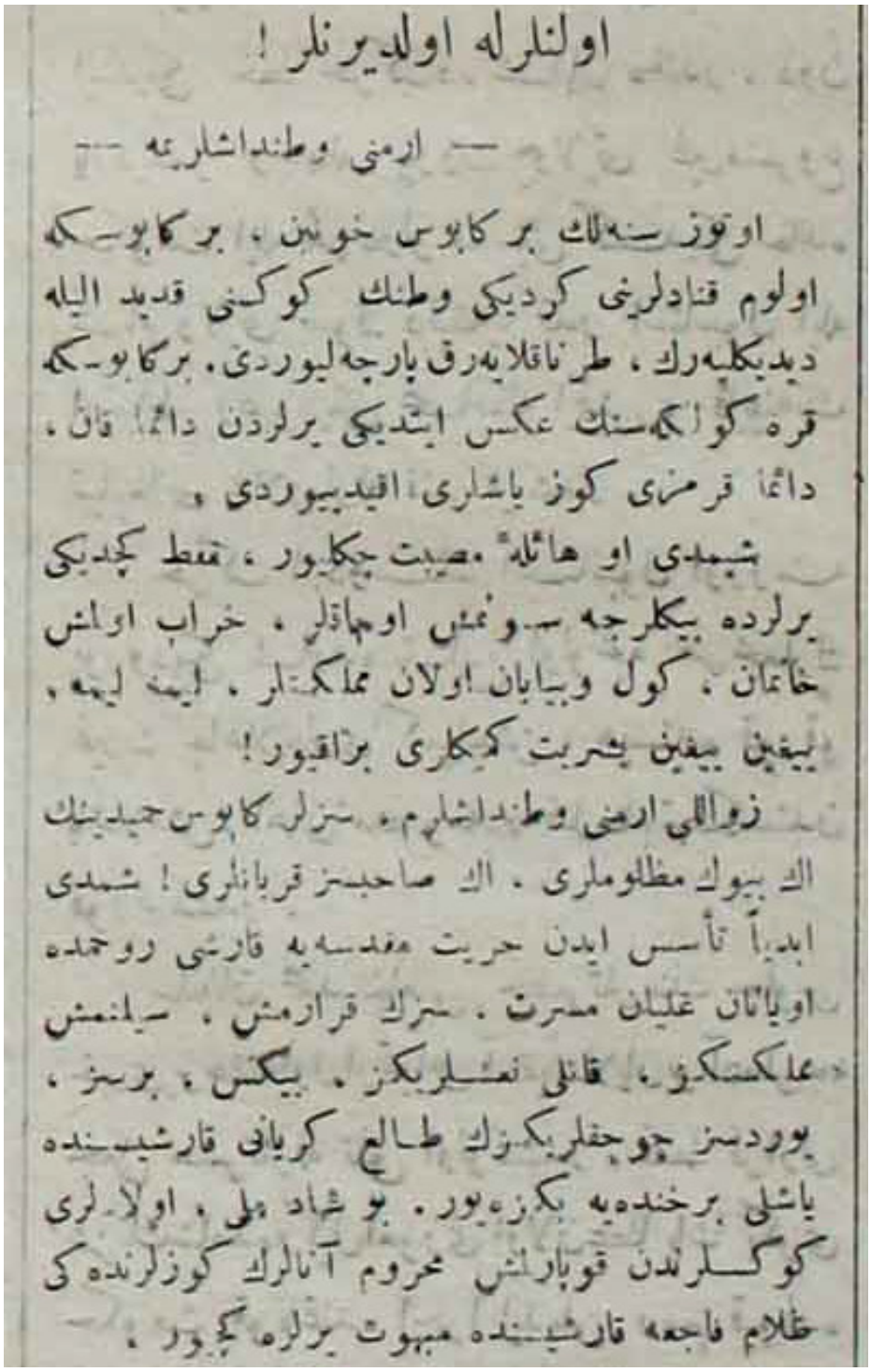
Absence with a capital A thus implies the lack of any attempt to approach absence, the lack of any attempt to encounter and to give a response to it, the lack of experiencing the absence of absents. Turkish literature is the landscape of absence of Absence. It is founded on absenting the absence; but, if an ethical response is intended, one can approach the Absence through it. This is the only way to lay bare and dismiss history's claim on literature, facing that what has been founded and named as the Turkish literature is the *arkheion.* One can give an ethical response to one's encounter –an encounter like mine with Zabel—only by approaching this *arkheion* as a literature of Absence.

# APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

HALIDE EDIB'S ARTICLE "THOSE WHO DIED, AND THOSE WHO KILLED"

(from *Tanin,* May 18, 1909)



اولنلرله اولدیرنلر !

— ارمنی وطنداشلریمه —

اوتوز سنه‌لك بر کابوس خونین ، بر کابوس که اولوم قنادلرینی کردیکی وطنك کوکسنی قدید الیله دیدیکلیه‌رك ، طرناقلایه‌رق پارچه‌لیوردی . بر کابوس که قره کوالکه‌سنك عکس ایتدیکی پرلردن دائما قان ، دائما قرمزی کوز یاشلری اقیدییوردی .

