

IMAGE OF ISLAMIZED ARMENIAN WOMEN IN MODERN TURKISH LITERATURE

It is known that literature mostly reflects the actual issues, which bother society at the given moment and make them priority themes. But at the same time the atmosphere in the country and in the society also influences the choice of the literature themes. In this respect we should state that the Turkish literature took the same stance in regard to a number of themes which had been considered taboo in the 20th century. Among those themes were the Armenian Genocide, expatriation, the issue of forcibly Islamized Armenians and one can state that despite some separate and skate allusion there had been no decent attention paid to Armenian subject in Turkish literature till recently.

"Allusions" to Armenian subject in Turkish literature of the 20th century: Brief survey

If the indifference or even hostility of Turkish writers adherent of conservative or nationalist inclinations to the national minorities in general and Armenians in particular can be explained by their ideology¹, then the silence of the progressive and socialist Turkish writers seems at least weird. We should state that the left, socialist direction in Turkish literature, which started to form in the 30s of the last century, especially flourished in the 40s. Even in a number of works created in the tideway of critical and social realism, appearing from the position of the protection of the various human rights, against the social and gender inequality we can hardly meet allusions to the Armenian problems and even if there are such allusions they are, as we have already mentioned, skate and indirect. Maybe under the conditions, which were ruling in Turkey, this was justifiable. Maybe conditions did not allow it or there

¹ The critic Omer Türkesh mentions that in contemporary Turkish literature all other nations except Turks are presented as enemies. I.e. the most wide-spread and accessible way to create a negative character is his not being a Turk. See: Ertan Özlem, "The literature estranging Armenians and "Those who suffered"" (Turkish), ["Ermenileri "ötekileştiren" edebiyat ve "Hayatta Kalanlar"], *Agos*, February 08, 2008.

was a problem of ignorance. By the way, the well-known writer Vedat Turkali touches upon the problem of ignorance in his conversation with Hrant Dink: "Our generation didn't know what happened"². While speaking about the ignorance of Turkish intelligentsia and society in general we would like to cite Hrant Dink: "After 1915 Turkish society with its villagers, townsmen knew very well what had happened during that period. Many of them witnessed what happened. Everything what happened was bad and bitter and that was why they had to keep silence. The official state position legitimated that silence. Not only conservatives but also those who were considered to be revolutionary came to the situation when they could not say even a word on this matter. In the poems of Nazim Hikmet there is only one line about Armenian issue, and that's all"³.

May be the ignorance of the left writers can be regarded as an excuse but rather unconvincing one. But, nevertheless, in the works of some Turkish writers, mainly of left orientation, between the lines we can find some thoughts, regarding Armenian subject. For example, famous and talented writer Yashar Kemal who touched upon the land issue for many times also in a skate way presented the problem of the allotment of the Armenian lands after the forced deportation. For example, he presents one of the characters of his "Aghas of Akchasaz" book Muallim Rustem in the following way: "...he was who like an eagle sailed down on the Armenians who tried to escape and save themselves, ripped them all apart and throwing them down the bridge took their gold and gave it to the Pasha of Adana"⁴. In his other work, "Rain bird" we can meet the following lines: "Mother admonished Ismail Agha in the following way: "I would like to ask you one more thing my son, if you go to that settlement do not take the houses, fields which remained after the Armenians. No other bird can find a shelter in the nest which owner has

² Oğın Çilingir, "1915 in Turkish literature and example of works" (Turkish), ["Türk romanında 1915 ve örnek eserler (2)"], *Agos*, January 11, 2008.

³ Sefa Kaplan, *What happened in 1915* (Turkish), [*1915-te ne oldu?*], Istanbul, Hurriyet publication, 2005, 2-nd edition, pp. 77-78.

⁴ Oğın Çilingir, "1915 in Turkish literature and example of works (Turkish)", ["Türk romanında 1915 ve örnek eserler (5)"], *Agos*, February 01, 2008.

gone. The one who destroyed the nest cannot have it. At the fields of violence only violence grows"⁵.

