Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific
Issue 51, November 2024
http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue51/haught.pdf
doi: https://doi.org/10.25911/7WDR-DT71

The Music of the Hemispheres: Halide Edib's Transnational Voice and the Sound of East-West Fusion in Late Ottoman Constantinople

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Abstract

In this essay, I examine social and political messages embedded in the use of music in Halide Edib's novel *The Clown and His Daughter*. I argue that Halide Edib uses the Quranic readings of the female protagonist Rabia as a metaphor for both the woman's voice in late Ottoman society and the ideal resolution of tensions between eastern and western perspectives. This historiographical approach to the novel encompasses early feminism in the Ottoman Empire, cultural and military conflict with European powers, and the establishment of the Republic of Turkiye with a new national identity and social agenda. Existing scholarship of this controversial and under-represented figure addresses these topics mostly in reference to her journalism and other non-fiction and focuses on her pre-exile perspectives and activities in the fight for Turkish independence. This method of close reading of a novel, published for an international audience during her exile, attempts to reflect her ripened outlook on women's issues and Turkish national identity as she frames it aesthetically. Presenting an historic peak of modern cultural friction in musical terms, Halide Edib illustrates, I will argue, what she considers a Turk's ideal relationship with the West through Rabia as a singer with a deep appreciation of both eastern and western music and as a Quran reader married to an ex-priest/classical pianist. In this essay, I explore how, through Rabia, Halide Edib harmonises the spiritual and carnal, individual and community, nation and world. Addressing marriage, ethnic heritage, and cultural development, Halide Edib uses music, as this article will demonstrate, in constructing a Turkish New Woman who, through male mentors and traditional socio-religious influences, becomes a spiritual inspiration in her community.

Introduction

In her 1926 memoirs, Halide Edib (Adıvar) (c. 1884–1964),[1] a driving force in the development of the Turkish novel, describes how she was 'nourished by both the eastern and western culture; she either listens to the prayers of her Sufi grandma or feels the influences of the English discipline that an occidental father admires'.[2] The western influence appears in her education with English governesses and as one of the few Muslim students of the American

[1] Because last names were not use in the Ottoman Empire, many of Halide Edib's works were published without this third name 'Adıvar,' which was her second husband's last name registered under the Republic. As a result, in the reference list, sources are listed under either Halide Edib or Halide Edib Adıvar, as is consistent with each publication.

[2] Halide Edib Adıvar, *Memoirs of Halide Edib* (Gorgias Press, 2005), 300.

College in Istanbul. Later in life, her friendship with English educator and social activist Isabel Fry led to multiple reciprocal visits during which Fry introduced Halide Edib to the women's suffrage movement in England. From 1939 to 1950, she headed the English Language and Literature department at Istanbul University and published twenty-one novels in addition to her journalism and academic non-fiction.

By the time she published her novel *The Clown and His Daughter* in 1935, Halide Edib had journeyed far and wide geographically and ideologically. In her 1956 book *Türkiye'de Şark, Garp, ve Amerikan Tesirleri* (The East, the West and American Influences in Türkiye),[3] Halide Edib repeals one of her early ideals, 'Pan-Turanism was perhaps a more dangerous and more impossible dream than Pan-Slavism.'[4] Thus, distancing from the ethnic utopia of her novel *Yeni Turan (The New Turan, 1912),*[5] Halide Edib had already questioned her own nationalism in print in her memoirs, in which she confesses, 'I have honestly tried to analyze the inner meaning of my nationalism, whether it can hurt others who are not Turks, … the family of nations in the world to which Turkey also belongs'.[6] With this reflection Halide Edib reveals how time and experience have affected her nationalism. During and after her exile, with her softening nationalism, her ideal for New Womanhood also seems to have mellowed. Her social and political ideals developed both Ottoman nostalgia and nuance in the pull between East and West. The novel *The Clown and His Daughter* harks back to an Ottoman setting but reflects Halide Edib's intellectual and cultural milieu as the student of a western education and a transnational intellectual.

In *The Clown and His Daughter*,[7] Halide Edib uses Quranic recitations of the female protagonist Rabia as a metaphor for both the woman's voice in late Ottoman society and the ideal resolution of tensions between eastern and western perspectives, a dynamism that continues into contemporary Turkish culture. Rabia, a poor girl from a broken family in late-Ottoman Constantinople, possesses an enchanting singing voice, and her musical gift manifests in moving Quran readings as well as in collaboration with her husband, an Italian composer. Halide Edib's early western exposure educationally, her time as a refugee in Egypt and a soldier in Anatolia informed her understanding of late Ottoman society's complex response to the cultural influence of Britain and the US. *The Clown and His Daughter* repeatedly uses musical terms to illustrate the late Ottoman Empire's historic peak of tension with Europe under the influence of modernisation, such as the statement an Ottoman prince, a gifted pianist of European classical music, makes to Rabia: 'The single melodies of our music make me feel so lonely. In the East we seem to be separated, so utterly shut up within

[3] Halide Edib Adıvar, *Türkiye'de Şark-Garp ve Amerikan Tesirleri* (Can Yayınları, 2009).