شمدی او هائله مصیبت چکیلیور ، فقط کچدیکی پرلرده بیکلرجه سونمش اوجاقلر ، خراب اولمش خانمان ، کول وبیابان اولان مملکتلر ، ایمه ایمه ، بیغین بیغین یتیم کوکلری براقیور !

زواللی ارمنی وطنداشلرم ، سزلر کابوس جدیدینك الك بیوك مظلوملری . الك صاحبسز قربانلری ! شمدی ابدیاً تأسس ایدن حریت مقدسه‌یه قارشی روحمده اویانان غلیان مسرت . سزك قرارمش ، سیلنمش مملکتکز ، قانلی نعشلریکز ، بیکس ، برسز ، یوردسز چوچقلریکزك طالع کریانی قارشیسنده یاشلی برخنده‌یه بکزه‌یور . بو شاد ملی ، اولاد لری کوکسلرندن قوپارلش محروم آنالرك کوزلرنده کی ظلام فاجعه قارشیسنده مبهوت یرلره کچیور ،

اوسنی ، اوجاغی سونن ، دکل ترکلکك بوتون انسانیتك قزاردیغی بو باشدن باشه مزار اولان آناطولی ویرانه‌لرینك اوتنده . اولدیرن قسمه مغلوب اولمق یأس و بجزایی ایله برابر روحم سزك ایچون برآنا لمی ، برآنا اضطراب و محرومیتی ایله صیزلایور ، ایکله‌یور !

صوکره حیات بشری مقدس بیله‌رك . دشمنلرینی بیله اولدورمکدن محترز و مجتنب فقط اعتقادلری . وطنلری ایچون قانلرینی آقتمغه مهیا قهرمان وطنداشلرمدن ، کوزلریمك اوکندن کچن اوزرلرینه حصیرلر اورتلمش کنج ترك شهداسندن پارلاق املری ، فداکار آرزولری سوندیریلمش کنج ، کزیده باشلرك مزارندن ، وبو مزارلر اوزرنده فیورانان غمدیده آنالردن یتیم چوجقلردن سزه کلیورم . قانلرینی سزك کبره قارشدیرمرق حرینی مهرلین بو مبجل عنصر نامنه مثلی کورولمه‌مش مصیبتکز ایچون ، متواضع و متضرع سزدن عفو دیلمکه کلدم . بو هائله فجیعه سوکیلرینی کومکلرك آیری آیری کدرلرینی پایلاشمق ، بجاره مزارلرك الك کوچوکندن الك بیوکنه قدر باشنده دیز چوکه‌رك مضروب اولدیغم قوم نامنه روحمك یاشاریله آعلامق احتیاجنی حس ایدییورم . اوه ! امین اولك کوکلده بوتون ملتك ندامت وجدانی ، آنا طوپراغنك ماتم سیاهی وار .

شمدی سوز سزك ای بویوك و گنج عثمانلی ملتی!
اوردوسنده شیازیلر. اوورلر، صلاح الدینلر، صبریلر.
شوکتلر کبی بیوك جبهه لر اولان. الك مستقبل
اولادینی حریت ایچون طوپراقلره دوکن یکی عنصر!
شمدی سز ترکلك ناموسنی قلیچکزك اوزرنده

طوتیورسکز. سلاح آرقداشلریکزك انتقامنی آلمق
ومشروطیتی صاتلامق ایچون ناصل برصولت آهنین ایله
قوجه برتحتی دویرمدیکنی ایسه، ترکلك، عثمانلیلغك
النده قالان ارمنی وطنداشلریمزك قانیدر سزك پاك
قلیچلریکز بیقایه بیلیر. ایلری وطنداشلرم، ارمنی
قردشلریمز حریت ایچون قان دوکن سلاح آرقدا-
شلریکزك قاردشلریدر.
بیکلرجه وطنداش قانی، کول اولمش یوتون
بر معموره، باشدن باشه مقبره اولان بر مملکت.
چوجقلریله، قادینلریله، یره کچریلن بو عثمانلیلرك
انتقامنی آلماز، انسانلقدن اوتانمیه رق قومیتمزی
ایکه این بوجانیلری تأدیب ایتمزسه کز، ظن ایدییورم.
مکه کنج ترکلك اوزرنده ابدی بر نقطهٔ جهالت
قالاجقدر.

خالده صالح

# APPENDIX B

## TURKISH TRANSCRIPTION OF "THOSE WHO DIED, AND THOSE WHO KILLED"

Ölenlerle Öldürenler!

Ermeni vatandaşlarıma,

Otuz senelik bir kabus-ı hunin, bir kabus ki ölüm kanatlarını gerdiği vatanın göğsünü kadid eliyle didikleyerek, tırnaklayarak, parçalıyordu. Bir kabus ki kara gölgesinin aksettiği yerlerden daima kan, daima kırmızı gözyaşları akıtıyordu.

Şimdi o hâ'ile-i musibet çekiliyor, fakat geçtiği yerlerde binlerce sönmüş ocaklar,harap olmuş hanümanlar, kül ve beyaban olan memleketler, lime lime, yığın yığın beşeriyet kemikleri bırakıyor!