As it was mentioned above the famous Turkish communist poet Nazim Hikmet also touched upon the Armenian issue in a couple of lines, e.g. in his "Handless Ismail" ["Cholak Ismail"] poem we can meet the following lines:

Though Ismail was only 16 years old
He was taken to the army.
He was sent as a policeman to Yozgat
And during the Armenian massacres
Buried himself in blood⁶.

In the other poem by Nazim Hikmet "Evening walk" ["Akşam Gezisi"] we can run into the following lines:

The lights of the grocer Karapet turned on
This Armenian citizen did not forgive
The slaughter of his father in Kurdish mountains
But he loves you
Because you did not forgive too
Those who drew that black strip
At the forehead of Turkish people⁷.

Turkish historian Halil Berktaş analyzing those ideas, reasonably mentions that despite the official state position there are the recollections of those events preserved in the memory of common people and adds that till now in some houses there are swords, hung on the wall, and it is said that the blood on those swords is Armenian, and at the same time some people are proud of it and some people are ashamed⁸.

⁵ Yaşar Kemal, *"Rain bird"* (Turkish), [*Yağmuncuk Kuşu*], İstanbul, Toros publication, 1993, p. 95.

⁶ Halil Berktaş, "Nazım, Armenian massacre, and the story of one collage" (Turkish), ["Nazım, Ermeni kıyımı, bir koleji hikâyesi"], *Taraf*, January 12, 2008.

⁷ Berktaş, "Nazım, Ermeni kıyımı, bir koleji hikâyesi", *Taraf*.

⁸ Berktaş, "Nazım, Ermeni kıyımı, bir koleji hikâyesi", *Taraf*.

Islamization of the Armenians and the allusion to that in Turkish literature

Armenians, being one of the main non-Muslim nations in the Ottoman Empire, had been forcedly Islamized from time to time. It is known that there were facts of Islamization of the Armenians during the Armenian Genocide. Among forcedly Islamized Armenians there were particularly many women and children, in whose Islamization both state and definite strata of the society played a role. Without delving deeply into the details and reasons of the Islamization, I think it is necessary to mention that the capturing and the Islamization of the exiled Armenian women and children had clear economic side, but of course the humanistic reasons should not be excluded either. As a consequence today the stratum has been formed in Turkish society, which has Armenian descent, particularly Armenian grandmothers. Hrant Dink said on this occasion: "Today, when you travel across Anatolia, almost everywhere, in a number of families you can meet people who say: "My grandfather, my grandmother were Armenians"⁹.

Today the fact of having Armenian grandmother is so wide-spread in Turkey that it became the material for literature. The stories of the forcedly Islamized Armenian women who survived the Genocide, which have appeared in Turkish agenda recently, are the part of oral history genre wide-spread for the recent two or three decades¹⁰. According to Armenian ethnographer Harutyun Marutyan, the oral histories make listen to the silent and despised strata of the society¹¹.

One may say that today in the modern Turkish literature there is a tendency, trend when the issue of the Armenians, mostly women, who were captured or survived by miracle and were Islamized in 1915 becomes the subject of the literature. In the published books especially the factual basis is distinguished. While speaking about the possibility of the discussing the theme of the Islamized Armenians, many people point out, e.g., some freedoms which can be seen on the way of Turkey to

⁹ "Children who do not have registration look for their relatives" (Turkish), ["Kayıt dışı çocuklar akrabalarını arıyor"], *Sabah*, September 07, 2005.

¹⁰ Harutyun Marutyan, *The Role of the Memory in the Structure of the National Identity* (Armenian), [*Hishoghutyun dery angayin inqutyun karidcvatsqum*], Yerevan, Noravank publication, 2006, p. 71.

¹¹ Marutyan, *The Role of the Memory in the Structure of the National Identity*, p. 72.

integration to Europe but the definite descendants, mainly grandchildren, of the Islamized Armenians are supposed to be the driving force of giving publicity to that theme¹². Though those bitter stories have been known for quite a long time and they have preserved in the memory of the people, the Turkish literature has turned to it only in recent years, and there are several reasons why Turkish literature has not made it a subject of the art for so many years, and one of those reasons is that it was closed and tabooed. But today's references of the Turkish literature to that theme partially broke the taboo.