[4] Jacob M. Landau defines Pan-Turanism as the pursuit of 'some sort of union—cultural, physical, or both—among all peoples of proven or alleged Turkish origin, whether living both within and without the frontiers of the Ottoman Empire (subsequently of the Republic of Turkey).' In *Pan-Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation,* 2nd rev. and updated edn (Indiana University Press, 1995), 22; Halide Edib, quoted in Emel Sönmez, 'The Novelist Halide Edib Adıvar and Turkish Feminism,' *Die Welt des Islams* 14, nos 1–4 (1973), 102, https://doi.org/10.1163/157006073X00038.

[5] Halide Edib Adıvar, *Yeni Turan/Raik'in Annesi* (Atlas, 1988).

[6] Adıvar, *Memoirs*, 325.

[7] *The Clown and His Daughter* was first published in London by George Allen and Unwin in 1935. It appeared the following year in Turkish as *Sinekli Bakkal* (The Fly-Ridden Grocery Store), and has since been celebrated as a classic work of Turkish Literature.

ourselves'.[8] Halide Edib, I contend, illustrates a Turk's ideal relationship with the West through Rabia as a singer with a deep appreciation of both eastern and western music, as a Quran reader married to an ex-priest classical pianist. In this essay, I explore how, through Rabia, Halide Edib harmonises the spiritual and carnal, individual and community, nation and world. Addressing marriage, ethnic heritage, and cultural development, Halide Edib uses music in constructing a Turkish New Woman who, through male mentors and traditional socio-religious influences, becomes a spiritual inspiration in her community.

This essay considers Rabia as Halide Edib's Turkish New Woman model, attentive to Rabia's feminist qualities expressed via music. This feminine ideal encompasses spiritual leadership, individual spiritual growth interweaving various religious influences in her community, independent choice in marriage, profound connection to her heritage, and respect for international communities in the process of modernisation. These aspects of the New Woman's motivations, awarenesses, activities, and roles are especially clarified through the lens of her appreciation of music and her singing voice. Music, in *The Clown and His Daughter,* illuminates significant touchpoints surrounding female identity and the ideal role of women alongside the historic developments in women's education, women in the workforce, and marriage dynamics. 'Negotiat[ing] an enormous silence' of female voices from this historical context, as Paul Hamilton describes, I will use a historicist approach attempting what Hamilton explains as Hans-Georg Gadamer's phrase 'coming to an understanding': 'a collaborative dialogue between past and present belonging exclusively to neither'.[9] In this manner, I will revisit Halide Edib's classic, being conscious of the politically motivated tropes of historical records that have minimised her influence and generalised or adjusted her views on issues such as international relations. With this method, Halide Edib presents a feminine ideal rooted in the Ottoman past and growing into the Republican future.

Halide Edib's employment of music, especially in *The Clown and His Daughter* and *Seviye Talip* (1910)*,*[10] has thus far received little critical attention despite its integral role in these novels.[11] For Rabia, singing is her liberation from an abusive guardian, her profession, her fluidity among social classes, the essence of her marriage experience, and her public influence. Throughout the novel, characters develop in relation to music. Halide Edib uses music symbolically to present Rabia as the model of a feminine identity in her community. Examining this character's development, I will consider Rabia's individual identity and her unconventional social role. I will demonstrate that the strong spiritual influence Rabia has on her community establishes a foundation for comprehending the altered personal and social standards Halide Edib promotes for women after her experience of the Independence War and the extreme secularisation of Turkish society.

[8] Halide Edib Adıvar, *The Clown and His Daughter* (George Allen & Unwin, 1935), 255.

[9] Paul Hamilton, 'Historicism and Historical Criticism,' in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, ed. Christa Knellwolf and Christopher Norris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 22 and 28.

[10] Halide Edib Adıvar, *Seviye Talip* (Can Sanat Yayınları, [1910] 2020).

[11] Damla Erlevent's master's thesis attempts the topic, '"Halide Edib Adıvar" ın Son Dönem Romanlarında İstanbul'da Gündelik Hayat ve Müzik' (Daily Life of İstanbul and Music in Halide Edib Adıvar's Late Novels) (Bilkent University, 2005). İnci Enginün underlines the significance of music in tandem with the subject of religion. See *Halide Edib Adıvar'ın Eserlerinde Doğu ve Batı Meselesi* (The Matter of the East and West in Halide Edib Adıvar's Works) (Dergâh Yayınları, 2007), 226.

The Turkish New Woman's voice and independent spiritual identity

The depiction of Rabia as a woman fully realised within Ottoman society, possessing bold opinions and a spirit independent of male authorities, stands apart from Halide Edib's other novels and most Turkish novels of the era. Typically, Turkish fiction addressed women's issues through the sufferings of a tragic female victim. I assert that this exceptional portrayal indicates a new vision of female identity, which took shape through Halide Edib's experiences of war and rapid modernisation. Her nationalist and transnational experience appears to have led her to a position poised between East and West, between the lost Ottoman past and the progressive future. Rabia's personal identity is intertwined with her music from childhood, and I will trace the evolution of her musical gift to outline Halide Edib's updated feminine ideal.[12] Rabia, named after the eighth-century female poet later embraced as a Sufi saint, expands out of traditional religious origins to exceed the customary bounds of women's spiritual activity; she mixes elements of her strict and traditional Sunni Muslim upbringing with a prevailing and inclusive Sufi influence. Rabia's imam grandfather is the religious leader of the Sinekli Bakkal neighbourhood, but at a young age Rabia becomes the community's moral compass, heart, and soul. Rabia's grandfather, who initially trains her in Quranic recitation, represents an austere conservative Islam with his 'grim and inhuman metaphysics,' which Rabia and many community leaders criticise.[13] Notably, this significant character is not named, as if he is one of a type. His exaggerated and little-developed characterisation contrasts with Rabia's individuality, just as his distant, disapproving leadership points up her genuine leadership through relationships in the community.

