

# Sociological and Political Factors Circumscribing Turkish Version of Animal Farm

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## Abstract

*This paper studies the extra-textual and textual factors circumscribing the first Turkish version of Animal Farm, which was translated by Halide Edib, one of the most leading authors and pioneers of contemporary Turkish literature in the foundation years of the Turkish Republic. Within this framework it focuses on the dual identity of Edib compared to George Orwell's identity, setting out from both peritext and epitexts so as to disclose the parallelisms between them from the point of Halide Edib's translatorial identity although they adopted divergent strategies as authors. At this stage, her autobiographical novel, Memoirs (1926), will serve to shed light on not only how she has developed her cultural and political awareness, but also how she gained dual identity both as author and translator in the course of time. Accordingly, it first focuses on stylistic features of both authors, as well as Edib's stylistic concerns as a translator; Next, it focuses on the relationship between international politics and domestic affairs; after that, a brief translation oriented text analysis is conducted to discern Halide Edib's version from the recent Turkish version of it so as to correlate textual features with extra-textual factors. In conclusion, it aims not only to disclose the function of paratexts in assessing the macro-scale decisions of the translator, but also to discuss whether the impact of international politics and domestic issues as factors circumscribing the translation event hinders the translator's achievement in seizing the style of the original.*

**Keywords:** Manipulation, paratexts, translation, ideology, dual identity.

## Introduction

This paper studies the first Turkish version (1954) of George Orwell's "Animal Farm" by Halide Edib Adivar, who was a member of parliament in 1950ies, to disclose not only in what way the newly founded republican regime has subverted the conservative literature of the royalty, but also the way the state manipulated the translation activity to establish the ideology of the new regime for the sake of "progress".

The concept "manipulation" reminds us Andre Lefevere's statement "rewriting manipulates, and it is effective", This brings forth the question "can we identify translation with rewriting? Again according to Lefevere "translation is most obviously recognizable type of rewriting", (1992, p.9). However, the translator encounters two constraints in rewriting: first, the translator's ideology, or strategy in treating the original's universe of discourse in such a way as to reflect his/her ideology: the second constraint is the poetics dominant in the target culture. This second constraint is related with "literary devices, genres, motifs, prototypical characters, situations and symbols" and the culture's notion of what the role of literature in the social system should be (1992, p.26). Since the translation of *Animal Farm* was published by Ministry of Education, one can easily deduce that the translator's ideology fell in with ideology of the state. Proceeding from Andre Lefevere's systemic approach based on the notions of "rewriting" and "patronage", the main components of which are ideology, economy and social status of the translator, this paper will study not only the ideological force of translations as a purposeful act, but also the strategy of the translator as one of the pioneers of modern Turkish Literature. (Lefevere 1992, p. 12). For this purpose, first the life story of the translator is studied in such a way as to draw parallelisms between Orwell's style as an author vs Edib's style as a translator in spite of cultural and spatial distances; Next, it focuses on the relationship between international politics and domestic affairs so as to disclose whether the impact of international politics and domestic issues as factors circumscribing the translation event hinder the translator's achievement in seizing the style of the original.

## Author vs Translator: Autobiographical Approach to Dual Identity of Halide Edib

George Orwell (1903-1950) and Halide Edib Adivar (1884-1964) were contemporary authors, although they experienced different life situations due to cultural, political, geographical and religious divergences. However, when one studies both authors' autobiographies, one can see similarities in the lifestyle they both chose. Halide Edib's decisions as a translator of *Animal Farm* will testify to these claims. As an author, Halide Edib based her novels on her life story, just as George Orwell based his early novels on his own life: his first novel, "Down and out in Paris and London" (1933); *Burmese Days* (1934), based on his police experience; *A Clergyman's daughter* (1935); *The road to Wigan Pier* (1937); and *Homage to Catalonia*. Accordingly, it might appear that both authors developed their political stance and ideology while they were writing. Studying Halide Edib's autobiographical novel *Memoirs of Halide Edib* (1922), in which she discussed political and cultural issues as well as the linguistic problems concerning translation, serves to establish correlations between her underlying reasons for translating *Animal Farm* and the personal ideology she developed during the course of her life.