There are already several works based on facts, which main hero is the forcibly Islamized Armenian woman with her complicated psychological world. Despite some differences between Islamized Armenian women there are also several common features. It is remarkable that those women preferred to raise the traumatic recollections, which accompanied them during their whole life, only in the twilight of their lives. Thus they hid them during their whole life, being afraid or maybe not wishing to distress their children. There is also another reason, i.e. they could not find the one with whom they could share their sorrow. The other common feature for such stories is that by telling about the traumatic recollections, which were hid during their whole lives; may be, subconsciously, they wanted to disburden or to unburden themselves. In the opinion of the specialists the best way to get rid of the trauma is storytelling, which can bring to the relief of the state of mind¹³. Women and children who were captured from their families or lost the families changing their religion, language and environment, going through the hardship of massacres and deportation, naturally, suffered various traumas, which had accompanied them for many years. In the books about the Islamized Armenian women the relations between grandmothers and grandchildren are distinguished, their mutual affection and trust and one may state that this is one of the main peculiarities of the theme. One of the main issues spread in world literature and literary criticism, the issue of the fathers and sons, in Turkish literature, in the works about the Islamized Armenian women has turned into a peculiar grandmothers and grandchildren issue.

¹² Erhan Başyurt, *Armenian orphans: secret lives* (Turkish), [*Ermeni evlatlıklar: saklı kalmış hayatlar*], İstanbul, Karakutu publication, 2006, p. 11.

¹³ Marutyan, *The Role of the Memory in the Structure of the National Identity*, p. 77.

The grandchildren of the Islamized Armenian women, being the listeners of their bitter stories, unintentionally became the bearers of those traumas, thus the trauma passes from the bearer to the one to whom he trusted it and then the new bearer of the secret begins to suffer from that burden. According to the specialists the traumatic recollections of the Armenian Genocide has accompanied different generations of the Armenians and they express themselves peculiarly depending on time and circumstances. Hrant Dink writes about this: "There seems to be no peaceful future for the Armenian world until we disburden from the trauma, which passes from generation to generation"¹⁴.

In the works about Islamized Armenian women the authority they had with their family and milieu is the most evident. Almost in all the books Islamized Armenian women are presented as clever, cleanly women with good housekeeping skills. Their skill in cooking was especially pointed out. We can find many recollections of grandchildren connected with their grandmothers and here we would like to bring the one we think is the most noteworthy. Kurdish Ahmet Onal was impressed by the love of his grandmother Fate for books: "I can say that she managed our family and everybody listened to her in surrounding villages. I felt that she was from the intellectual family. She paid great attention to the education of the children. I remember very well that one day when returning home from school I dropped my books and copy-books into the mud. When my grandmother saw this she called me and told a story: "Our people left us under the walls, buried gold and money but they took the books with them. The book is very valuable. I shall leave this world, money and gold may have gone, but if the book disappears from the face of the world everything will disappear – the knowledge, future, history. That is why a book is more valuable than a man and money"¹⁵. Hrant Dink, who also touched upon the issue of the

¹⁴ Hrant Dink, "Turks and Armenians. Two close peoples. Turkey and Armenia: Two distant neighbours" (Turkish), ["Türkler ve Ermeniler: İki Yakın Halk; Türkiye ve Ermenistan: İki Uzak Komşu"], *Ermeni Sorunu Tartışılırken...*, İstanbul, Heinrich Boll stiftung publication, 2006, p. 55.

¹⁵ Ahmet Onal, "'Ours' left us under the walls" (Turkish), ["'Bizimkiler' bizi duvar diplerine bıraktılar!"], *Yeni Aktuel* No. 116.

<http://www.yeniaktuel.com.tr/tur106.116@2100.html>

authority of the Islamized Armenian women, said: "Each of those women was a legend; they were the dervishes of their homes"¹⁶.