Zavallı Ermeni vatandaşlarım, sizler kabus-ı Hamidi'nin en büyük mazlûmları, en sahipsiz kurbanları! Şimdi ebediyen teessüs eden hürriyet-i mukaddeseye karşı ruhumda uyanan galeyân-ı meserret, sizin kararmış,silinmiş memleketiniz, kanlı naaşlarınız, bikes, yersiz yurtsuz çocuklarınızın tali'-i giryanı karşısında yaşlı bir handeye benziyor. Bu şad-ı milli, evlatları göğüslerinden koparılmış mahrûm anaların gözlerindeki zalâm-ı faci'a karşısında mebhût yerlere geçiyor.

Üstü, ocağı sönen değil, Türklüğün, bütün insaniyetin kızardığı bu baştan başa mezar olan Anadolu viranelerinin önünde, öldüren kısma mensup olmak yeis ve hicabıyla beraber ruhum sizin için bir ana elemi, bir ana ıztırab ve mahrumiyeti ile sızlıyor, inliyor!

Sonra hayat-ı beşeri mukaddes bilerek, düşmanlarını bile öldürmekten muhteriz ve müctenib fakat itikatları, vatanları için kanlarını akıtmaya müheyya kahraman vatandaşlarımdan, gözlerimin önünden geçen üzerlerine hasırlar örtülmüş genç Türk şühedasından parlak emelleri, fedakar arzuları söndürülmüş genç,güzide başların mezarından ve bu mezarlar üzerinde kıvranan gamdide analardan yetim çocuklardan size geliyorum. Kanlarını sizinkilere karıştırarak hürriyeti mühürleyen bu mübeccel unsur namına misli görülmemiş musibetiniz için, mütevazi ve mutazarrı' sizden 'afv dilemeye geldim. Bu haile-i feci'a'da sevgililerini gömenlerin ayrı ayrı kederlerini paylaşmak, biçâre mezarların en küçüğünden en büyüğüne kadar başında diz çökerek mensup olduğum kavim namına ruhumun yaşlarıyla ağlamak ihtiyacını hissediyorum. Oh! Emin olun gönlümde bütün milletin nedâmet ve hacâleti, ana toprağının matem-i siyahı var.

Şimdi söz sizin en büyük ve genç Osmanlı milleti! Ordusunda Niyaziler, Enverler, Selahaddinler, Sabriler, Şevketler gibi büyük cepheler olan, en müstesnâ evlâdını hürriyet için topraklara döken yeni unsur! Şimdi siz Türklüğün namusunu kılıcınızın üzerinde tutuyorsunuz. Silah arkadaşlarınızın intikâmını almak ve Meşrutiyeti saklamak için nasıl bir savlet-i ahenin ile koca bir tahtı devirdiniz ise, Türklüğün, Osmanlılığın elinde kalan Ermeni vatandaşlarımızın kanını da sizin pâk kılıçlarınız yıkayabilir. İleri vatandaşlarım, Ermeni kardeşlerimiz hürriyet için kan döken silah arkadaşlarınızın kardeşleridir.

Binlerce vatandaş kanı, kül olmuş bütün bir ma'mure, baştan başa makber olan bir memleket, çocuklarıyla kadınlarıyla yere geçirilen bu Osmanlıların intkâmını almaz, insanlıkdan utanmayarak kavmiyetinizi lekeleyen bu cânileri te'dib etmezseniz, zannediyorum ki genç Türklüğün üzerinde ebedi bir nokta-i cehâlet kalacaktır.

Halide Salih

# APPENDIX C

## ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF "THOSE WHO DIED, AND THOSE WHO KILLED"

### Those Who Died, And Those Who Killed!

To my Armenian compatriots,

A bloody nightmare of thirty years, a nightmare in which Death, picking and clawing with its bony hands, has shredded the breast of the motherland over which it spread its wings. A nightmare that has caused blood and red tears to flow incessantly from the places where its dark shadow was cast.

Now that foul tragedy is withdrawing, but in the places over which it passes, it leaves thousands of extinguished bloodlines, ruined households, charred and barren native lands, tattered piles of human bones!

My poor Armenian compatriots, you are the most wronged, the most forsaken victims of the Hamidian nightmare! The excitement of rejoicing that has awakened in my soul at the sacred freedom being established for all time is now like a tearful smile before the tragic fortune of your somber and obliterated native land, your bloody corpses, your destitute and dislodged children. This national joy passes into bewilderment before the dark calamity in the eyes of bereft mothers whose children have been torn from their bosoms.

Before the ruins of Anatolia, whose bloodline has been extinguished, which from one end to the other has become a graveyard at which not merely the Turkish community but all of humanity is shamed, along with the despair and disgrace of being a member of the party that killed, my soul aches and moans for you with the pain of a mother, with the torment and bereavement of a mother.

Afterwards, I come to you from our heroic compatriots who, believing human life to be sacred, avoid and abstain from killing even their enemies, but who are prepared to spill their own blood for their convictions and their motherland; from the young Turkish martyrs with rush mats pulled over them who have passed before my eyes; from the graves of distinguished young ones, whose shining aspirations and dedicated desires have been extinguished; from the sorrowful mothers writhing upon these graves; from the orphaned children. In the name of this esteemed element I have come to you, humble and suppliant, to beg your forgiveness for calamities the likes of which had never been seen. I feel the need to share the grief of each and every one of those who have buried their loved ones in this terrible tragedy, to kneel at those wretched graves, from the smallest to the largest, and cry with the tears of my soul in the name of the nation to which I belong. Oh! Be certain that my heart holds the remorse and shame of the entire community, and the black grieving of my native soil.