The novel follows the spiritual development of Rabia, who submits to her grandfather's lessons in Quranic chanting, but displays a vibrant individuality. Rabia's developing spiritual identity also appears in her burgeoning musical ability and her liberated maternal and even paternal roles at home. After Selim Pasha, the sultan's Minister of Internal Affairs, convinces Rabia's grandfather to allow her music lessons under the pasha's patronage, her voice opens a new social sphere and freedom to her. Rabia's voice not only provides for her spiritual development, but it also gains her respect from her grandfather and mother, who become financially dependent on her while she is still a child: 'The Imam had begun to treat her as a person of importance in the house.'[14] Rabia imitates her grandfather's manner of fatherhood in that she supports his living but avoids any personal connection to him. He has no spiritual influence on her music. Rabia's counter-cultural relationship with her grandfather and religious authority suggests that Halide Edib does not intend a rigid traditional spirituality for her New Woman ideal.

Years later, Rabia determines to leave her grandfather and mother for her father, Tewfik. Rabia moves in with Tewfik and begins running his grocery store and caring for him

[12] For discussion of British female novelists who may have influenced Halide Edib and who also used music as a metaphor for the female protagonist's development and identity, see Beryl Gray, *George Eliot and Music* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-10018-7; Phyllis Weliver, *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction: Representations of Music, Science and Gender in the Leisured Home* (Ashgate, 2000). Mary Burgan, 'Heroines at the Piano: Women and Music in Nineteenth-Century Fiction,' *Victorian Studies* 30 (1986); Anna Peak, 'Music and New Woman Aesthetics in Mona Caird's The Daughters of Danaus,' *Victorian Review* 40 (2014), https://doi.org/10.1353/vcr.2014.0011.

[13] Adıvar, *The Clown and His Daughter,* 256.

[14] Adıvar, *The Clown and His Daughter,* 46.

more like a mother than a daughter, 'taking charge of her big, helpless father.' [15]The gendered nature of this relationship is complex; her father tells a family friend that Rabia is 'more a like a big brother than a daughter!'[16] Defying her mother and grandfather and both mothering and brothering her father, Rabia asserts her will using her singing ability, establishes her own home, and stations herself at the head before she has come of age. Her Quranic performances open a variety of social spheres to her, endearing her to Selim Pasha and his wife, Sabiha Hanım. Additionally, she becomes a regular member of their son Hilmi's salon, a dissident political group. With these influential patrons, Rabia encounters the Italian musician Peregrini and Sufi mystic Vehbi Effendi, who become her musical and spiritual mentors. Rabia combines the sensual power of Peregrini's music with the deep wisdom and peace of Vehbi Effendi's philosophy and the Islamic chanting tradition. Each of these masculine forces bends to her spirit, as Peregrini converts to Islam in order to marry her and Vehbi Effendi realises that she is able to withhold her confidences and make her own choices regardless of his input. Thus, in leaving her grandfather, in accepting Vehbi Effendi's 'spiritual adoption,' and in her independent will, Rabia repeatedly asserts herself extraordinarily for her historical context by determining how male figures will influence her musical and spiritual development.[17]

Rabia's carefully crafted spiritual formation seems to reflect a balance Halide Edib recommends for the New Woman's spirituality. Rabia does not parallel the aggressive secularisation of the Turkish Republic. Instead, the novel details Rabia's training in Quranic chanting, which leads into her musical collaborations with Vehbi Efendi and Peregrini. Halide Edib uses the term 'chanting' rather than the standard 'reading' or 'reciting,' presumably to emphasise the musical aspect of Rabia's voice. As an outflow of her spiritual identity and personality, it is a mystical fusion of truth, beauty, and her individual expression. Peregrini says of Rabia's Quranic chanting: 'The contradictory aspects of the girl's nature blend in those moments. She achieves oneness in her chant … she attunes herself to the Infinite.'[18] Even the unbeliever recognises the spiritual significance of Rabia's singing. The freedom to assert herself and grow into leadership in her community progresses in tandem with her deepening relationship with her two music instructors. Peregrini and Vehbi Effendi understand well Rabia's 'dual nature,' described at length as the influence of her father as well as her mother and grandfather. The latter pair is responsible for a 'puritanical tendency, the readiness to think and take a definite decision.' However, her 'distinct and original personality' comes from Tewfik as well as her 'intense capacity for attachment to human beings.'[19] These sacred and secular influences along with those of Selim Pasha, Sabiha Hanım, and their son's revolutionary salon combine to form Rabia's depth and stature as an ideal. It is apparently this rare and diverse combination that Halide Edib finds necessary to transition her nation from its Ottoman past. This fusion in Rabia's character suggests an alternate way and a critique of the first president's lightning-bolt modernisations, such as outlawing the fez hat,

[15] Adıvar, *The Clown and His Daughter,* 87.