Halide Edip Adivar was born in 1884 in Istanbul. Halide Edip's first bicultural experience occurred when her father, Mehmet Edip, private treasurer of the Sultan, wanted to train his daughter in Robert College, which was founded by the USA in 1864 during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamit II. Because she came from an extended family that shared both traditional Ottoman values and the Western values of the republican era, Halide Edip could analyse the position of women in the Ottoman Turkish society. Her means of upbringing assured her the role of an activist in the suffragette movement. As an orphan, she was raised by her grandparents under the guidance of her father, who was among the strongest advocates of Western values. Once she graduated from Robert College, Halide Edip married Salih Zeki, a leading mathematician who taught her mathematics. However, their marriage ended in 1910, when Salih Zeki asked to marry another woman. In her book *Memoirs of Halide Edib* (1922), the author narrated her childhood memories along with the foundational years of the republican regime within the framework of World War I. Halide Edib expressed not only the ways in which Westernisation was perceived in the recently founded republic:

Now her father Edip Bey, secretary of His majesty Abdul Hamid, had a strong admiration for the English and their way of upbringing children. He believed their greatness was due to this and so his method of upbringing his firstborn was strongly influence by English ways as he had read them in books. He occupied himself personally with her dresses,[...]; Turkey having, however, not yet entered the road of reform and modernism, by a slavish imitation of English outward apparel, he did not make her wear a hat. [...] It would never done for him even to express a desire to do such a thing, for wearing hat were the outward and visible sign of Christians, [...].(Edib, 1926, p. 23)

All of her experiences abroad and her bicultural upbringing enhanced Halide Edib's cultural awareness. Her educational and family background placed her in a position to sow the seeds of the suffragette movement in modern Turkey, which was opposed to the traditional values of Islam. The protagonists in her novels were traditional female characters. For example, her novel *Sinekli Bakkal* (1936) was originally published in English under the title *The Clown and his Daughter* (Adivar Edip, 1935). Different from the melodramatic psychological novels of the age, this urban novel revolved around a common female character in the suburbs of Istanbul. Orwell's socialist approach to dictatorship and intolerance in *Animal Farm* overlapped with the character analysis of Halide Edip in her autobiographical novel *Memoirs*, in which she not only narrated her story but also discussed her political views within the framework of the War of Independence (1919-1923). Edib herself, as a bilingual author who wrote her first novel in English, experienced cultural and linguistic diversity in such a way as to assimilate it into her professional identity. For example, her first original novel, *The Clown and his Daughter* (1935), was written in English.

## Linguistic and Stylistic Views as an Author vs as a Translator

As for Halide Edip's linguistic and stylistic concerns, we clearly discern her authorial skills in the translation process. The following excerpt is the best evidence of the macro-scale decisions made during the rewriting processes:

There is a wild harmony in the Anglo- Saxon diction of Shakespeare the parallel of which I thought I could find in the simple but forcible Turkish of popular usage, the words and expressions of which belong more to Turkish than to Arabic or Persian sources. This was at the time an un-heard of and shocking thing, but as I had no intention of publishing I was not hindered by any of considerations of what the public or press might say. The popular Turkish genius in its language was a thing rather apart, although it had greater resemblance to the forcible Anglo-Saxon than the refined Persianized Turkish could be made to have (Edib, 1926, p.220).

There are two points here. The first pertains to the linguistic constraints shaping the translator's initial decisions regarding the stylistic features of the original. The second relates to the conventions of the Ottoman literary poly-system. In the former, Halide Edip compared potential and constitutional features of Turkish to English in terms of the logic of languages. What she discussed in this excerpt is that Turkish as an inductive language resembles English more than Arabic. As for the latter claim, even if the canonised literary polysystem at the time placed Turkish folk literature at the periphery, the vernacular literature prospered and disseminated over the course of time.

When Halide Edip wrote in English, her style is very plain, far from the ambiguous and circuitous language she used in her novels. Distinct from the Ottoman literary polysystem, in which poetry was esteemed more highly than prose, the republican era introduced the prosaic style to Turkish readers. The authors wavered between two choices in prose: whether to maintain the elaborate style of verse peculiar to the Eastern tradition or to adopt the plain style of the Western literary polysystem. In the beginning, the authors opted for the elaborate style of the East. However, state-sponsored translation activity had an important role in introducing the plain language of prose to the literary polysystem of Modern Turkish. For example, although Halide Edip was criticised by her contemporaries, including Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu and İsmail Hakkı Sebük, for linguistic errors, circumlocutions, and run-on sentences in her novels (Kudret, 1998, p.65), she avoided ornate language in her translations from the West. For example, when Halide Edip Adivar was assigned the task of delivering the annual welcome speech for Istanbul University in 1942, she spoke about "The impact of Translation on Literature" and expressed her ideas on plainness as follows:

What I mean by "plainness in language" is not just opting for the words of urkish origin. No language can achieve such purification. It can only be called impoverishment of language, not plainness. What I mean by "plainness" is using all the words incorporated to Turkish—just for a few exceptions—in consideration for the linguistic constitution of Turkish. (Adivar-Edip, 1943, p.270)

It might have been for this reason that she avoided ornate language in the translation of *Animal Farm*. From this perspective, Halide Edib observed the principles defined by George Orwell in his essay *Politics and English Language* (1946):

Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech [...].

Never use a long word where a short one will do.

If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.

Never use the passive where you can use the active.

The plain authorial style adopted by George Orwell may relate to his concern with directly communicating his political views and message. This hypothesis is verified in the preface of the Ukrainian version of *Animal Farm*, where Orwell expressed his views on its language as follows "On my return from Spain, I thought of exposing the Soviet myth in a story that could be easily understood by almost anyone and which could be easily translated into other languages." (Orwell, 1947) It might have been for the same reason that Halide Edip adopted George Orwell's plain style in Turkish version although she adopted a very circumlocutory and complicated language as an author. Accordingly, her plain style in translation may also be related to convey Orwell's message of the humanist approach in the struggle—based on the egalitarian ideology of socialism—against the authoritarian and totalitarian regimes of fascism, communism and capitalism. George Orwell expressed his arguments against nations' totalitarianism in the preface of to the Ukrainian edition of *Animal Farm* in 1947 as follows:

Everything he reads about a country like the USSR is automatically translated into English terms, and he quite innocently accepts the lies of totalitarian propaganda. Up to 1939, and even later, the majority of English people were incapable of assessing the true nature of the Nazi regime in Germany, and now, with the Soviet regime, they are still to a large extent under the same sort of illusion (Orwell, 1947).

From these remarks one can deduce that there is a correlation between ideology and language. While totalitarian regimes, or extremist ideologies opts for ornate language in conveying their messages,

such humanitarian ideologies as socialism opts for plain language to share not only the division of labour, but also the same rights in political arena. As for Halide Edib as an author and the member of parliament of the recently founded republic, the linguist and stylistic conflict she fell into as an author and translator can be evaluated as the sign of transition period.

## Preliminary Factors and Operational Strategies

The translation of *Animal Farm* in 1954 was not a mere coincidence. Such external factors as international affairs and the personal ideology of the translator played a role in defining the new regime following the Republican People's Party's authoritarianism. *Animal Farm* was first published in 1945, corresponding to the end of the Second World War (1939-45). The novel was listed in the 55th issue of *Tercüme* in January 1953 under the category of new American Literature. It was published in 1954 by the Ministry of Education. Compared to the delayed translation of other Western classics, the translation of *Animal Farm* was published only a decade after the original. Undoubtedly, *Animal Farm*'s publication as a serial in *Cumhuriyet*, the first journal of the republican age in 1924 and Halide Edip's symbolic power as an MP played a role in its approval by the translation bureau. Moreover, the USA's anticommunist policy against the USSR after the Second World War and the CIA's strategy in disseminating anticommunist propaganda throughout the world to create its global market may have ended not only in the publication of the *Animal Farm* translation one year after it was written but also in using it as a means of propaganda in different languages (Erhanlı, 2003).

As for the matricial elements, in Halide Edip's version, the novel was not divided into chapters because in the Turkish literary polysystem, legends and fairy tales are not divided into sections or chapters. However, her plain style in translation assumed the colloquial tone of the fables, even if the statement of "a fairy tale" in the title of the original was omitted in the Turkish version. In the introduction of the Turkish versions, which Halide Edip wrote in the form of a translator's note, there was no direct information regarding the novel's audience, or any indication of the problems she encountered in the translation process. Accordingly, the introduction took the form of a critical analysis of the original novel alongside suggestions for how the reader might approach the novel. The following excerpt may illuminate the suggestions Halide Edip made to readers in the translator's preface of the Turkish version of the novel (1954/1966):

