Extra

Gendered Silences, Gendered Memories: New Memory Work on Islamized Armenians in Turkey

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Since 2004, at least 17 books (across the genres of memoir, fiction, oral history, history, and historiography) have been published in the Turkish language on the Islamized Armenian survivors of the 1915 genocide and the (post)memories of their "Muslim" grandchildren. This emerging body of memory work poses significant challenges to Turkish national self-understanding, the official politics of genocide denial as well as to the growing scholarship on 1915. It also calls for a critical analysis of the nine decades of silence on Islamized Armenians in all historiographies. This article aims to discuss the need for a feminist perspective to make sense of both this silence and the recent process of unsilencing.

In what follows, I first provide a brief overview of the emerging literature on the predicament of the Ottoman Armenians who survived the 1915 genocide through (forced) Islamicization and the (post)memories of their grandchildren. Since the main concern of this article is the major historical silence that this new memory literature has unravelled rather than the literature itself, I will confine myself to a general overview except for a brief discussion of the groundbreaking memoir "Anneannem" [My Grandmother]. In the second section, I examine the making of the historical silence on Islam-

1 This work derives from earlier work with Fethiye Çetin and Yektan Türkyılmaz and has been developed in the context of the project "Gendered Memories of War and Political Violence" with Andrea Petö, in the framework of the CEU-Sabanci University Joint Academic Initiative. Versions of this article have been presented at the Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting (2009), Hrant Dink Memorial Workshop (2009), and Gendered Memories of War and Political Violence Conference (2012) as well as at various universities in Europe and the USA. I am grateful to all comments and criticism I have received in these presentations. I would also like to thank Gabriele Jancke for her very constructive comments and encouragement and the editors and two anonymous reviewers of "L'Homme" for their helpful criticism.

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ized Armenians and how nationalist and post-nationalist scholarship on 1915 has approached this group of survivors. In the third section, I analyse the gendered aspects of both the predicament of Islamized Armenians and their historical silencing in society and scholarship. In my concluding remarks, I argue for the need to work at the intersections of gender studies and post-nationalist genocide studies in order to develop a nuanced understanding of the historical (un)silencing of Islamized Armenians.

1. The 'Discovery' of Armenian Grandmothers and Grandfathers

"How can our albums and archives gesture toward what has been lost and forgotten, toward the many lives that remain obscured, unknown and unthought?" asks Marianne Hirsch in her latest book on postmemory.[2] In the past decade, a number of creative responses to this question have surfaced in Turkey with regard to the "obscured, unknown and unthought" lives of Ottoman Armenians who survived the massacres and death marches of 1915 by converting to Islam and taking on Turkish, Kurdish, or Arabic names. Although it is impossible to know the exact figures, the estimates of those who survived the 1915 genocide through conversion to Islam are around 200,000.[3] If this figure is accurate, it would imply that several million Muslims in Turkey today are in some way affiliated (as children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, in-laws etc.) with converted Armenian survivors. Yet, sheer numbers are not enough to disturb deep nationalist silences. Before discussing the historical dynamics behind these lives becoming "obscured, unknown and unthought", I would like to provide an overview of the ongoing moment of uncovering, getting to know, and making intelligible.

I have argued elsewhere that 2005 was a turning point in the debate on 1915 in at least two ways. Firstly, for the first time in Republican history, a national public debate, with genuinely different perspectives, on 1915 and the fate of Ottoman Armenians emerged. Secondly, it became recognised that a significant number of Armenians had survived the massacres and death marches of 1915 by converting to Islam.[4] As Armenians in Armenia and across the diaspora were organizing events commemorating the 90th anniversary of the genocide, a small group of academics in Turkey prepared to host the first critical academic conference on 1915. After much public controversy, the conference was finally held

2 Marianne Hirsch, The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust, New York 2012, 247.

3 Cf. Taner Akçam, A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility, trans. by Paul Bessemer, New York 2006, 183; Sefa Kaplan, 1915'te Ne Oldu? [What Happened in 1915?], İstanbul 2005, 107f. (Interview with Etyen Mahçupyan).

4 Cf. Ayşe Gül Altınay, In Search of Silenced Grandparents: Ottoman Armenian Survivors and Their (Muslim) Grandchildren, in: Hans-Lukas Kieser and Elmar Plozza eds., Der Völkermord an den Armeniern, die Türkei und Europa – The Armenian Genocide, Turkey and Europe, Zürich 2006, 117–132.

in September 2005 at Istanbul Bilgi University. Although its full title was "Ottoman Armenians during the Demise of the Empire: Responsible Scholarship and Issues of Democracy", the conference was referred to as the Genocide Conference in the mainstream media.[5] A key panel, titled "Tales of Tragedy and Escape", included Fethiye Çetin, a human rights lawyer whose book "Anneannem" had become a bestseller in the previous year, and İrfan Palalı, a surgeon who had recently published a novel titled "Tehcir Çocukları: Nenem bir Ermeniymiş" [The Children of Tehcir: My Grandmother turned out to be an Armenian…] based on his Armenian grandmother's story.[6] Both grandmothers had survived the catastrophe of 1915 as children aged eight or nine. They were adopted by Muslim families, were given Turkish names, and 'passed' as Muslims for the rest of their lives.[7]

By the time the conference panel took place, drawing a large and engaged audience, Fethiye Çetin's memoir "Anneannem" had already raised significant public interest going through five editions in its first six months. As of August 2013, it is in its tenth edition and continues to be read and discussed widely, not only in Turkey, but also internationally through its translations into Arabic, Western Armenian, Eastern Armenian, Bulgarian, Dutch, English, German, Greek, French, Italian, and Polish.