[16] Adıvar, *The Clown and His Daughter,* 91.

[17] Adıvar, *The Clown and His Daughter,* 90.

[18] Adıvar, *The Clown and His Daughter,* 98.

[19] Adıvar, *The Clown and His Daughter,* 102.

switching to the Latin alphabet from the Arabic-based Ottoman script, and giving the call to prayer in Turkish rather than Arabic.[20]

In keeping with the modern element of this balance in Halide Edib's Turkish New Woman, Rabia also maintains musical and spiritual independence from Peregrini. Rabia, the imam's daughter and admired 'Quran-chanter,' maintains her religious argument when she receives a proposal from Peregrini, a man of no faith and a former Catholic monk. This relationship illustrates the confluence of eastern piety and western atheism and secularism. Rabia struggles with the prospect of this marriage as some form of personal spiritual failure, battling with her love for Peregrini—forbidden in her society. When she asks her female mentor Sabiha Hanım, 'What happens if a Moslem girl marries a Christian?' Sabiha Hanım does not recognise this possibility as a marriage, instead using the word 'lover': 'I suppose the people in her street would stone her and her Christian lover to death. It is one of the unbreakable laws.'[21] Rabia herself does not breach this religious barrier, and Peregrini converts to Islam to marry her. In Rabia's society, the 'unbreakable laws' remain intact, but she nonetheless manages to marry her European suitor as he adjusts himself to her dictates and those of her faith context. As a personal and social ideal, Rabia unites with the best Europe has to offer while respecting Islamic religious tradition and remaining thoroughly ensconced in the close community of Sinekli Bakkal as well as in the upper-class social circle of the sultan's court.

Rabia, in all her exceptional agency for a traditional Ottoman woman, differs significantly from the new republic's modern secular vision.[22] Halide Edib seems to be critiquing this model through Rabia. With all the social barriers that Rabia surmounts, she respects certain traditional elements of her society. Although Rabia has already determined that she will marry Peregrini, when he suggests that they move to somewhere where their differing faiths would not matter, she looks away in silence with 'the air of one who had thought out things carefully and had come to definite conclusions.'[23] In her silence, her 'definite conclusions' are not lost on Peregrini. His wildly strong personality nonetheless conforms to her well-considered opinion. Thus, understanding her reasoning and knowing this unbending independence in her character, he does not push his plan further, but instead suggests that he convert. Her spiritual identity, rather than simply submitting, presses the boundaries by considering what the majority religion forbids, but ultimately without compromise. While she keeps her faith, her culture, her neighborhood, much of his self, it seems, is secondary to uniting with her. In this marriage of western and eastern values that Halide Edib proposes, the western side is to compromise more.

In addition to the compromise Rabia requires of Peregrini, she consistently displays an independent spiritual identity in private and public after marriage. Rabia's marital life, in its continuing tensions and the couple's growing mutual admiration, commands a significant portion of the novel, and the depth of their musical connection is considerable. Later in Rabia's development, during the painful throes of her life-threatening pregnancy, she realises

[20] For a thorough treatment of the period of rapid modernisation after the War for Turkish Independence, see Erik-Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (I. B. Tauris, 2004).

[21] Adıvar, *The Clown and His Daughter,* 129.

[22] For further discussion on women and secularisation in Türkiye, see Deniz Kandiyoti, 'End of Empire: Islam, Nationalism and Women in Turkey,' in *Women, Islam and the State,* ed. Deniz Kandiyoti (Palgrave Macmillan, 1991).

[23] Adıvar, *The Clown and His Daughter,* 260.

that Peregrini is wrestling to birth a musical creation. She receives the inspiration for a key musical theme Peregrini could use in his masterpiece. When she sings this for him, her voice brings 'sudden inspiration' and he watches her 'with a new light in his eyes' in a moment of epiphany, attributing to her a powerful metaphysical energy: 'He was very conscious of her, but not of her physical being; rather of the force which he had never felt with such awareness.' This musical inspiration redefines their relationship for Peregrini: 'I believe that you are a song of Allah in person, Rabia. You are not only my wife, you are my inspirer and collaborator.'[24] He speaks as if he has experienced a revelation of her identity. As Peregrini's muse and musical partner, Rabia provides this melody, demonstrating her influence as her husband's creative inspiration as well as her ability to transform pain into musical and relational beauty. Perhaps most significantly, Peregrini, the unbeliever and European musician, identifies her as the manifestation of divine music.

Furthermore, when Peregrini pleads with her to seek an abortion rather than risk a dangerous pregnancy, Rabia is resolute in a maternal strength that Halide Edib depicts as more essential even than her Islamic faith. When Rabia's spiritual father Vehbi Effendi comes to discuss the pregnancy with her, 'he who had championed the complete freedom of Rabia's soul now felt a little hurt because it seemed so entirely independent.' When she disturbs him by withholding her soul, as he describes it, and staunchly defends her choice, he realises 'something stronger than love was at work within her. What could it be except life in its most elemental form?'[25] In motherhood, Rabia stands apart from both these figures, from both the eastern and western perspectives. She has exceeded even her spiritual teacher, connecting in spirit and body with the essence of life. Her decision to risk her life for the baby's is entirely independent, and, indeed, in spite of these two men, her musical and spiritual mentors. Thus, music is the measure by which the novel combines western and eastern values and tracks the female protagonist's spiritual development in relationship with two music instructors representing opposing values.