Now it is your turn to speak, o great and young Ottoman community! O new element which has in its army magnificent advance guards such as the Niyazis, the Envers, the Selahaddins, the Sabris, and the Şevkets, which poured its most exceptional children onto this land for freedom! Now you bear the honor of the Turkish community upon your swords. In the same manner as you toppled a massive throne in an onslaught of iron to take revenge for your comrades in arms and preserve constitutional government, so can your pure swords clean the blood of our

Armenian compatriots who remain in the hands of the Turkish and of the Ottoman community. My advanced compatriots, our Armenian brothers are the brothers of the comrades in arms who spilled their blood for freedom.

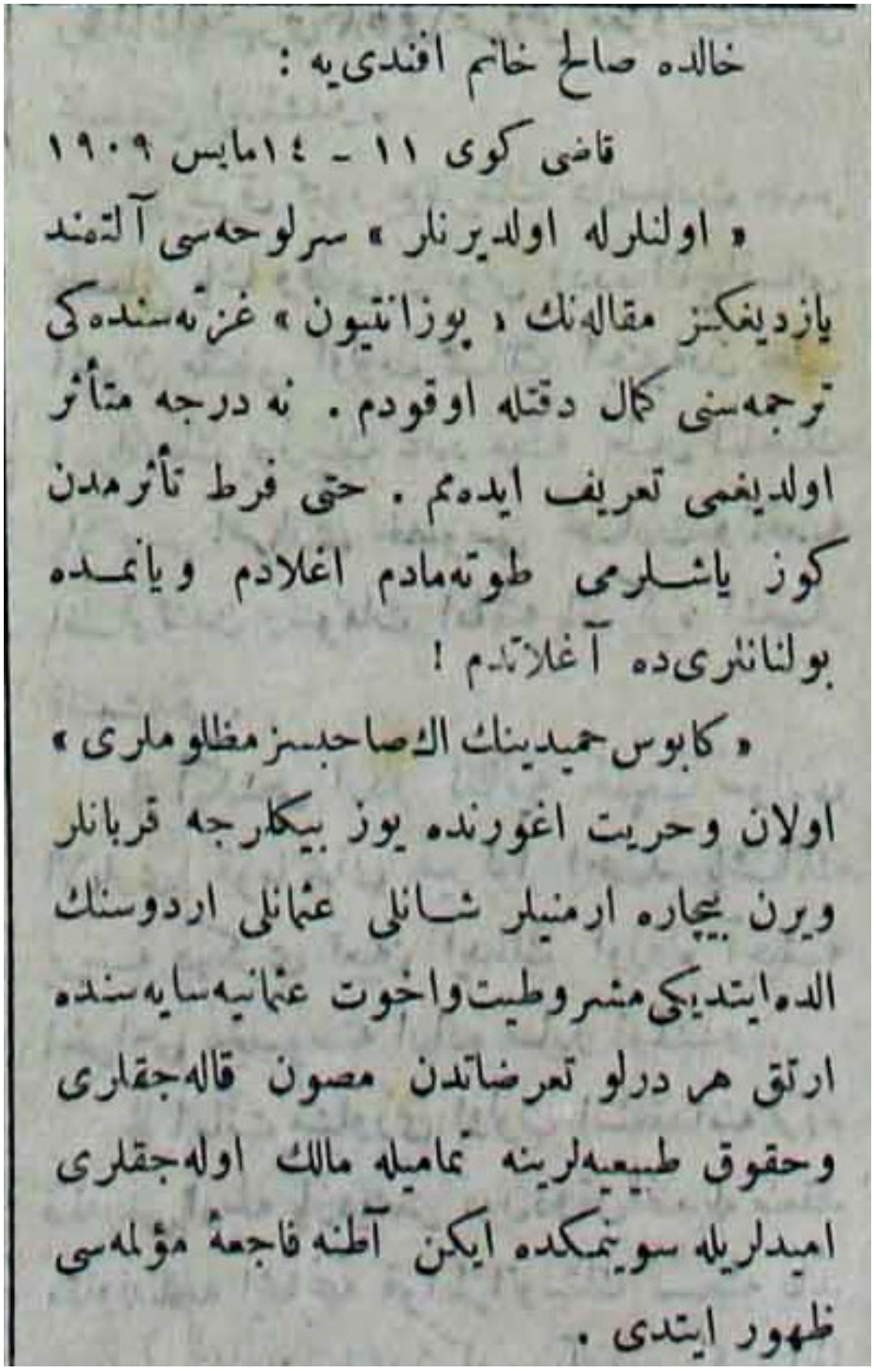
If you do not take revenge for the blood of thousands of compatriots, for an entire habitation reduced to ash, for a land turned to a graveyard from end to end, for these Ottomans who have passed into the earth with their children and their women; if you do not punish those criminals who, having no shame before humanity, have stained our nation, I believe that an eternal spot of disgrace will remain upon the Turkish community.