The book starts with the grandmother's funeral. We read how Fethiye Çetin bursts out when her grandmother's parents are named as Hüseyin and Esma: "But that's not true! Her mother's name wasn't Esma; it was İsguhi! And her father wasn't Hüseyin, but Hovannes!"[8] Hence, at the outset, we are confronted with the first public outburst of a grandchild against the "obscuring" of the Armenian names of her beloved grandmother and her parents. The moment of death marks the beginning of the process of reckoning with a violent past and its ongoing effects.

The book moves between three intersecting storylines. The first is the narrative of Heranush/Seher, as conveyed by her granddaughter, on Armenian life in the village of Habab[9] before 1915, on the death march of 1915, and on Heranush's journey to becom-

5 Cf. Fahri Aral ed., İmparatorluğun Çöküş Döneminde Osmanlı Ermenileri: Bilimsel Sorumluluk ve Demokrasi Sorunları [Ottoman Armenians during the Demise of the Empire: Responsible Scholarship and Issues of Democracy], İstanbul 2011.

6 Fethiye Çetin, Anneannem [My Grandmother], İstanbul 2004; İrfan Palalı, Tehcir Çocukları: Nenem Bir Ermeniymiş… [The Children of Tehcir: My Grandmother turned out to be an Armenian…], İstanbul 2005. Although the earliest example of this body of literature was Serdar Can's "Nenemin Masalları" [My Grandmother's Tales] (İstanbul, 1991), it had only reached a limited audience.

7 My own presentation at the conference also focused on Islamized Armenians through an analysis of "Anneannem" and its reception. In the same year, Fethiye Çetin and I started doing in-depth interviews with other "Muslim grandchildren" with Armenian grandparents, which culminated in our co-authored book in 2009, see Ayşe Gül Altınay and Fethiye Çetin, Torunlar [Grandchildren], İstanbul 2009. "Torunlar" is based on the reflections of 25 grandchildren on the lives of their Islamized Armenian grandmothers and grandfathers as well as their own lives as grandchildren.

8 Fethiye Çetin, My Grandmother: A Memoir, trans. by Maureen Freely, London 2008, 2.

9 Historically (and colloquially) known through its Armenian name Habab or Havav, Heranush's village is currently named Ekinözü and is located in the Elazığ province in Eastern Turkey.

ing Seher first as the adopted daughter of an Ottoman corporal and then as the wife of a Muslim man from the neighbouring town of Maden with whom she has five children. The second storyline is that of the author telling us about her grandmother's life and relations with different members of the family. The third storyline is Fethiye Çetin's own struggle with the story of her grandmother, her unsuccessful efforts to establish a relationship with her grandmother's Armenian family in the US while Heranush/Seher is alive, her protest at the funeral, and finally, her trip to New Jersey to visit the graves of her grandmother's parents and to meet the American members of the Gadarian family. The last photograph, which is also on the cover of the book, portrays the graves of Ovannes and Esquhe Gadarian with the pink roses brought to them by Fethiye Çetin, who asked for their "forgiveness" when she placed the roses at their graves.

Çetin's story would inspire others to "ask for forgiveness" as well. A columnist in a popular daily, Milliyet, for instance, wrote an essay in 2006 titled "I apologize!" extending an apology for what had happened to Armenians in 1915 after having read "Anneannem": "stories can do what large numbers or convoluted concepts cannot do [...]. Concepts are cold, stories can touch you inside."[10] My own presentation at the critical conference on Ottoman Armenians in 2005 discussed "Anneannem" as a powerful example of what Hannah Arendt had called "critical storytelling", a kind of storytelling that (in Lisa Disch's terms) "serves not to settle questions but to *un*settle them and to inspire spontaneous critical thinking in its audience"[11] and becomes a powerful tool in confronting totalitarian narratives.

For Fethiye Çetin, the critical storytelling that materialized in the book has a long and troubled personal history. Fethiye remembers her years in military prison after the 1980 coup d'etat where she faced weeklong torture, daily beatings and solitary confinement because she would not reveal anyone else's name of her leftist organization or because she refused to partake in the militarist rituals of prison life. And yet, she says, "when I was telling my friends in prison about my grandmother, I would speak in a whisper."[12] For years, a "socialist revolution" was more imaginable to her than a public sharing of her grandmother's story of survival. Marianne Hirsch's generative concept of "postmemory" tackles the relationship that "the generation after" has with "the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before – to experiences they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right."[13] In the case of Fethiye Çetin, the fears, anxieties, and careful silences that shaped the stories of her grandmother had obviously

10 Tuba Akyol, Özür Dilerim, [I Apologize], Milliyet Pazar, March 25, 2006, at: http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2006/03/25/pazar/yaztuba.html.

11 Lisa J. Disch, More Truth Than Fact: Storytelling as Critical Understanding in the Writings of Hannah Arendt, in: Political Theory, 21, 4 (1993), 665–694, 665.

12 Personal communication with Fethiye Çetin, May 2012.

13 Hirsch, Generation, see note 2, 5.

left deep marks on the postmemories of the "revolutionary" granddaughter. The transformation of these postmemories into publicly shared stories would take almost thirty years, culminating in the publication of "Anneannem" in November 2004, only months before the 90th anniversary of 1915.

As I have noted earlier, 2005 marked a turning point in the Turkish public debate on 1915. Since 2005, the stories of Islamized Armenian survivors have become publicly visible through memoirs, novels, documentary films, theatre plays[14] as well as historical and anthropological research.[15] With at least 17 books published on Islamized Armenians, we can consider it as a "moment of public discovery" regarding the presence and cultural legacy of Islamized Armenians. Using Marianne Hirsch's terminology, we can also conceptualize it as a moment of "postmemory" when second and third generation family members use a variety of different forms to express their (post)memories, challenging the historical silence on Islamized Armenians through an affective engagement with their own family "albums and archives".