Orwell, the author has not written this book to inculcate his ideology. He was only shooting the live pictures of this world by setting up a scene and shedding the light on it". While you are reading the book you feel the fact of the time in action. As a critique remarked, Orwell is a contemporary Walt Disney, who can animate the words into imaginary moving pictures.(Orwell, 1954/1966)

Halide Edip's remarks in the preface demonstrate her authorial meticulousness in transferring literary features peculiar to genres and text-types even if the statement "fairy tale" was omitted by the translation bureau. Moreover, they also prove her concern for the reader in the translation process as well as her mission in the reading campaign to develop simple reading habits for those accustomed to the oral culture. It was perhaps for this reason that she even did not even mention the original subtitle of "fairy tale", which George Orwell inserted to emphasise the plain style in the fables. This decision might relate to differences between Eastern and Western genre conventions, as there are no satirical elements or political connotations in the fairy tales of the Eastern literary polysystem. Turkish fairy tales generally do not revolve around animals but rather describe the imaginary world of elves. For this reason, they address only morals rather than any satirical elements. However, forty-six years later, the term "fairy tale" was inserted in Celal Üster subsequent translation of the same novel (2000). However, his style of translation is so literal that the colloquial tone of the fairy tale disappeared in the Turkish version even if illustrations are inserted in the text.

The following excerpts would prove this claim

### Original

We are born, we are given just so much food as will keep the breath in our bodies, and those of us who are capable of it are forced to work to the last atom of our strength; and the very instant that our usefulness has come to an end we are slaughtered with hideous cruelty (Orwell 1988:8).



## Turkish Version I

Doğuyor, canı tende muhafaza edebilecek kadar bize yiyecek veriyorlar, aramızda kudreti yetenleri son nefesine kadar çalıştırıyorlar, ve çalışmayacağımız an en çirkin bir gadir ile bizi boğazlıyorlar (Orwell, 1954/1966, p. 6).

## Back translation I

Born we are, we are given so much food as to keep soul in the skin. They make those amongst us who could work until their last breath, and once we can't work they strangled us with a most outrageous qadr.

## Turkish version II

Dünyaya geldikten sonra yaşamımıza yetecek kadar yiyecek verirler; ayakta kalanlarımızı canı çıkana kadar çalıştırır; işlerine yaramaz duruma geldiğimizde de korkunç bir acımasızlıkla boğarlar. (Üster, 2011, p. 24)

## Back translation II

After we were born, they give us enough food for survival; they make those who survive until they lose their lives; when they prove useless they strangled them with appalling merciless.

Even from this brief comparative analysis, one can easily discern the colloquial tone of Halide Edip through her inverted style in the beginning of the sentence by starting with the verb “doğuyor” as opposed to the long sentence translated by Celal Üster as “Dünyaya geldikten sonra”. The inverted style can be viewed as a harbinger of acknowledging folk language as “canonised” in the modern Turkish literary polysystem, as opposed to its noncanonised position in the Ottoman literary polysystem. Her colloquialism can also be viewed in her frequent recourse to the idiomatic usage of language such as “canı tende muhafaza edebilecek”. However, her frequent use of archaic words of Arabic and Persian origin, such as “gadir” or “muhafaza edebilecek”, can be viewed as a sign of the conservative policies of the Democratic Party, which advocated preserving the society’s Islamic values together with the liberal policies imposed by the USA.

## Conclusion

Halide Edip, as an MP of the Democratic Party, did not reject the manipulation, although she taught English Literature for several years and stated Orwell’s ideological motive in writing *Animal Farm* in the preface of the Turkish version. During those years, this type of state intervention and manipulation was legitimised because it was believed that “progress” could be achieved only if Turkey overcame its economic crisis. In this case, the state’s manipulations of cultural affairs were justified in the name of “progress”. If the novel is to be analysed from the angles of both writers, one can claim that both were socialists; however, their motives for advocating socialism differed. While Orwell was fighting against communism and fascism, Halide Edip was fighting for “progress” based on the principles of Islam and established societal norms. Accordingly, her motivation related more to her country’s prosperity than to international politics. However, in spite of all interventions stemming from political and economic concerns, Edip managed to seize the plain style of Orwell as a translator, by having had a recourse to high number of binomials, near synonyms, and idiomatic expressions in the translation process.

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