One of the first works devoted to the Islamized Armenian women was the novel "The Children of the Exile: My Grandmother was Armenian" by İrfan Palalı, which was mainly based on the facts but due to different reasons the names of the heroes were changed. In this book we can see the peculiar connection between Islamized Armenian woman Fatma and her grandson Demir, and, as a result, grandmother trusted him the secret of her life. This woman, despite her advanced age, remembered their life before the Genocide in details, their road to exile, massacres, and the murder of her father and the death of her mother. All those scenes accompanied her during her whole life. As she told their string, at first, consisted of 80 people: "At the end only me, and maybe several girls like me survived"¹⁷. She also remembered the moment of killing her father and other men from their string: "Later all the men were killed in turn. Two men hold them and the third one killed. At the very end they killed my father"¹⁸. The moment when she had parted from her mother left a distinct imprint on Fatma as well as on other girls like her. After the murder of the men, the women were taken to the trees, most probably to be raped. "Before my mother went that way she came up to me and said something, or whispered, but I don't remember what she said, I only remember that she kissed me. After that I never embraced or kissed my mother. She came up to me and kissed me. This is the only thing I know. It turned out to be her last kiss, because the next day my mother was frozen to death"¹⁹. Generally in such works the tendency can be observed that the Islamized Armenian girls remember that they were from secured families and they were under care but later quite the contrary they were under pressure, insults and they preserved the small part of the memories from their childhood and may be this gave strength to them to resist challenges.

¹⁶ "Hrant Dink: Let us speak not about the dead but about those who are alive" (Turkish), ["Ölenlerin değil, kalanların üzerinden konuşalım"], *Zaman*, November 26. 2005.

¹⁷ İrfan Palalı, *The children of exile: My Grandmother was Armenian* (Turkish), [*Tehcir Çocukları: Nenem bir Ermeniymiş*], İstanbul, Su publication, 2005, pp.14-15.

¹⁸ Palalı, *Tehcir Çocukları: Nenem bir Ermeniymiş*, p. 16.

¹⁹ Palalı, *Tehcir Çocukları: Nenem bir Ermeniymiş*, pp. 16-17.

Fatma was 5-6 years old girl when she and a group of girls of her age survived and reached Urfa where she was taken as a servant and later married to the son of that family Dervish.

The fact that the fear of death had accompanied her throughout her whole life proves that the scenes of murder influenced child deeply. According to Fatma grandmother she was even afraid to go to the funeral of the relatives because it was hard and painful to her, but the explanation of all these is in the following simple but at the same time very thoughtful sentence: "When I listen that somebody died, the murder of my father flashes out..."²⁰.

The Islamized Armenian women regarded their special attachment to one of their grandchildren as a support point, but in that attachment they wanted to see the resemblance to their former Armenian families. E.g. during her last phone conversation to her grandson Demir Fatma grandmother asked him to come as soon as possible, in order to see him as she missed him very much, maybe she would see him for the last time as she filled her close death and then she added: "You are both my son, and my father. Do you know that my father was like you? You are just a little dark, while he was fairer"²¹.

The great role in putting on the agenda and initiating public discussions on the issue of the Islamized Armenian women played "My Grandmother" memoirs novel by Fethiye Chetin. This was the first and one the most beautiful books written on this subject but it differs from other works of this kind by its high artistic features.

Fethiye's grandmother Heranush suffered massacres, horrors of exile and at the road of exile she was captured by one militia man, adopted and given name Seher. Heranush had deep affection for one of grandchildren – Fethiye, and at the advanced age she trusted her with the biggest secret of her life. There are several reasons for the affection between grandmother and grandchild but, as in the case with Irfan Palali's grandmother, here also Heranush, in our opinion, saw or tried to see in her granddaughter something which connected her to her family and the following words addressed to Fethiye which Heranush often

²⁰ Palali, *Tehcir Çocukları: Nenem bir Ermeniymiş*, p. 41.

²¹ Palali, *Tehcir Çocukları: Nenem bir Ermeniymiş*, p. 122.

repeated come to prove it: "You are like our part of the family"²². According to Chetin, grandmother had rather retentive memory but in order to remember the details connected with the exile and massacres of her Armenian family she repeated everything in herself²³, and that means that she was constantly in trauma. Other Armenian women who shared the fate of Heranush had also been under the same condition and all that also was called for writing that book: "Later I noticed that many women who shared the fate of my grandmother being unable to tell about that talked to themselves or to each other"²⁴.