In November 2013, the Hrant Dink Foundation will be hosting an international conference on Islamized Armenians in Istanbul, the first major conference to be held on this topic anywhere in the world.[16] In the meantime, "Anneannem" has been translated into eleven languages, our co-authored book "Torunlar" [Grandchildren] into three languages,[17] several books on Islamized Armenians have been published in Armenian, English, and French by Armenian and international researchers, and others seem to be on their way.

This new wave of cultural and academic production on Islamized Armenians raises questions about the absence of this particular group of survivors in the scholarly and popular histories of 1915 for almost nine decades. This absence not only marks Turkish scholarship and public debates, but international (including Armenian) academic and popular histories of 1915 as well. In other words, the stories of Islamized Armenian survivors of the genocide of Ottoman Armenians in 1915 have been silenced by all historiographies, either in the form of complete erasure or of serious trivialization.[18] In

14 For the documentaries that focus specifically on Islamized Armenians, see Berke Baş dir., Nahide'nin Türküsü/Hush!, 2009 and Mehmet Binay dir., Anadolu'dan Fısıltılar & Konuşan Fotoğraflar/Whispering Memories-Talking Pictures, 2009. Since 2011, an international documentary on the topic has also been screened in Istanbul: Suzanne Khardalian dir., Grandma's Taboos, 2011. Two theatre plays have used "Anneannem" and "Torunlar" as texts: Anneannem [My Grandmother], Seyyar Sahne, 2010; Geçmiş Zamanın Rivayeti [Rumors from the Past], İTÜ Sahnesi, 2010.

15 A comprehensive bibliography is available on the Hrant Dink Foundation website: http://hrantdink.org/picture_library/tr.pdf.

16 Conference on Islamized Armenians, organized by the Hrant Dink Foundation, November 2–4, 2013, at: http://www.hrantdink.org/?Detail=645&Lang=&Home&Lang=en, access: August 22, 2013.

17 It has been translated into Eastern Armenian, French, and English (forthcoming).

18 For a discussion of silencing through "total erasure" and "trivialization", see Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History, Boston 1995.

what follows, I will focus briefly on how Turkish nationalist – as well as the recent post-nationalist – historiography has approached the issue of Islamized Armenians. I will then discuss the making of a historical (and historiographical) silence.

2. Where are Islamized Armenians in Turkish Nationalist and Post-Nationalist Historiography?

Anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot, who analyses the silencing of the Haiti Revolution, suggests that there are four moments when silences enter the process of historical production: "the moment of fact creation (the making of *sources*); the moment of fact assembly (the making of *archives*); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of *narratives*); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of *history* in the final instance)."[19] He also identifies two formulas for silencing: formulas of erasure and formulas of banalization (or trivialization).[20] Using Trouillot's terminology, it can be argued that in the making of sources, archives and early narratives of 1915 in Ottoman-Turkish sources, neither the Armenian massacres of 1915 nor the survival of women and children through Islamization were silenced in the form of total erasure (although they are at times banalized and legitimized). Yet silence as erasure did occur in the moment of "retrospective significance", that is in the making of history in the final instance.

In her analysis of how Ottoman and Turkish historiography describes what happened to Ottoman Armenians in 1915, Müge Göçek identifies three historical periods marked by distinct narratives: the Ottoman Investigative Narrative (1910s), the Republican Defensive Narrative (1953 onwards), and the Post-Nationalist Critical Narrative (1990s onwards).[21] Written around the time of the events of 1915, works that Göçek classifies as the Ottoman Investigative Narrative are based on a recognition of the Armenian "massacres". According to Göçek, "the central tension in the Ottoman investigative narrative regarding the Armenian deaths and massacres in 1915 is over the attribution of responsibility for the crimes"[22] rather than their existence. Recent studies on the various texts of this period (1915–1920) – from the memoirs of Cemal Pasha and Halide Edib to Ottoman newspapers, magazines, and archival records – suggest that one can also find a wide range of narratives on the different fates of Armenian

19 Trouillot, Silencing, see note 18, 26, italics in the original.

20 Cf. Trouillot, Silencing, see note 18, 96.

21 Cf. Fatma Müge Göçek, Reading Genocide: Turkish Historiography on the Armenian Deportations and Massacres of 1915, in: Israel Gershoni, Amy Singer and Y. Hakan Erdem eds., Middle East Historiographies: Narrating the Twentieth Century, Seattle 2006, 101–127.

22 Göçek, Genocide, see note 21, 111.

women and children during the deportations.[23] These narratives point to the survival of significant numbers of women and children through Islamization and adoption into Muslim families.[24]

After the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, both the Armenian massacres and the fate of the Islamized women and children became "a page of human history that is best forgotten."[25] This strategic "forgetting", which characterizes the national curriculum from primary school to university, is accompanied by the development of what Müge Göçek has called the "Republican Defensive Narrative". After the 1950s, and more intensely after the Armenian armed group ASALA's (Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia) deadly attacks against Turkish diplomats and institutions in Europe and North America in the 1970s, a limited number of books (written mostly by diplomats) appeared that challenged the emerging claims of "genocide". In this body of work, the size of the Armenian population before the war and the numbers of casualties during the war were minimized, wartime Muslim losses were emphasized, "massacring" of Armenians was denied, and the main responsibility for the