Halide Salih

APPENDIX D

SRPUHI MAKARYAN'S LETTER TO HALIDE EDIB

(from *Tanin,* May 26, 1909)



خالده صالح خانم افندی‌یه :

قاضی کوی ۱۱ - ۱٤مایس ۱۹۰۹

« اولنلرله اولدیرنلر » سرلوحه‌سی آلتمند یازدیغکز مقاله‌نك « یوزانتیون » غزته‌سنده‌کی ترجمه‌سنی کمال دقتله اوقودم . نه درجه متأثر اولدیغمی تعریف ایده‌مم . حتی فرط تأثرمدن کوز یاشلرمی طوته‌مادم اغلادم و یانمده بولنانلری‌ده آغلاتدم !

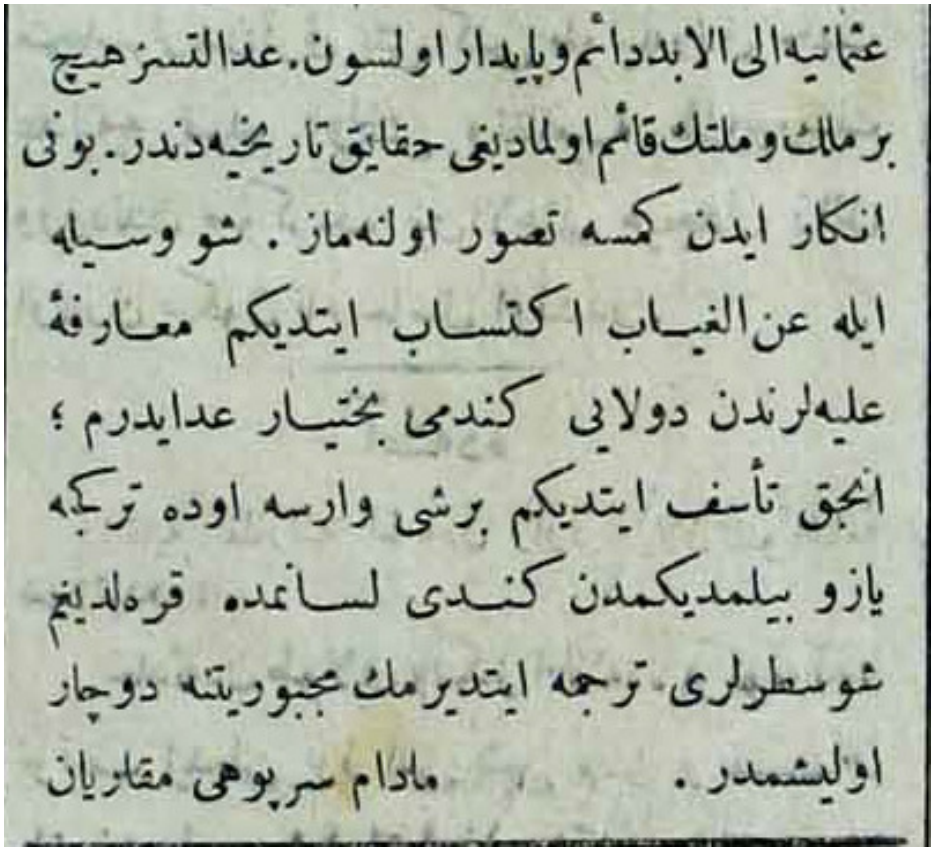
« کابوس حمیدینك الدصاحبسز مظلوملری » اولان وحریت اغورنده یوز بیکلرجه قربانلر ویرن بیچاره ارمنیلر شمالی عثمانلی اردوسنك الده ایتدیکی مشروطیت واخوت عثمانیه‌سایه‌سنده ارتق هر درلو تعرضاتدن مصون قاله‌جقلری وحقوق طبیعیه‌لرینه تمامیله مالك اوله‌جقلری امیدلریله سوینمکده ایکن آطنه فاجعهٔ مؤلمه‌سی ظهور ایتدی .

اویله بر فاجعه که بوتون عثمانلیلری مأیوس
ودلخون، عالم انسانیتی محزون ایتدی ؛ دهااوج کون
اول بر برلریله قارداش کبی کچینوب کار وکسبلریله

اوغراشان ومشروطیتی محافظه ایچون ـ قانلرینك
صوك طاملهسنه قدر ـ دوکه جکلرینه عهد
وپیمان ایدن بر وطن اولادلری اره سنده نصل
اولدی ده بویله وقعهٔ مؤسفه ظهور ایتدی ؟
نیچون وقت وزمانیله تدابیر لازمه اتخاذاولنمایوب
بونجه سفك دمایه سبیت ویرلدی ؟ .. بونلر
شیمدیلك بزم ایچون مجهول ایسه ده البته تحقیقات
عادلانه نتیجه سنده تظاهر ایده جکدر . زیرا بو
ایشك دائرهٔ عدالت وبیطرفانه ده جریان
ایده جکنی وعد وتأمین ایدن محمود شوکت پاشا
حضرتلری کبی بر ذات عالیقدر که ، عثمانلی ملتنی
حقیق الظهور اولان برفلاکت عظیمه دن
قورتاردی . بو بیوك آدمه جمله مز مدیون ومنتدارز !