In "My Grandmother" we can also meet the facts telling about the traumatic everyday life of the Islamized Armenian women. The most remarkable are the efforts of Heranush and other Islamized Armenian women to preserve secretly some Christian traditions, e.g. to celebrate the Easter, to bake some cakes for that²⁵. By the way we can also meet in the book some facts of the direct or indirect preservation of the Christian traditions. Thus, the rule of preserving seven generations during the marriage was spread among Armenians and when Siranush, Heranush's aunt who was captured, Islamized and Kurdishized wanted Heranush's daughter to marry her son, Heranush answered: "I will not give my daughter in marriage to a relative"²⁶.

The theme of the forcibly Islamized and crypto-Armenians is also touched upon by the Turkish writer living in Germany Kemal Yalchin. In his first book on this subject, "You Rejoice My Heart", the meetings of the author with the Islamized and crypto-Armenians and their successors in the forms of the dialogues are presented. One of the heroines of the book, the crypto-Armenian Sultan Bakircigil tells one rather peculiar detail which was characteristic of almost all the Islamized Armenian women: "Most of them never laughed"²⁷. In the other book by Yalchin, "Blond

²² Fethiye Chetin, *My Grandmother* (Turkish), [*Anneannem*], İstanbul, Metis publication, 2005, p. 29.

²³ Interview with the author of "My Grandmother" book Fethiye Chetin, *Azdağ*, Beirut, November 27. 2006.

²⁴ Interview with the author of "My Grandmother" book Fethiye Chetin, *Azdağ*.

²⁵ Chetin. *Anneannem*, p. 78.

²⁶ Chetin. *Anneannem*, p. 60.

²⁷ Kemal Yalchin, *You Rejoice My Heart* (Armenian) [*Hogis qezmov ky khayray*], Yerevan. Zangak-97 publication, 2003, p.358.

Bride" ("Sarı Gelin"), we meet beauty Siranush from the famous Bersum family of Adiyaman who was saved by one of the Kurd aghas – Nuri, and later married him. In Yalcin's book in stories told by the son of Nuri Agha and Siranush – Mehmet Nuri about his mother one can clearly see the traumatic everyday life of an Islamized Armenian woman and her memories: "My mother's real name was Siranush, after her marriage to my father they called her Hanim. When she was young she often told me and my brothers: "Call me Siranush, I want to listen". When I called her Siranush she embraced me, kissed me and cried. When I was a child, seeing my mother crying I cried too, but I never knew why she was crying. Sometimes my mother talked to mountains, birds, stones, land, and flowers. I did not understand the language she spoke. When I asked she patted my hair and said: "This is the language of my mother, my father, the language of you uncles, and the language of the Armenians". The language of the Armenians was the language of my mother's tears"²⁸.

Another book on the subject of the Islamized Armenian women is "Armenian Girl" memoirs novel by Yusuf Baghi, which is also based on the story of the eyewitness who suffered all that. Mariam who changed her name to Fatma had hidden her grief in herself for decades and only at the advanced age she found the one with whom she could share her memories. Mariam who suffered the horrors of the Genocide at the early age remembered rather well her village – Karskapi by Erzurum, the well-to-do and happy family, her father, mother, two brothers whom she lost. As the author of the book Yusuf Baghi writes: "Fatma could not share those memories connected with her identity with anyone; she trusted only me and when I asked the questions she never denied to answer and told some facts"²⁹. But, in fact, the fear was the reason that even at that age she asked that everything she told to be published after her death. She remembered the scene of the murder of her parents and people from their string. "In the evening there was only a small group of us left. We were waiting when they will come to take us. We were going to death deliberately. I was small, I did not realize but the other people of the string knew how it would end. We moved away from the gathering point on 500 meters. The soldiers who

²⁸ Kemal Yalcin, *Blond Bride* (Turkish), [*Sarı Gelin*], Bochum, 2004, p. 294.