23 Cf. Hülya Adak, "Ötekileştiremediğimiz *kendimizin keşfi*": Yirminci Yüzyıl Otobiyografik Anlatıları ve Ermeni Tehciri [The Armenian Deportations and Autobiographical Narratives of the Twenty-First Century], in: Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar, 5, Spring (2007), 231–253; Yavuz Selim Karakışla, Savaş Yetimleri ve Kimsesiz Çocuklar: "Ermeni" mi, "Türk" mü? [War Orphans and Destitute Children: "Armenian" or "Turkish"?], in: Toplumsal Tarih, 12, 69 (1999), 46–55; Ferhunde Özbay, Milli Mücadele Döneminde Öksüz ve Yetimler: 1911–1922 Yıllarında Anadolu'nun Kimsesiz Kız Çocukları [Orphans During the Period of National Struggle: The Destitute Girls of Anatolia during 1911–1922], in: E. Gürsoy-Naskali and A. Koç eds., Savaş Çocukları, Öksüzler ve Yetimler [War Children and Orphans], İstanbul 2003, 105–115; Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeniler (1915–1920) [Armenians in Ottoman Documents (1915–1920)], T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, Ankara 1994; İbrahim Ethem Atnur, Türkiye'de Ermeni Kadınları ve Çocukları Meselesi (1915–1923) [The Issue of Armenian Women and Children in Turkey (1915–1923)], Ankara 2005; Hans-Lukas Kieser, Iskalanmış Barış: Doğu Vilayetlerinde Misyonerlik, Etnik Kimlik ve Devlet 1839–1938 [Missed Peace: Missionaries, Ethnic Identity and the State in the Eastern Provinces, 1839–1938], trans. by Attila Dirim, İstanbul 2005; Nazan Maksudyan, Foster Daughter or Servant, Charity or Abuse: Beslemes in the Late Ottoman Empire, in: Journal of Historical Sociology, 21, 4 (2008), 488–512; Selim Deringil, Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire, Cambridge 2012.

24 For a more extensive discussion, see Ayşe Gül Altınay and Yektan Türkyılmaz, Unraveling Layers of Silencing: Converted Armenian Survivors of the 1915 Catastrophe, in: Amy Singer, Christoph Neumann and Selcuk Aksin Somel eds., Untold Histories of the Middle East: Recovering Voices from the 19th and 20th Centuries, London 2010, 25–53.

25 Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, Suyu Arayan Adam [The Man Searching for Water], İstanbul 2003 (Orig. 1965), 121, quoted by Adak, "Ötekileştiremediğimiz kendimizin keşfi", see note 23, 248, my translation. On the Republican silence and the impact of continuity in the ruling elite in the perpetuation of this silence, see Erik Jan Zürcher, Renewal and Silence: Postwar Unionist and Kemalist Rhetoric on the Armenian Genocide, in: Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek and Norman M. Naimark eds., A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire, Oxford 2011, 306–316. For an insightful analysis of the articulations of this silence at the local level, as well as the national, see Uğur Ümit Üngör, The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913–1950, Oxford 2011.

tehcir (translated as relocation or deportation in some text sources) was placed on the Armenians themselves and on the Great Powers by representing the Ottoman state/ Muslims/Turks as "victims" rather than perpetrators.

One of the deep silences of the Republican Defensive Narrative is the silence over Islamized Armenian survivors. Not only does their existence remain unmentioned in canonical works, this particular group of survivors is also treated as a non-entity in the "number-crunching" regarding the total Armenian population and casualties, which is central to this narrative. In other words, they are not only "obscured", but also "unthought" and, indeed, "unthinkable". For instance, one of the key texts of Turkey's official narrative of 1915, Kamuran Gürün's 1983 book "Ermeni Dosyası" ["The Armenian File"],[26] includes several telegrams sent from the Ministry of the Interior to various provinces claiming that "the Government particularly emphasized the protection of life and property, and continually gave instructions for necessary measures to be taken."[27] Gürün also cites telegrams conveying government orders for Armenian orphans to be adopted by Muslim families, but they are listed merely as "evidence" for his general claim about the "protection of life and property" by the Ottoman government.[28] Nevertheless, these references make it clear that Gürün is aware of the conversion and adoption of Armenian children. In fact, he seems to generalize from these specific telegrams and presents such conversions and adoptions as a measure for "the protection of life". Yet, how does he account for this "life" when it comes to his "computations" of losses? Although Gürün never mentions Islamized Armenians in his "computations" (his terminology), the only category where they would fit seems to be among the "dead".[29] In other words, Armenian converts and adoptees are not regarded by Gürün (or by others contributing to Turkish nationalist historiography who have used Gürün as their main source) as "survivors" of the *tehcir*.

The first book in Turkish nationalist historiography that focuses specifically on Islamized Armenian survivors is a detailed 300-page study by historian İbrahim Ethem Atnur.[30] In line with mainstream nationalist historiography, Atnur regards *tehcir* as a legitimate measure in response to the rebellious acts by Armenian subjects of the Ottoman Empire. Throughout the book, Atnur recognizes the great suffering of Armenian women and children, who "despite their innocence, constituted the main body of victims."[31] Yet he blames Armenian nationalists, the Western powers, who aided their aim of establishing "Great Armenia", and American Protestant missionaries for their suffering. Atnur

26 Kamuran Gürün, Ermeni Dosyası, Ankara 1983; Kamuran Gürün, The Armenian File: The Myth of Innocence Exposed, New York 1985.
27 Gürün, File, see note 26, 212.
28 Gürün, File, see note 26, 211f. For a critical reading of these telegrams, see Akçam, Act, see note 3, 175.
29 For a detailed discussion, see Altınay/Türkyılmaz, Unraveling, see note 24.
30 İbrahim Ethem Atnur, Türkiye'de Ermeni Kadınları ve Çocukları Meselesi (1915–1923) [The issue of Armenian women and children in Turkey, 1915–1923], Ankara 2005.
31 Atnur, Türkiye'de Ermeni, see note 30, 293.

seeks to demonstrate the Ottoman government's "resolve to administer and implement the relocations in humane fashion",[32] although he repeatedly notes the practical difficulties of realizing this aim in conditions of war. Interestingly, Atnur also recognizes the occasional acts of "sexual violation" targeting young girls and women, but emphasizes the "immediate interventions" of the Ministry of the Interior when such incidences occured.