خانم افندی ! انسان یأس والم کونلرنده کندوسیله هم حال اولانلرو کندوسنی تسلی ایدنلره قارشو برحس محبت وشکران طویار : شوکدرلی کونلرده یازمش اولدیغکز مقاله رقت رحم وشفقت علو وجناب کبی حسیات عالیهٔ صمیمانه‌لرکزك آیینه‌سی اولمغله بزم ایچون پك زیاده تسلیت وامید بخش اولمشدر . بناءً علیه بتون ارمنی قادینلری نامنه سزه عرض تشکر ایدرم. معلوم اولدیغی اوزره تربیهٔ نسوان مدنیتك رکنی اولوب ملتلرك اخلاقی تهذیب ، حسن معاشرتلرینی تأمین ایدر ورفاه وسعادت عمومیه‌یی موجب اولور.

ایشته سزك کبی ادیبه ، پاك وجدانلی وایو یورکلی قادینلرك عهده‌سنه ترتب ایدن وظیفه عظیم ومقدسدر. نسوانك انسانیت اوزرینه اولان نفوذ وتأثیری پك بیوکدر . وطن سزلردن چوق شیلر بکلمکده‌در ؛ سز فکر عدالت واخوتی تا بشکده‌کی چوجقلرکزدن باشلایوب هرکسه تلقین وتعلیم ایتملیسکز که ملت



عثمانیه الی الابد دائم وپایدار اولسون. عدالتسز هیچ
بر ملك وملتك قائم اولمادیغی حقایق تاریخیه دندر. بونی
انکار ایدن کمسه تصور اولنه‌ماز. شو وسیله
ایله عن الغیاب اکتساب ایتدیکم معارفهٔ
علیه‌لرندن دولایی کندمی بختیار عدایدرم؛
انجق تأسف ایتدیکم برشی وارسه اوده ترکجه
یازو بیلمدیکمدن کندی لسانمده قره‌لدیغم
شو سطرلری ترجمه ایتدیرمك مجبوریتنه دوچار
اولیشمدر. مادام سرپوهی مقاریان

# APPENDIX E

## TURKISH TRANSCRIPTION OF SRPUHI MAKARYAN'S LETTER

Hâlide Sâlih Hânım Efendiye:
Kadıköy 11 -14 Mayıs 1909

"Ölenlerle Öldürenler" Serlevhası altında yazdığınız makâlenin "Pozantiyon" Gazetesindeki tercemesini kemâl-i dikkatle okudum. Ne derece müteessir olduğumu ta'rif edemem. Hatta fart-ı te'sirimiden göz yaşlarımı tutamadım ağladım ve yanımda bulunanları da ağlatdım.

"Kabûs-ı Hamidi'nin en sahibsiz mazlûmları" olan hürriyet uğrunda yüz binlerce kurbanlar veren biçare Ermeniler şanlı Osmanlı ordusunun elde etdiği Meşrutiyet ve uhuvvet-i Osmaniye sayesinde artık her dürlü ta'rûzdan masûn kalacakları ve hukûk-i tebaiyelerine tamamıyla mâlik olacakları ümidleriyle sevinmekde iken Atana faci'a-yı müellimesi zuhûr etdi.

Öyle bir faci'a ki bütün Osmanlıları me'yus ve dıl-hun, 'alem-i insaniyeti mahzûn etdi. Daha üç gün evvel birbirleriyle kardaş gibi geçinub kâr ve kesbleriyle uğraşan ve Meşrutiyeti muhâfaza içûn – kanlarının son damlasına kadar – dökeceklerini ahd ve peymân eden bir vatan evlâdları arasında nasıl oldu da böyle vaka'-i müessife zuhûr etdi? Niçûn vakit ve zamanıyla tedâbir-i lâzıme ittihâz olunmayub bunca sefk-i dimâya sebebiyet verildi?... Bunlar şimdilik bizim içûn mechûl ise de elbette tahkîkât-i 'adilâne neticesinde tezâhür edecekdir. Zirâ bu işin dâ'ire-i 'adalet ve bî-tarafanede ceryân edeceğini va'ad ve te'min eden Mahmud Şevket Paşa Hazretleri gibi bir zat-ı 'âli-kadr ki, Osmanlı milletini hakiki elzuhûr olan bir felaket-i 'azimeden kurtardı. Bu büyük ademe cümlemiz medyûn ve minnetdarız! Hanım Efendi! İnsan ye's ve elem günlerinde kendüsüyle hem-hal olan ve kendüsünü teselli edenlere karşı bir hüsn-i muhabbet ve şükrân duyar: Şu kederli günlerde yazmış olduğumuz makâle dikkat-i rahm ve şefkat 'uluvv ve cenâb gibi hissiyât-ı 'âliye-i samimânelerinizin ayinesi olmağla bizim içûn pek ziyâde teselliyet ve ümid bahş olmuşdur. Binâen 'aleyh bütün Ermeni kadınları namına size 'arz-ı teşekkür ederim. Ma'lûm olduğu üzere terbiye-i nisvân medeniyetin rüknü olub milletlerin ahlakını tehzib, hüsn-i mu'âşeretlerini te'min eder ve refâh ve sa'âdet-i 'umumiyeyi mucib olur.