Public spiritual identity and spiritual leadership in the community

Halide Edib creates a heroine for her new nation that is innovative not only privately but also publicly. As Rabia matures, her assertive individuality extends to a remarkable social influence. Through Rabia, Halide Edib insists on both an inviolable independence and social leadership for the Turkish New Woman. A key instance of this power in Rabia's voice is the occasion when she sings of the birth of the prophet for Princess Nejat's guests at the First Chamberlain's house. Rabia's vocal expression of suffering brings catharsis to a community of listeners. In her memoirs, Halide Edib declares that this birth narrative stirred her 'highest religious emotions hitherto': 'The poem … is by a simple Turkish poet [Süleyman Çelebi], and I know nothing more beautiful in literature than that unpretentious and unconscious revelation of a great soul in the throes of pain for suffering humanity.'[26] Thus, Halide Edib exalts this tale of a mother in labour as the ultimate in heroism and compassion for humanity. This song united with Rabia's voice creates a communal exploration of the reaches of human

[24] Adıvar, *The Clown and His Daughter,* 364.

[25] Adıvar, *The Clown and His Daughter,* 354.

[26] Süleyman Çelebi (died 1429) was one of the most celebrated early poets of Anatolia, leader of the Khalwatīyah dervish order, and imam of Bursa. Adıvar, *The Clown and His Daughter,* 156–57.

emotion and experience. When Rabia presents her own rendition of the beloved song, her audience is mesmerised:

> With the first notes the kneeling crowd began to wave like a field of white daffodils when the winds of the open blow freely on the surface. Soft sighs, heavy sighs, single sobs, sobs in chorus joined in her chant, but the chanter—whether conscious or unconscious of the general emotion—continued to describe in melody the feelings and fancies of a woman in travail.[27]

Displaying a heightened sense of poetry, Halide Edib decorates this communal experience of the court women observing the prophet's birth with the daffodil, a flower connected with spring festivals such as Persian Nowruz and Lent. This celebration of birth is wrapped in a beautiful simile from nature, as the women sway in unity and punctuate the rhythm of the song with their sibilant sighs. They respond to Rabia's voice as a field of flowers bend to the invisible wind. When Rabia performs the Mevlut chant, she innovates the historic Turkish song, singing the beginning in a major key, as she deems appropriate to the celebration of birth. Moreover, Halide Edib clearly connects this traditional Turkish song to universal feminine experience, uniting more than the Islamic audience of this scene. 'Is not every child,' the narrator asks, 'when it descends upon earth, a messenger of God?' The women listening to Rabia represent 'in their collective passion … something supremely human.'[28] Moreover, when Vehbi Effendi remarks that Rabia's performance was not 'traditional,' the Princess responds that she detected 'an air of Signor Peregrini's improvisations' in Rabia's performance. Rabia's music and her spiritual identity are apparently a mixture, reflecting a variety of influences across faiths, cultures, and social strata, a mixture into which she is drawing her community. When Rabia transitions to the death portion of the song, those gathered mourn together with 'an agony of fear at the inevitable end of human life…. Hysteria had taken hold of them all.' Behind a curtain, the First Chamberlain and some other men are also listening. A nurse later tells Rabia that the Chamberlain said Rabia's version of the birth song was the most beautiful he had ever heard: 'He was crying with emotion just as much as the women on this side of the curtain.'[29] At least a small coterie of men is equally moved, though the stereotypically feminine word 'hysteria' agitates the group reaction. The pathos of this communal experience moves with the spiritual wind of Rabia's singing; her unique voice guides the audience collectively through the extremes of human existence. As with Rabia's personal identity, her public identity, enabled and defined by her music, amalgamates the traditional and the transnational as Rabia universalises this beloved medieval Turkish song.

As to folk music in Rabia's musical blossoming, once Tewfik and Rabia have settled into their home and grocery business, Tewfik wants to resume his community theatre performances. When Rabia suggests she could sing, her father is skeptical: 'But you are a Quran-chanter, Rabia; how can you sing silly songs and play the tambourine?' She should sing, he continues, in 'proper style … slow and in regal fashion.' Her style 'wouldn't do for the street children and the outcast shadow-player.'[30] But Rabia then spends some of her happiest moments dancing and singing with them. Her development deliberately involves a departure from the strict extremes of her imam grandfather and a wider experience than singing in the

[27] Adıvar, *The Clown and His Daughter,* 231.

[28] Adıvar, *The Clown and His Daughter,* 231–32.

[29] Adıvar, *The Clown and His Daughter,* 246, 233, 240.

[30] Adıvar, *The Clown and His Daughter,* 76–77.

Ottoman court. The expansion of her musical knowledge represents the development of her spiritual voice, of her perspective on metaphysical values and her ability to express this worldview in a fusion of sacred and secular music.