A central concern for Atnur is the question of whether acts of conversion (by women and children alike) constitute an effort to assimilate. His answer is a cautious no. Large sections of Atnur's book are dedicated to post-war efforts by the Armenian church, missionaries, foreign consuls, and, in particular, by the Near East Relief to "gather" Armenian girls, women, and children from orphanages and Muslim homes. In the case of children, he discusses the government's strict orders to give Armenian children to their families, relatives, the Armenian community or missionaries, and describes the diligent (even aggressive) efforts of Armenians and missionaries to retrieve the children. His conclusion is that the Near East Relief had taken "a great majority" of the Armenian orphans out of the country by the end of 1922.[33]

In the case of women, the story is quite different. According to Atnur, women who married Muslim men "mostly" stayed with their husbands instead of reclaiming Armenian lives for several reasons: "because they loved their husbands, because they had children, because they feared the break-up of their families, and because of their anxieties about how they would be received by their own communities."[34] In this discussion Atnur ignores the issue of "forcefully married" women claiming that they had already left these marriages during the Armistice. He also acknowledges the possibility that "under the conditions of the time" some women may not have been able to leave their husbands despite wanting to do so.[35]

What became of these women who stayed behind with their Muslim husbands? What about the children who remained with their adopted families? Atnur leaves these questions virtually unexamined. His historical account ends with Armenian orphans leaving the country with Near East Relief and other missionaries in 1922 and 1923, together with large portions of the remaining Armenian population. There are no references throughout the entire book to the emerging memory literature, apart from a footnote in which he politically distances himself from the authors of these works and cautions against "propaganda in between the lines".[36]

The "propaganda" Atnur refers to in this text is presumably the politics of genocide recognition, which he overtly opposes in his book. While elaborating on the suffering of "women and children as innocent victims", Atnur builds his main argument around

32 Atnur, Türkiye'de Ermeni, see note 30, 27.
33 Atnur, Türkiye'de Ermeni, see note 30, 284.
34 Atnur, Türkiye'de Ermeni, see note 30, 186.
35 Atnur, Türkiye'de Ermeni, see note 30, 186.
36 Atnur, Türkiye'de Ermeni, see note 30, 68.

the claim that the Ottoman state did not employ a *systematic* policy of assimilation – in fact, that it took painstaking measures to prevent such assimilation. Atnur's "defense" is clearly addressing the UN definition of such policies as part of genocide, since Article 2 of the UN Convention of Genocide refers to forcibly transferring children of one group to another group as a genocidal act. This is a clear example of the ways in which the issue of Islamized Armenians causes nationalist anxieties vis-à-vis the politics of genocide recognition.

In short, within the mainstream (nationalist) Turkish historiography since the early years of the Republic, Armenian converts and adoptees have been either erased from the historical record altogether or treated as examples of Ottoman government efforts to "protect life". In the "computations" regarding the remaining Armenian population after the *tehcir*, the only category reserved for them (indirectly) has been among the "dead".[37]

How has this silence been challenged by post-nationalist critical scholarship in recent years? Müge Göçek identifies the 1990s as a period when the "post-nationalist critical narrative" on 1915 emerged in Turkish scholarship and public debates.[38] Ironically, the 1990s also mark the peak of a civil war between Kurdish militants and the Turkish State that ended up claiming the lives of at least 40,000 people between 1984 and 1999. Despite (or perhaps given impetus by) the ongoing civil war, the 1990s and 2000s witnessed a major transformation in Turkish society, politics, and scholarship whereby a number of taboo issues (including militarism, conscientious objection, religious, sectarian and ethnic exclusions, feminism, sexual orientation, and sexual identity) became subjects of academic research, political activism and public debate. In relation to the Armenian issue, the founding of Aras Publishing House in 1993 (publishing Turkish and Armenian literature and memoirs); the founding of the Turkish-Armenian weekly newspaper Agos under the editorship of Hrant Dink in 1996; the publication of historian Taner Akçam's critical books on the Armenian genocide (1992, 1999) as well as other academic and (auto)biographical books by Armenian and international scholars in the 1990s (by Belge Yayınları and others); public statements made by Turkish historians (especially by Halil Berktay) in daily newspapers and weekly magazines starting in the 2000s; the appearance of Armenian intellectuals (Hrant Dink in particular) in TV debates; and the first critical conference on 1915 organized by three universities in 2005 – all these aspects contributed to the creation of alternative narratives of and a critical debate on what happened to Ottoman Armenians in 1915 and beyond.

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37 Armenian historiography is not in the scope of this article, but I would like to emphasize the need to review Armenian historiography of 1915 within the same light. Many Armenian historians of genocide also refer to the converted Armenian women and children as representing the "eradicated nation". For a detailed discussion, see Altınay/Türkyılmaz, Unraveling, see note 24. For a critical reading of Armenian (as well as Turkish and international) historiography of 1915, see Marc Nichanian, The Historiographic Perversion, trans. by Jin Anidjar, New York 2009.

38 Göçek, Genocide, see note 21, 121.

As I have discussed earlier, this critical debate has also included the converted Armenians, particularly after the publication of "Anneannem" in 2004. The 17 books of literature, memoir and research that have been published since 2004 and their enthusiastic reception point to the growing public interest in this issue. Yet, this interest is only recently being translated into historical and anthropological/sociological research. In other words, in the case of Islamized Armenians, it is fair to say that it has been memory work and literature that has pushed the limits of the existing post-nationalist scholarship and paved the way for a new research field.

How can we understand the nine decades of silence on Islamized Armenians in Turkish scholarship? First, the hegemonic nationalist narrative that constructs the Turkish nation as a primordial, homogeneous entity defined through Sunni Islam and an ethnicized (and at times racialized) understanding of Turkishness must have played a key role in the silencing of Islamized Armenian survivors. Until recently any mention of "other" identities has been regarded as a "divisive threat" and the discussion of any difference from the Turkish-Sunni-Muslim norm has been silenced in various ways. Against this background, voicing Armenian heritage or affinity or conducting research on this topic would have been considered risky. After all, Islamized Armenians (and their offspring) threaten the homogeneity and ethnic identification of the Turkish nation.