İşte sizin gibi edibe, pâk vicdânlı ve iyü yürekli kadınları uhdesine terettüb eden vazife-i 'azim ve mukaddesdir. Nisvânın insâniyet üzerine olan nüfuz ve tesîri pek büyükdür. Vatan sizlerden çok şeyler beklemekdedir. Siz fikr-i 'adalet ve 'uhuvveti tâ beşikdeki çocuklarınızdan başlayub herkese telkin ve ta'lim etmelisiniz ki millet-i 'osmaniye ile'l ebed dâ'im ve pâyidâr olsun. 'Adaletsiz hiçbir mülk ve milletin kâim olmadığı hakâyık-ı târihiyedendir. Bunu inkar eden kimse tasavvur olunamaz. Şu vesile ile ani'l gıyâb iktisâb etdiğim mu'ârife-i 'aliyelerinden dolayı kendimi bahtiyâr 'add ederim ancak teessüf etdiğim bir şey varsa o da Türkçe yazu bilmediğimden kendi lisanımda karaladığım şu satırları tercüme etdirmek mecburiyetine düçâr oluşumdu.

Madam Serpohi Makaryân

# APPENDIX F

## THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF SRPUHI MAKARYAN'S LETTER

To Halide Salih Hanımefendi:
Kadıköy 11-14 May 1909

I read with utmost interest in the newspaper *Pozantiyon* the translation of the article you wrote under the title "Those Who Died, and Those Who Killed." I cannot describe how moved I was. I in fact wept, unable to contain my tears from my excess of grief, and I caused those around me to weep!

Just as the wretched Armenians, who are "the most wronged of the Hamidian nightmare" and who sacrificed hundreds of thousands for freedom's sake, were rejoicing with the hope that they would now be safe from all manner of assaults on account of the constitutional government that the glorious Ottoman army had achieved, and on account of Ottoman brotherhood, and that they would be entirely in possession of their natural rights, the grievous Adana massacre came to pass.

It was so great a calamity that it saddened and distressed all Ottomans, and grieved the realm of humanity; how did such a deplorable event occur amongst a motherland's children who, just three days prior, had been getting along with one another like brothers and going about their business, and who had vowed that they would spill their blood to the final drop in order to preserve the constitutional government? Why were the necessary precautions not taken in a timely fashion, and why was cause given to so much bloodshed? … Even though these things are unknown to us at present, they will surely become manifest at the end of a just investigation. For a noble personage such as his Excellency Mahmud Şevket Pasha, who has promised and assured that this matter will take its course in the impartial court of justice, has rescued the Ottoman community from a great disaster of real occurrence. We are all of us indebted and obliged to this great man! My dear lady! In days of grief and pain, one feels affection and gratitude towards her fellow sufferers and towards those who offer her comfort: In addition to being a mirror of such sublime sentiments as your refined compassion and great tenderness, the article that you wrote is also for us very much a comfort and a provider of hope in these gloomy days. Thus do I offer you my thanks, in the name of all Armenian women. As is well-known, the education of women is the pillar of civilization; it improves communities' morals, ensures social interactions, and brings about the general felicity.

Now the duty incumbent upon women of letters and of pure conscience such as yourself is magnificent and sacred. Women's effect and influence upon humanity is great; the motherland expects many things of you! You must inculcate and teach the ideas of justice and brotherhood to everyone, beginning with your children in the cradle, so that the Ottoman community may endure for all time. It is an historical truth that no dominion or community can remain standing without justice. No one who would deny this can be imagined. I count myself fortunate to have indirectly made your acquaintance by these means, but if there is one thing for which I am sorry, it is that, because I do not know how to write in Turkish, I am obliged to have these lines translated which I drafted in my own language.

Madam Serpohi Makaryân

# APPENDIX G

## HALIDE EDIB'S LETTER TO CAVİD BEY

(from *Talat Paşa'nın Evrak-ı Metrukesi*)

Muhterem Cavid Bey,

Evvelâ yeni senenizi tebrik ederim sonra da nâzırlığınızı. Ben Şam'da iken Talat Paşa Hazretleri'nin Cemal Paşa'ya telgrafına rağmen bu hadiseye inanmadım. Bütün Suriye vilâyetleri valileri ile suret-i kat'ideye mübâhaseye giriştim, "Cavid Bey olmaz, kabul etmez" dedim. Fakat dün İstanbul'dan gelen bir Tanin'de Muhiddin Bey'in "Cavid Bey dördüncü defa Maliye Nezareti sandalyesine oturuyor" cümlesini okuyunca iman ettim. Her halde memleket için bunu hayırlı görmüş olacaksınız. Allah muvaffak etsin ve hele dâhili siyasetimizde daha liberal bir tahavvüle sebebiyet verebilirseniz her halde bu bir lütuf olur.