Furthermore, and perhaps most counter-cultural of all, Halide Edib gives her New Woman a voice that spans social classes in the rigidly compartmentalised Ottoman society. Rabia unifies her community by connecting with the wealthy and influential as well as with the uneducated poor. Rigid social stratification in Ottoman Istanbul would neither typically have space for a relatively poor girl like Rabia to gain the audience of wealthy authorities nor to exert a broader social influence. Her influence, however, extends beyond the established religious and social systems to outliers, mystics, agnostics, working-class believers, and even to criminals. Rabia confers honour and compassionate understanding to those rejected and reviled. Though she enjoys the patronage and fascination of pashas and princes, as a moving 'Quran-chanter' Rabia is firmly rooted in her poor neighbourhood, working the grocery business with her controversial father. The deep friendship between Rabia and Rakim, a performer with dwarfism often asked by strangers to perform tricks and imitate a monkey, illustrates her maturing ability to appreciate and love against social prejudices. She incorporates Rakim into her home and business, and thus, into the small, insular community of Sinekli Bakkal. At times, this ennobling grace appears to be a freedom almost unique to women. Male characters are captive to political authorities; Selim Pasha betrays his own son, active in the Young Turk movement, in loyalty to the sultan.[31] In his legalistic religious perspective, Rabia's grandfather is consumed by anger in the condemnation he declares on his community. These social and religious ties prevent men from serving the common good as freely as female community leaders such as Rabia and Sabiha Hanım. In this way, Halide Edib's ideal even exceeds the average late-Ottoman male as Rabia exceeds her male peers in social influence.

Rabia's social opportunities and agency continue to expand as Sabiha Hanım takes a personal interest in the girl and her son Hilmi welcomes her into his salon of politically dissident Young Turks. Rabia's ability to gain the respect of the sultan's advisor as well as his revolutionary son's band of friends, accomplished through her music, demonstrates the growing power of her voice, both musically and personally. She compels her society toward her values in its own historically mutating identity from empire to republic. This influence increases with a new level of agency for her.

Later, when Tewfik and Hilmi are banished for secret political activities, Selim Pasha as the sultan's security advisor manages the case and allows even his son to be exiled out of duty to the sultan. Rabia, as the community's moral compass, decries Selim Pasha's cold betrayal. Yet in the end, after he resigns his position with the sultan, Rabia forgives Selim Pasha and renews her relationship with him. She comes to visit Sabiha Hanım and to read her parts of Tewfik's letters from exile that relate to Hilmi. Selim Pasha also listens, and as she reads, begins to think of all the suffering he had participated in as security advisor; 'he had never thought of [the exiles] as individuals' until this moment.[32] This great man experiences his first pangs of self-awareness, compassion, and regret under the influence of Rabia's voice.

[31] Halide Edib discusses the Young Turk movement, of which she was initially recognised as a matriarch, in much of her non-fiction including her memoirs, *Turkey Faces West* (Yale University, 1930), and *The Turkish Ordeal* (The Century Co., 1928). On the history of the movement, see M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (Oxford University Press, 1995).

[32] Adıvar, *The Clown and His Daughter,* 271.

Tewfik expresses her guiding influence in her environment most clearly in calling her 'one walking-stick of forty blind men'; the text continues in describing people around her who lean on her: Tewfik himself, who 'would have ceased to exist' without her; Selim Pasha and his wife; Rakim, another outcast, who adores her as 'her unconditional slave'; and Hilmi and his Young Turk salon.[33] This unlikely group represents a spectrum of ages, political views, socio-economic situations, and moral perspectives. This diversity indicates the universality of Rabia's influence; they all respond to her voice and respect her values. The community had known the imam for his greed and gloom, but they come to know Rabia for her courage and morality. By the novel's end, after her grandfather has passed away, Rabia and her ex-monk husband completely renovate the imam's house and move in, completing her 'redemption' of the neighbourhood as its new spiritual guide and revered mother figure. Rabia's rare social honour and salvatory impact on her community becomes possible through her music, a symbol of her unique voice amplified in late-Ottoman society.

Perhaps even more significantly, Halide Edib seems to intend Rabia to project an image of diversity and harmony within the late Ottoman context. Contrary to contemporary European stereotypes of Ottoman women kept at home, music broadens Rabia's awareness of other ways of life from an imperial palace to an imperial prison. Rabia's relationships span social spheres, faiths, and ethnic backgrounds, suggesting that she can relate to, value, and embrace an array of people, an accomplishment Halide Edib seems to associate with the Ottoman Empire itself at its best. In a 1957 interview, Halide Edib states that Sinekli Bakkal 'represents the life and spirit of the people of every class as well as of individuals who lived on a street of Istanbul some fifty years ago.'[34] Thus, as a socially ideal woman, Rabia is just as comfortable fascinating an Ottoman prince as she is flirting with the gardener's son. Rabia's sphere of influence takes in the gang of firemen in Sinekli Bakkal; Pembeh, a Roma woman; Bilal the Rumelian; her Circassian friend who becomes a princess; and, of course, her Italian husband. Even so, other than Peregrini, this collection contains only one minor Christian figure, serving in a prince's household, seemingly skirting the controversial late-Ottoman relations with Christian minorities in the Empire. This omission is notable considering Halide Edib's political intercession on behalf of the Armenian musician Komitas, apprehended in 1915, and her own controversial involvement in the education of Armenian orphans.[35] Furthermore, the harmony Rabia achieves in Sinekli Bakkal is not so diverse or cosmopolitan as Halide Edib's own experience, as Rabia's education involves no foreign languages or travel and no substantive interaction with Christian minorities. But for a girl without the social privileges of Halide Edib, Rabia's social sphere is remarkable.