Second, this silence needs to be read as part of the general silence on the fate of Ottoman Armenians in 1915. The public taboo around this issue has had its impact in Turkish historiography and social science literature. Moreover, the 1980 coup d'etat and the subsequent changes in the Turkish higher education system have put further restrictions on academic research on any politically sensitive topic, including the fate of Ottoman Armenians.[39]

Third, with the advent of the concept of "genocide" in the latter part of the twentieth century and of an international politics of genocide recognition, reinforced by the violent attacks by ASALA in the 1970s, this issue became a matter of "national security" and "defense". I have discussed elsewhere how until recently the hegemonic framework of the Turkish debates on 1915 has been shaped by a "war of theses" with two clearly distinguishable sides: the Turkish thesis on the one hand and the Armenian thesis on the other. In this war it is alleged that objectivity, true scholarship and scientific evidence are the strength of the Turkish side (which basically claims that the events of 1915 do not constitute genocide) whereas the Armenian side (in this view represented by the Armenian diaspora as the key player or the main "enemy") lacks these qualities. The dichotomies such as honorable vs. disgraceful nationhood, heroism vs. treason, friend vs. enemy, and victory vs. defeat are commonplace in nationalist schol-

39 The researcher who has suffered the most from research taboos is İsmail Beşikçi, the first social scientist to write books on the Kurds. Beşikçi spent 17 years of his life in prison and 32 of his 36 books have been banned. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C4%B0smail_Be%C5%9Fik%C3%A7i.

arly and popular literature that participates in this "defence" of the nation, resulting in a fetishization and militarization of the "nation".[40] Islamized Armenians pose major challenges to this "war of theses". Not only do Islamized Armenians blur the boundaries between the neatly defined "Turkish" and the "Armenian side", but, as I have shown above, their presence also creates anxieties in view of Article 2 of the Genocide Convention which refers to forcibly transferring children of one group to another group as a genocidal act.

For these reasons it is not surprising that the silence on Armenian grandparents has been broken with the advance of what Göçek calls the "post-nationalist critical narrative". Yet these reasons do not explain the relatively late and still inadequate engagement with Islamized Armenians in the emerging post-nationalist scholarship, particularly in historiography. If one reason for this has been the silence on Islamized Armenians in the international genocide literature,[41] another reason, I argue, is the ongoing lack of a critical gender lens in current post-nationalist scholarship. In the next section, I discuss the ways in which both the experience of Islamized Armenians and their (post)memories are deeply gendered and argue for the need to work at the intersections of post-nationalist genocide studies and critical gender studies in order to understand the gendered silencing and unsilencing of Islamized Armenians.

3. Gendering Silences and (Post)Memories

Both historically and presently in recent literature in Turkey, the issue of Islamized Armenians has largely been about "women and children." Even a cursory look at the titles of the emerging memory literature suggests an almost exclusive emphasis on "grandmothers": "Nenemin Masalları" [My Grandmother's Tales], "Anneannem" [My Grandmother], "Nenem bir Ermeniymiş" [My Grandmother was Armenian], "Ermeni Kızı Ağçik" [Ağçik, the Armenian Girl], "Müslümanlaştırılmış Ermeni Kadınların Dramı" [The Tragedy of Islamized Armenian Women]. We are yet to see memoir, fiction or academic research that focus specifically on Islamized Armenian grandfathers or on Islamized Armenian adult men.[42]

40 For a more detailed discussion see Altınay, Search, see note 4.

41 For a brief overview of the silence in Armenian genocide literature see Altınay/Türkyılmaz, Unraveling, see note 24.

42 Several books touch upon the stories of male children adopted by Muslim families. For instance, Altınay/Çetin, Torunlar, see note 7, and the orally recorded memoir of M. K. who later escaped and settled in Australia: Baskın Oran ed., "M. K." Adlı Çocuğun *Tehcir* Anıları: 1915 ve Sonrası [The Tehcir Memories of a Child Named "M. K.": 1915 and Its Aftermath], İstanbul 2005; the grandfather depicted in: Filiz Özdem, Korku Benim Sahibim [Fear Rules Over Me], İstanbul 2007; and the stories of two "hidden" Armenians, interviewed by Kemal Yalçın in: Kemal Yalçın, Seninle Güler Yüreğim [You Rejoice My Heart], İstanbul 2006.

There are several important reasons for this that reflect the gendered nature of the genocidal process and the patriarchal organization of Ottoman-Turkish society. As Arlene Avakian observes:

> The genocide was very clearly gendered. Men were killed, and women and children were sent on forced marches. Women and girls were raped and abducted, some were forced into prostitution, both during the genocide and in its aftermath, as a way to survive. These aspects of the genocide were recognized by contemporary observers, but until very recently there has been very little scholarly attention to this central feature of the genocidal process.[43]

Some historians claim that Muslim families who adopted children in this process preferred girls over boys and that boys who remembered their Armenian families had the relative freedom of mobility to leave and search for their families once they were old enough to travel on their own, whereas girls, as soon as they reached puberty, were married off, and often became young mothers.[44] Yet, our joint research with Fethiye Çetin on second and third generation family members showed that quite a few men, and in more exceptional cases whole families or neighborhoods and villages, had become Islamized in the early stages of the war and that many Muslim families tried matchmaking between Islamized girls and boys when they reached puberty. Hence, Islamized Armenian children from different families, often from different villages and towns, would get married among themselves. In other words, the absence of Islamized Armenian grandfathers in the emerging literature cannot be explained solely by the gendered nature of the genocidal process and its aftermath. One also needs to look at the gendered process of transmission across generations, at the possible effects of patriarchal

43 Arlene Avakian, A Different Future? Armenian Identity Through the Prism of Trauma, Nationalism and Gender, in: New Perspectives on Turkey, 42 (2010), 203–214, 208f.