İşte ben de nihayet burada eski bir manastırın Akdeniz ve Lübnan'a bakan açık koridorlarında bir rahibe hayatı yaşıyorum. Kendi hayatımın nasıl geçtiğini pek bilmiyorum. Gündüz, gece birbirini baş döndürücü bir sür'atle takip eyliyor. Dört mektep birden ve muhtelif yerlerde açtığımız için masabaşı işleri, seyahat bittiği yok. Esasen biterse sıkılıyorum. Suriye'ye pek bedbaht oldukları zaman geldim. Onun için Suriye'yi ve Suriyeliler'i çok seviyorum. Esasen ben bu kadar ince, bu kadar kusursuz güzel bir memleket görmedim. Güzel insanların, sevgili insanların gözleri gibi akşamları ufuklar, dağlar, denizler, insanın kalbini ağlatıyor. Esasen bu memleket bugünlerde hep insanı ağlatacak gibi. Eleminde o kadar derin ve ezilmiş bir şey var. Bilhassa Ermeniler, Cemal Paşa'nın aziz başına Allah'la beraber yemin eden, sırf burada yaşamak hakkını bulan bir sürü bedbaht Ermeni var. Mektebe bağlı bir binada da birçok var. Çöllerde ot yiyerek karınları şiştikten sonra kimi anasını, kimi babasını, birçokları da çocuklarını kaybettikten sonra buraya düşmüşler. Daha doğrusu Cemal Paşa getirtmiş. Belediye biraz yiyecek veriyor, oturuyorlar. (one word missing) bu bedbahtlarla hemen birbirimizi sevdik. Çocuklarıyla, kadınlarıyla ayrıca meşgul oluyorum. Küçüklerine bir sınıf açtık okutuyoruz. Rusya Türklerinden beraberimde getirdiğim bir küçük muallime bir melek gibi fedakar ve muhabbetli aralarında çalışıyor. Dışarıdan anası açlıktan ölen, babası yanında öldürülen on iki yaşında bir Ermeni kızı geldi, iltica etti. Mahzun, büyük gözleriyle etrafımda dolaşıyor, lüzumlu lüzumsuz elimi öpüp ağlıyor. Bahçede bir facia daha var! Oğlunu yanında öldürürlerken birdenbire dilini kaybeden bir bedbaht, öteki oğlunu ve ailesini nereye attıklarını bilemiyor. Ayakları çıplak, gözleri elem içinde, mütemadiyen işaretle felaketini haykırıyor. Bazen geceleri çocuğu ölen bir kadın gibi, başı elleri içinde döğünüyor, döğünüyor. Gündüzleri yazımı yazarken bazen hıçkırdığını işitiyorum. Pencereye koşuyorum, aşağıda bahçede ellerini sallıyor, oğlunun kalbinden kurşun geçerken çıkan sesi göklere uluyor, söylüyor. İşte bunlardan binlerce, yüzlerce var. Yetimhaneler hayatta bir şeyin telafi edemeyeceği şeyi kaybetmiş yarı aç bedbaht çocuklarla dolu. Ermeniler bana diyorlar ki, "Senin Suriye'ye gelmeni iki aydır uykularımız kaçarak bekledik. Bizim için bir şey yap. Dünyada bir Cemal Paşa, bir seni severiz". Ben ne yapabilirim? Her gittiğim yerde bana mutlak sefalet manzaraları gösterip ağlıyorlar. Şam'da beni bir saat eski dar sokaklarda dolaştırdıktan sonra götürdükleri bir yerde kadın, erkek söylediler, söylediler ve birden bire çok metin görünen bir erkek başını kollarının arasına alarak yüksek sesle ağlamaya başladı. Bu hep böyle! İşte yeni kabine bu emsalsiz zulüm ve cinayetin hiç olmazsa netayicini tahfif edemez mi? Şimdi bugün yaşayanlara insan

hakkı veremez mi? Ben kendi hayatımla bu fena ve çirkin şeyi ödeyebilsem öderdim. Fakat benim hayatım nedir ki? Hiç hem de pek gülünç ve küçük bir hiç!

Artık tamamen öğrendim ve inkiyad ettim ki hayatta insan yalnızdır. Sevdiği ve sevildiği insanlar bir geçici hayaldir. Bunu sakin düşündüm, hayatı olduğu gibi kabul ettim fakat oğullarım büyüyünceye kadar kendilerine sahip oluncaya kadar, kuvvetli ve itimat edeceğim bir yere bırakabileceğimi hissetmek istiyorum ve bunu pek ciddi bir surette düşünüyorum.

İşte şimdi bu kadar! Siz ne yapıyorsunuz? Sizin de hayatınızı hemen ezber bilirim klüp, nezaret, ev, Beyoğlu madamlarına ziyaret! Şişli hanımları ile yarenlik! Değil mi? Bazen otomobille kar altında beyaban ve vahşi yerlerden geçerken İstanbul birden gözümün önünden geçiyor. Bu İstanbul hayatı teferruatını düşünüyorum. Çok uzun düşünmüyorum. Bakkal defteri gibi bir defterim var, hemen çıkarıp mekteplerin birine aid eşya listesi yapmaya uğraşıyorum.

Düşünüyorum ki insan ruhunu hiçbir elem, hiçbir şey mağlup edememeli! Öldürse, ezse, parçalasa kanları arasından kuvvetli namağlup bakmalı!

Bu son seneler harici ve şahsi hepimiz ne ateşli, ne hummalı, ne kasırgalı bir hayat yaşıyoruz. Daha ne kadar yaşayacağız, kim bilir!

Şimdi biraz mehtap var. Manastırın hurma ağaçlı bahçesinde bir sürü kurbağa ötüyor. Ben de bu kadar uzun ve sıkıntılı şeyleri bizim kabinemizde bir nazıra niçin yazıyorum diye düşünüyorum. Bilmem, göndermeli mi? Şam'da gelirken sansürlenmiş bir sürü zarf getirdim, bana böyle hezeyan yaptırıyor. Bon nüi.

Halide Edib

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