²⁹ Yusuf Baghi, *Armenian Girl* (Turkish), [*Ermeni kızı. Ağçık*], Istanbul, Peri publication, 2007, p. 7.

guarded the gathering point passed us to the executioners. The executioners hold swords and there were daggers hanging on their belts. I saw the blood on that swords and daggers. The executioner who took our group was forty years old, of low stature, in trousers and vest, with thick and black eyebrows, dark skin, black moustache and hamayil on his head... That man killed my mother and my two brothers³⁰. The image of the executioner stuck in the mind of Mariam in every detail and accompanied her during her whole life. Due to all this she had different spiritual anxieties during her whole life but she had hidden it even from her children. "They killed my brothers with sabres before my eyes and then cut off their heads and threw it into the well. Before being killed they were asked only one question: "Do you adopt Islam?" and after that the executioner lowered the sword During that time I was crying constantly, I was taken from my mother. My mother and brothers were killed before my eyes. I was shocked³¹. It is noticeable that the scene of murder left a deep imprint on her memory and she repeated it constantly. The calmness of the executioners while they were doing their job also impressed her and the following lines best of all describe the whole scene: "I was under the impression of what I had seen when a horseman came up to us. He "bade God speed in the affairs" to the executioners standing by the well and the chief of the executioners stopped his work and went up to the horseman. They sat down, talked. They were laughing as if they were slaughtering cattle at the slaughterhouse. They told each other their deeds without being afraid or ashamed and laughed. It turned out that the horseman had also been the executioner but he worked near other well³². These all happened before small children's eyes who were listening and waiting for their lot. While they were talking one of the executioners noticed little Mariam and asked the other one: "What is this little girl doing here?" And Ibrahim answered: "Salih, if you want take her. I have many of them at home. If you don't want I will take". "Ok, she is a very beautiful girl I'll take her³³. Thus, seven years old Mariam went to executioner Salih who took her home, then adopted, named Fatma and Islamized her. But the child had been in nightmare for a long time because

³⁰ Baghi, *Ermeni kızı. Ağçik*, p. 11.

³¹ Baghi, *Ermeni kızı. Ağçik*, p. 13.

³² Baghi, *Ermeni kızı. Ağçik*, p. 14.

³³ Baghi, *Ermeni kızı. Ağçik*, p.14.

of what she had seen, she could not sleep, and according to her, the image of the murderer of her family Ibrahim never left her. It is interesting that the executioner left such a deep imprint on her that even many years later when she suddenly saw him she recognized him and went through all the horrors she had suffered again. But she kept all her feelings in herself and did not tell anyone: "Of course I did not tell anyone, I kept everything to myself. I had no one with whom I could share; I didn't trust anyone with my secret"³⁴. The milieu where being Armenian was not respectful to say the least, also played great part in the reticence of Mariam and as she said: "I could not share my pain with anyone because if I did then they would destroy me; they would say Fatma is still Armenian"³⁵. At the close of her days telling her grandson Yusuf about her sufferings she expressed the ideas which were rather characteristic and which demonstrate both the presence of the traumatic memories and absence of the milieu which would help to get rid of them: "Yusuf, son, do you know what my biggest pain is? I concealed all these secrets because I had no one to trust with, there was no one I could trust. And I tried to forget but all these cannot be forgotten"³⁶.

The horrors seen and suffered by those children make them fear and that fear accompanies them throughout their whole life and in this regard the book "The Exile Memories of a Child by Name M.K." by Baskin Oran is rather conspicuous. This book tells us about Manvel Krkyasharian, who passed the road of exile, lost his parents, spent some time in the families which adopted him at last reached Aleppo and saved. But the most remarkable is that the 90 years old Manvel Krkyasharian who lived in Sydney while recording his memories was afraid to call his real name and said: "My name is M. K."³⁷. In this regard the title of the book by Filiz Ozdem on the same subject is also rather conspicuous: "The Fear is My Master"³⁸.

It should be mentioned that the problem of the Islamization of the Armenian woman is also reflected in the Turkish folklore. This comes to

³⁴ Baghi, *Ermeni kızı Ağçik*, p. 36.

³⁵ Baghi, *Ermeni kızı Ağçik*, p.36.

³⁶ Baghi, *Ermeni kızı Ağçik*, p. 37.

³⁷ Baskin Oran, *The Exile Memories of a Child by Name M.K: 1915 and what happened later*, (Turkish), [*"M.K." adlı çocuğun rehirc anıları: 1915 ve sonrası*], İstanbul, İletişim publication, 2005, p. 14.