This freedom broadens Rabia's musical repertoire into the secular music of the West through her musical mentor Peregrini and the traditional folk music of her father and his friends. Significantly, Peregrini plays classical piano and discusses music with Rabia regularly

[33] Adıvar, *The Clown and His Daughter,* 104.

[34] Mustafa Baydar, 'An Interview with Halide Edib Adivar, *Hayat,* Istanbul, 19 July 1957, quoted in Sönmez, 'The Novelist Halide Edib Adivar and Turkish Feminism,' 84.

[35] On Halide Edib's relationship with Turkish general Cemal Pasha and her involvement with the Armenian and Kurdish orphans during the World War I, see, for a recent academic perspective, Haval Halavut, 'Loss, Lament and Lost Witnessing: Halide Edib on "Being a Member of the Party Who Killed" Armenians,' *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 8 (Winter 2021); and, for a coeval Armenian point of view from a fellow student at the American College for Girls, Aghavnie Yeghenian, 'The Turkish Jeanne d'Arc: An Armenian Picture of Remarkable Halide Edib Hanoum,' *New York Times,* 17 Sep. 1922.

for years, but early in the novel he declines to teach her singing in the European classical style. Instead, he recommends that she continue in her 'perfect art': 'Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's! The child belongs to Allah; let her remain where she belongs.'[36] Rabia is not instructed by the European master because he realises she has no need of him. It would appear that understanding and exposure are important to her development, but there is to be no direct tutelage. This beginning to the musical relationship between Rabia and the man who will be her husband suggests Halide Edib's prescription for Ottoman society—not only as a community, but also in relation to Europe. Peregrini and Rabia interact as equals, and this interaction expands each's understanding and experience as well as self-discovery.

The (inter)national influence of the Turkish New Woman's spiritual identity

Sevinç Elaman-Garner describes Halide Edib's significant influence in 'generating the discourse concerning … the image of the New Turkish woman'—as 'a model of "ideal" Turkish womanhood' in her career as an educator, military officer, orator, member of parliament, and 'cosmopolitan intellectual' and also as a novelist depicting these ideals.[37] In her journalism and her fiction, Halide Edib fervently and extendedly addresses issues of education for women, polygyny, and equality in marriage. Significantly, Rabia represents the early stages of the historic formation of a new state and ideal qualities of the female citizen. However, she does not make any express prescriptive statements anticipating this new state or a woman's place in it, but, rather, exemplifies and inspires changes. She represents a tempered ideal, through which Halide Edib balances some of her previous perspectives in oratory and writing on national and international movements and events. Although Rabia is a member of Hilmi's salon and regularly associates with Hilmi and his Young Turk friends—and even though the Young Turks passed a resolution calling Halide Edib 'Mother of Turks'[38]—Rabia does not seem to imbibe their ideologies or participate in their activities, even when her father does, to the point of torture and banishment. His involvement is presented as being purely of out loyalty to his friend Hilmi and not in solidarity with the Young Turk movement. The narrator and multiple sympathetic characters, including his doting mother, sharply criticise Hilmi.[39] Rabia does not employ her oratorical skills to stir the public to revolutionary action, as Halide herself did before an audience of hundreds of thousands in Istanbul protesting the Greek occupation of Smyrna in 1919. Furthermore, Rabia is not the blazing insurgent figure that Ayşe is in Halide Edib's earlier novel *Ateşten Gömlek*.[40] After the Republic was established (1923) and Halide Edib was in self-imposed exile following a falling out with the new Republic's leadership (1926–39), she reached back in history with this novel to an Ottoman heroine, apparently in a corrective move against what she saw as excessive westernisation in her estranged

[36] Adıvar, *The Clown and His Daughter,* 59.

[37] Sevinç Elaman-Garner, 'Women, War and the Foundations of the Turkish Republic: The Vision of New Womanhood in Halide Edib Adıvar's *The Shirt of Flame* (1922),' *The First World War and Its Aftermath: The Shaping of the Middle East,* ed. TG Fraser (Gingko Library, 2015).

[38] Derya İner, 'Gaining a Public Voice: Ottoman women's struggle to survive in the print life of early twentieth-century Ottoman society, and the example of Halide Edib (1884–1964),' *Women's History Review* 24, no. 6 (2015), 980, http://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2015.1034603.

[39] Sabiha Hanım rebukes Hilmi for quoting the 'forbidden literature' of Ziya Pasha and asks herself where her son's principles lie when Hilmi lives off his father's salary from the sultan. See Adıvar, *The Clown and His Daughter*, 42.

[40] Halide Edib Adıvar, *Ateşten Gömlek* (Can Sanat Yayınları, 2007).

homeland. Rabia speaks to her society in song rather than aggressive rhetoric; her voice is religious, passionate, nostalgic, unifying, and compelling.