44 For an analysis of the different treatment of women and men during the genocidal process see Akçam, Act, see note 3, 174–183; Matthias Bjørnlund, "A fate worse than dying": Sexual Violence During the Armenian Genocide, in: Dagmar Herzog ed., Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth Century, New York 2009, 16–58; Ara Sarafian, The Absorption of Armenian Women and Children into Muslim Households as a Structural Component of the Armenian Genocide, in: Omer Bartov and Phyllis Mack eds., God's Name: Genocide and Religion in the Twentieth Century, New York 2001, 209–221; Katharine Derderian, Common Fate, Different Experience: Gender-Specific Aspects of the Armenian Genocide, 1915–1917, in: Holocaust and Genocide Studies, 19, 1 (2005), 1–25; Vahé Tachjian, Gender, Nationalism, Exclusion: The Reintegration Process of Female Survivors of the Armenian Genocide, in: Nations and Nationalism, 15, 1 (2009), 60–80. More research on the gendered aspects of genocide is underway. The 2012 conference "Gendered Memories of War and Political Violence" included a panel titled "Gendering the Armenian Genocide", with contributions from Anna Aleksanyan, Hourig Attarian, Doris Melkonian, Arlene Avakian, and myself (http://myweb.sabanciuniv.edu/genderconf/files/2011/08/14-May%C4%B1s_-Program.pdf). Our joint research with Andrea Petö explores the similarities and differences between the gendering of genocide and its representations in the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust literature.

inheritance practices, at the predominance of a patrilineal understanding of descent as well as at the gendered construction of historiography and scholarship in general.

From storytellers in families to authors of books, women come across as key actors in the process of transmission. Even in those cases where men as grandchildren have written memoirs or given interviews, it is mothers who constitute the majority of second generation storytellers. And the stories these mothers convey are often those of grandmothers rather than of grandfathers. Among the 25 grandchildren whose stories we present in our book "Grandchildren" only four are grandfather stories (despite the fact that they are published anonymously) and only a couple of grandmother stories have been told by fathers.[45] In other words, in the first two generations women come across as the predominant storytellers who share their own or their mothers' stories of survival.

Why has this been the case? Several of our research participants in the Grandchildren project reflected on this peculiarity and highlighted the gendered approach to descent in their communities. With patrilineality providing the predominant framework for understanding descent across Turkey, grandchildren with Armenian grandfathers might be finding it more difficult to share their stories. Zerdüşt, for instance, referred to the widespread practice in his small town to call only those children with Armenian fathers and mothers "Armenian", whereas others like him who had Armenian grandmothers or mothers were regarded as Kurdish.[46] Salih also mentioned the use of "Armenian children" as a humiliating term especially during fights and quarrels among children or teenagers, but only for those who were Armenian from their father's side: "They never used it against me because my father's side is not Armenian."[47] Accordingly, Turkish kinship terminology differentiates between maternal grandmother, *anneanne,* and paternal grandmother, *babaanne,* and indeed, most published stories are about maternal grandmothers. In other words, within the patrilineal understanding of descent prevalent in most local communities across contemporary Turkey, having an Armenian grandfather, father or even a paternal grandmother seems to characterize a person as 'more Armenian' than having an Armenian maternal grandmother or mother. Consequently this leads to the silencing of stories of survival and descent regarding Islamized Armenian grandfathers, fathers and – although perhaps to a lesser extent – of paternal grandmothers.

A related issue is connected to material inheritance practices and fears of economic marginalization: With men constituting the overwhelming majority of property owners and women being a negligible minority in the labour force and in professional

45 The grandchildren who tell their Armenian grandfather's stories are Henaramın, Nükhet, Aslı, and Elif. Cf. Altınay/Çetin, Torunlar, see note 7.

46 Zerdüşt is a pseudonym. All but two of our research participants appear in the book under pseudonyms rather than under their real names: Cf. Altınay/Çetin, Torunlar, see note 7.

47 Altınay/Çetin, Torunlar, see note 7, 146 (from the story of "Salih").

life,[48] particularly in the first two generations, men may have felt that they – and their families – had more to lose if their Armenian heritage became publicly known, which prevented them from sharing this knowledge even with their children and grandchildren.

It is not only the local and familial memory and postmemories of 1915 and the genocidal process that is gendered, but historical and other scholarship as well. The same year Cynthia Enloe published her insightful analysis that "nationalism has typically sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation, and masculinized hope",[49] a feminist Armenian scholar, Eliz Sanasarian, problematized the gendered nature of research on the Armenian genocide: "Despite a wealth of literature on the Armenian genocide, little research has been done on women who made up the mass of the deportees. The significance of gender differences in the genocidal process has been neither empirically conceptualized nor systematically analyzed."[50] According to Sanasarian, Armenian women have not only been absent in genocide literature, but also in post-genocide analyses of Armenian life.

Until recently, the scholarship on the Armenian genocide has typically treated women as undifferentiated victims, as opposed to historical actors. In both Turkish and Armenian, the term that is most frequently used for single women without a husband or father, or other male relatives who act as their guardian is *sahipsiz/anter* (both terms translate literally as "without an owner").[51] Not surprisingly, women are often discussed in the same sentence as "property" and defined as "their women" or "our women" underscoring the construction of women as commodity (under patriarchal ownership).

> [Armenians settling in the Southern provinces under French rule in 1919] began to take back property that had been confiscated or seized, and to take the women who had been forcibly converted to Islam and reconvert them to Christianity.[52]

> [During the Lausanne peace talks:] The Turkey delegation was uncompromising in its opposition to any article in the peace agreement regarding the search for lost women and children or the return of confiscated property.[53]

48 According to a January 2013 report men own 65 per cent of the real estate property in Turkey and in certain provinces such as Hakkari, Mardin and Siirt this figure reaches 80 per cent, see Tapuda Kadının Adı Yok! [In the Deeds, Women Have no Name!], Habertürk, January 22, 2013, at: http://ekonomi.haberturk.com/emlak/haber/813703-tapuda-kadinin-adi-yok, access: August 22, 2013, 3 paragraphs. Women's employment rate in 2012 was 28.7 percent, the lowest among OECD countries: OECD, Employment rate of women, in: Employment and Labour Markets: Key Tables from OECD, No. 5, 2013, doi: 10.1787/emp-fe-table-2013-1-en.