³⁸ Filiz Özdem, *The Fear is My Master* (Turkish), [*Korku Benim Sahibim*], İstanbul, Yapı kredi publication, 2007.

prove that the Islamization of the Armenian women was not only state policy but it was also carried out and acceptable for the vast strata of the Muslim society. Thus, in the village of Soyutveren of Posov province in Ardahan the "Armenian girl" song-game on the local dialect was recorded and its essence is how Muslim boy Ali convince Armenian girl to convert to Islam:

If you ask my name is Ali
And our religion is greater than all other religions
Come on girl, become a Muslim, don't stay Armenian
Won't you adopt my religion, you black-eyed?³⁹

The number of the books devoted to the Islamized Armenian woman was fulfilled by the documentary book by Gulchichek Gunel Tekin "Black Shroud" published recently, in which several stories about the Islamized Armenian women were included. The subtitle of the book speaks for itself: "The Drama of the Islamized Armenian women". Several similar stories included in the book have the same common points characteristic to this subject thus we would like to turn to the story of Varter Tumadjanyan from the village of Kulvenk in Elyazig. Varter Tumadjanyan who was born in wealthy family was captured and saved from death by Kurd whose name was Jafer Tan who latter married her. Varter's whole family was killed. The most remarkable was that some time latter Varter and her husband Jafer moved to and settle at the Tumadjanyan's house; they took care of the garden, field because Varter was the only legal heiress. But for Islamized Varter the return to her native village and house was both consolation and suffering at the same time and that was more preferable under those conditions. On the one hand, all that reminded her lost family, but on the other hand, she had an opportunity to satisfy her grief. Later she told her daughter Shirin Tan about that: "There are traces of my father, mother and brothers in every field, under every tree, in every brook, in every spring. Every time I enter the house I imagine my mother, father, brothers. It seemed as if I saw them, as if I heard their voices"⁴⁰. But some time later when they had to leave Varter's father's house and village she suffered the

³⁹ Ahmet Caferoglu, *The Collection Of The Dialects Of Our Eastern Provinces* (Turkish), [*Doğu illerimiz ağızlarından toplamalar*], Ankara, Türk Dili Kurumu Publication, 1995, p. 113.

⁴⁰ Gülcicek Günel Tekin, *Black Shroud* (Turkish), [*Kara kefen*], İstanbul, Belge publication, 2008, p. 12.

second trauma, thus we can say that the losing touch with the native environment can also cause trauma. Like other heroines Varter had also kept touch with other Armenian women with the same fate and, of course, the memories of their past and of the horrors they suffered united them. As Shirin Tan mentioned her mother was in friendly terms with other Islamized Armenian woman Melek: "Sometimes they were crying during their conversations. We had never even thought to ask why they were crying"⁴¹. Varter Tan, though secretly, tried to preserve some elements of Armenian Christian traditions concealing them even from her husband and children. One of those elements was the secret cross mark made while baking the bread. But one day her husband saw that by chance, got very angry and beat her saying: "Girl of the Armenian, the years passed but you have not abandoned your Armenian habits"⁴². Her loneliness, being misunderstood and restraint many years later distressed her children who felt remorse for not understanding her, not being able to share her troubles, her pain. As Shirin said: "We could never understand her, share her pain. My mother had always been alone and she suffered and nobody was interested in her sorrow"⁴³. It is rather indicative that at the close of her days Varter herself as the evidence of her sufferings said and demanded from her children the following: "I had no bright days. All my days were dark. I suffered pain constantly, my life was black. When I die I want my shroud be black"⁴⁴. The black shroud which was used as a title of the book symbolizes not only Varter's life but the life of other Islamized Armenian women who had the similar lot.

In conclusion we can say that in Turkey Armenian subject matter with its distinctive features develops little by little: the most typical feature is that forcibly Islamized in 1915 Armenians and their stories become the stimulus and motive force for reflection of the problem of Armenian Genocide in Turkish literature.

⁴¹ Tekin, *Kara kefen*, p. 17.

⁴² Tekin, *Kara kefen*, p. 19.

⁴³ Tekin, *Kara kefen*, p. 5.

⁴⁴ Tekin, *Kara kefen*, p. 21.