This moderated voice may have emerged from Halide Edib's own experience with British feminism. Her comments about the suffrage movement in England while she was a guest there are not complimentary. As she recorded in the *Akşam* newspaper, when she visited Parliament, the need for fencing to prevent women in the balcony from hurling projectiles at speakers repulsed her. She criticises the suffragettes' actions as 'azgın ve faal "feminizm"' (furious and activist feminism) and compares their 'isyan' (riot), symbolised by public smoking, unfavourably with the women who admirably volunteer to support working women with childcare.[41] Furthermore, Kaitlin Staudt notes the significance of the novel's ending concurrent with the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, a period characterised by 'an opening up of Turkish society for women in terms of increased educational opportunities, periodicals, and associations for women.' With this timing, in Staudt's view, Halide Edib intends 'to project an alternative future out of the Ottoman past.' Rabia, as an ideal of Turkish womanhood, 'then becomes one of the "outmoded" dreams of modernity that Edib brings back into circulation by projecting her retroactively out of the Ottoman past.'[42]

Thus, Rabia seems to indicate a significant shift in Halide Edib's conception of the ideal woman in her society, especially as this woman relates to the West. Despite her education, European travel, and proficiency in French and English, Halide Edib does not find any of these necessary for Rabia. She assumes her European husband into her own neighbourhood, culture, faith, and values. He, from the first time he hears her sing, declines to add anything from his European expertise to her natural gift and traditional training. So, it seems, it should be in Halide Edib's broader perspective. In limited proportions, Ottoman culture may enjoy the beauty of European music, and may even find some inspiration in it, but Peregrini is never Rabia's music instructor—not even when her Ottoman patron proposes such an arrangement. Her voice is her own, though she lives together with Peregrini and eventually collaborates with him musically. Peregrini, representing the West, respects the innate treasure of her voice; as their relationship grows, he learns to respect her agency in making choices with which he disagrees and in her capacity as a community leader.

Conclusion

Rabia makes individual and controversial choices based on her experience with the traditional majority religion. By the end of the novel, these counter-cultural spiritual decisions and Rabia's strong voice led her community to a more merciful stance towards a religious outsider. Rabia develops enduring family-like relationships with a diversity of characters and creates a respectable place for this unusual family. Thus, the novel depicts a new agency for the woman that challenges late Ottoman gender norms, an independence that is expressly spiritual, deeply personal, and socially impactful. In facing tensions among traditional expectations, her own emotions, and her spiritual values while considering marriage, Rabia demonstrates ideals for feminine spiritual identity privately, interpersonally, and socially.

[41] Halide Edib Adıvar, 'İngilitere ve İngilizler: 4: Victoria'ya isyan' (England and the English: Rebellion against Victoria), *Akşam* 7423 (22 Haziran [June] 1939). 5. On Halide Edib and feminism, see Ayşe Durakbaşa, *Halide Edib: Türk Modernleşmesi ve Feminizm* (Halide Edib: Turkish Modernisation and Feminism) (İletişim Yayınları, 2009).

[42] Kaitlin Staudt, 'Make It Orijinal: Literary Modernism and the Novel on the Turkish-British Axis, 1908–1948,' PhD thesis (University of Oxford, 2017), 130–31.

This characterisation of Rabia and her musical gift, I suggest, is a bold social and political statement, couched in fiction. Halide Edib, it appears, artfully depicted the changes she wanted to see for women and for international relations in the new Turkish Republic. She declares a governing principle that might be applied to this novel in the conclusion of her series of lectures at the National Muslim University in New Delhi, given the year *The Clown and His Daughter* was published (1935): 'The key of the future will belong to that nation which knows how to blend the material and the spiritual in as near and equal a proportion as it is possible to do.' The West, in these lectures, she characterises by materialism.[43] To this materialism, her novel adds carnal pleasure through the Italian musician Peregrini and the beautiful if dizzying complexity of western music.[44] This music likely connects with a western contribution she prescribes in these same lectures: administrative organisation. To enrich its society, the East might embrace western developments in managing the material world; the essence, like Rabia's spiritual identity, would remain untouched. After the events of the Turkish War for Independence, the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye, and Halide Edib's own travels during her exile, she presents a modified view of her national ideal: 'I say nationhood and not nationalism, for the former brings into play and harmonises inner forces in all their variety, while the latter may cause inner disintegration and create conflict with the surrounding peoples.'[45] Rabia's voice, then, may reflect what Halide Edib wished her own voice had been in the past turmoil: a balance of her national and transnational observations.

[43] Halide Edib, *Conflict of East and West in Turkey*, 2nd ed. (Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1935), 800.

[44] 'In the next room Peregrini's fingers struck the chords fiercely, almost insanely. But what wonderful sounds he unchained!... Sounds like a shrill wind whistling in a blind alley, then the roar of waters, a wild concert of the elements in space.… Through that hurricane of harmonies a single sweet melody was singing. By Allah, he could raise a thousand jinn, a thousand devils with his fingers!' See Adıvar, *The Clown and His Daughter,* 252.

[45] Edib, *Conflict of East and West in Turkey*, 295.

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