49 Cynthia Enloe, Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics, London 1989, 44.

50 Eliz Sanasarian, Gender Distinction in the Genocidal Process: A Preliminary Study of the Armenian Case, in: Holocaust and Genocide Studies, 4, 4 (1989), 449–461, 449.

51 Cf. Altınay/Türkyılmaz, Unraveling, see note 24.

52 Akçam, Act, see note 3, 340.

53 Akçam, Act, see note 3, 281.

These two quotes from Taner Akçam's 2006 book highlight both the gendered narratives in historical sources and the uncritical use of such narratives in post-nationalist genocide scholarship. In this framework the nation is masculinized, with "women and children" often falling under the same category. This resonates with Cynthia Enloe's critique of militarized discourses of national honour that place "womenandchildren" (as one entity) under the custody of men.[54] In both Armenian and Turkish scholarship, "womenandchildren" are treated as passive beings in need of male protection and guidance without which they become *sahipsiz/anter*, without an owner.

Moreover, this patriarchal framework defines women's bodies as "fields" to be sown by men, and hence as vehicles of masculinized honour. Historian Vahé Tachjian discusses the marginalization of women who were raped and those who became prostitutes, in both the post-genocide Armenian nation-building process and Armenian scholarship since.[55] According to Tachjian:

> The typical Armenian heroine is often considered to be the woman who taught her child the Armenian alphabet in the sands of the desert; or the woman who, weapon in hand, defended Urfa against the executioner at the cost of her life; or else the one who threw herself into the River Euphrates from a high cliff so as not to fall into the hands of the Turks and be raped.[56]

Instead, Tachjian proposes a framework where women are regarded as historical actors who have used various forms of resistance in the face of a "machine of destruction and eradication" to survive, including marriage, prostitution and conversion to Islam.[57]

Arlene Avakian, who has been a pioneering feminist voice in the diaspora Armenian memory literature, links this absence of women in historical and historiographical literature to "the absence of a feminist voice in both scholarship and community debate" in the Armenian-American context. Avakian argues that this absence has been detrimental for both scholarship and the Armenian community.[58] According to her, researching Islamized Armenian survivors in Turkey from a feminist perspective is crucial for the diaspora Armenian community and scholarship as well:

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54 Cynthia Enloe, "Women and children": Making Feminist Sense of the Persian Gulf Crisis, in: Village Voice, September 25, 1990, 29–32.

55 Cf. Tachjian, Gender, see note 44.

56 Tachjian, Gender, see note 44, 76f.

57 Tachjian, Gender, see note 44, 77. Historian Keith David Watenpaugh's insightful analysis of the gendered development of humanitarianism is also geared towards the effort to "recover women and children survivors as discrete historical actors": idem, The League of Nations' Rescue of Armenian Genocide Survivors and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism, 1920–1927, in: American Historical Review, 115, 5 (2010), 1315–1339, 1337.

58 Avakian, Future, see note 43, 203. Also see Avakian's groundbreaking feminist memoir: Arlene Voski Avakian, Lion Woman's Legacy, New York 1993.

> They are also victims and survivors who ought to be honored, and researching them from a feminist and ethnic perspective can provide vital insights into how post-genocide efforts to rebuild the nation and Armenian identity were gendered and how those conceptions continue to shape both our ethnic and gender identities.[59]

4. Concluding Remarks

Since 2004, the public in Turkey has been going through a period of 'discovery' regarding the fate of Armenians in general and Islamized Armenians in particular. What makes the current moment particularly noteworthy is that it follows nine decades of absolute public silence and that, in the case of Islamized Armenians, it is the (post) memory literature that is shaping the public debate and emerging scholarship. This article aimed to show that a critical understanding of gendered silencing and unsilencing of Islamized Armenians will not be possible unless we work at the intersections of post-nationalist genocide studies and critical gender studies. As Angelika Epple and Angelika Schaser suggest, "historiography has rarely been gendered. It is high time for a change of perspective."[60] In the case of Islamized Armenians this change of perspective has the potential to unsettle some of the founding blocks of contemporary politics and scholarly frameworks of analysis.

The stories of Armenian converts who have spent their lives in Muslim families or Muslim towns open up the Pandora's box of gender and national identifications for both Turkish and Armenian nationalists as well as for scholars of genocide. Who belongs to the nation? Who is an "Armenian" and who is a "Turk"? Whose lineage matters? If genocide is defined as the eradication of a racial, cultural, national group, then who qualifies as a "survivor" in genocide? Are Islamized Armenian women, men, and children "survivors" of the Armenian Genocide? Can we, responding to Vahé Tachjian's call, consider their survival as an act of resistance?

This article has argued that the emerging memory literature on Islamized Armenians in Turkey poses several difficult questions regarding the gendered nature of the genocidal process, the gendered embodiment of race/ethnicity/nation, gendered memories of the genocide, the presumed purity or exclusivity of predominant understandings of the nation, the easy equation between nation and religion as well as the prevalent conceptions of who qualifies as a "survivor" of a genocide. A feminist lens, enriched by critical race studies and post-nationalist genocide studies, is key to unravelling these questions.

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59 Avakian, Future, see note 43, 209f.

60 Angelika Epple and Angelika Schaser, Multiple Histories? Changing Perspectives on Modern Historiography, in: idem eds., Gendering Historiography: Beyond National Canons, Frankfurt o. M. 2009, 7–23, 8.