

THE ARMENIAN
Genocide
IN LITERATURE

The Second Generation Responds

Rubina Perroomian

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The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute
(Research and Studies in Armenian Genocide Series: 6)

**The Armenian Genocide
in Literature**
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Yerevan 2015

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(Research and Studies in Armenian Genocide Series: 6)
Includes bibliography, index, and summary in Armenian

ISBN 978-9939-855-19-6

1. Diasporan Armenian literature – 20-21st centuries – History and criticism. 2. The Armenian Genocide, history and literature. 3. Gender and genocide. 4. Diasporan Armenian identity. 5. Diaspora-Armenia relationship.

Cover design: Lusine Matevosyan Demoyan
Layout and printing by "Collage" LTD

This volume would not have been possible without the incredible support and encouragement of my husband, Neshan. I could not refuse when he insisted that this volume be completed in 2015, the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, even if it meant my working day and night and burdening him with my share of family responsibilities.

I am also indebted to Diane Belle James' dedication and passion. Diane, my copyeditor on the two previous volumes of this work, went beyond this role by providing numerous constructive comments and suggestions on the content and structure of the text.

Finally, many thanks to Dr. Hayk Demoyan, the director of Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, who unreservedly continued his commitment to extend the Museum's support for my work.



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Preface

I am often asked if I am a descendant of Armenian Genocide survivors, by people who assume that is the reason for my dedication to the field of Armenian Genocide studies, teaching, and activism. More often than not, they are surprised to hear my response: No, I am not. My parents were born in Iran and did not share the tragic fate of Armenians in Western Armenia. In fact, my father was a toddler in a village in the Gharadagh (Kara Dagħ) region of northwestern Iran and later an ill-treated houseboy in Tabriz, and probably did not even hear about what was occurring on the other side of the border. Nevertheless, I was affected, and perhaps profoundly affected, and this, I would think, for particular reasons.¹

¹ In order to discover the roots of my psychic attraction to the subject of the Armenian Genocide and the puzzling relationship between my biography and my academic scholarship, I have attempted a self-psychoanalysis in "A Personal Note in Lieu of Preface" in my previous monograph, *The Armenian Genocide in Literature: Perceptions of Those Who*

This is my fourth book on genocide literature, yet I feel I have so much more to explore and explicate. Yes, this is the fourth book and it is still on the Armenian Genocide, as I sometimes see myself apologetically admitting to people who ask me what my upcoming work is about.

No one gave me this task. I have shouldered a commitment that does not seem to reach fulfillment. But I have come to regard it as my calling and I do my best to make a noteworthy contribution to the field of Armenian Genocide studies. Meanwhile, I ask my readers to accept my writing as a genuine effort to reveal the deep impact of the Genocide in all its aspects and dimensions and to see the importance of artistic literature as a repository of knowledge and truth for this field. I ask my readers to accept my writing as a genuine effort to keep the flames of the memory of the Armenian Genocide alive and burning in the souls of the generations of survivors of that Great Calamity.

Whether or not our parents or grandparents went through the atrocities and survived the death march, we are a nation of survivors of a genocidal act. We share the memory. Our common history, an important element of our national identity, has the Genocide at its core: the Genocide is at the core of our identity. In the words of Ervin Staub, Professor of Psychology, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, "Because our identity is deeply rooted in racial, ethnic, or religious groups, members of the group who were not present still carry

Lived through the Years of Calamity (Yerevan: Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, 2012, 2014).

many of the burdens of the collective experience."² We carry the burden of the traumatic experience endured by half of the Armenian nation that perished in the deserts of Syria or somehow survived the Catastrophe and vainly tried to return to normal life.

I have chosen a long and tortuous road in search of closure for myself and my people.

With my previous monographs I wrapped up my survey of the first-generation survivor-writers' perceptions of the past traumatic experience of the nation and their responses to it.³ I tried to unearth and map out the circumstances and influential factors prevailing in the immediate aftermath of the Genocide that were instrumental in shaping the psychology, the philosophy of life, the outlook, and the spirit of the survivors, and what could have been transmitted to the next generations. I argued that, although in terms of legal status these new members of diasporan Armenian communities were immigrants, it was nevertheless their cultural and emotional attachment and unrelenting devotion to their origins, and their perception of the mainstream society in the host country, that determined their true status: immigrant or exile. This self-image was an important factor in shaping their behavior and attitude, and also in shaping the literary imagination of

² Ervin Staub, "Healing and Reconciliation," in *Looking Backward, Moving Forward: Confronting the Armenian Genocide*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2003), pp. 263–74. Quotation from p. 265.

³ The books I authored on the subject of genocide literature, *Literary Responses to Catastrophe* (1993) and *The Armenian Genocide in Literature* (2012, 2014), and to some extent also *And Those Who Continued Living in Turkey after 1915* (2008, 2012), embody my attempts to achieve that goal.

individual writers in the Diaspora, to be transmitted to the next generation.

I sadly observed that despite a large output of articles, memoirs, scholarly and popular studies of Armenian history, literature, and art in the early post-genocide period, there was no significant effort, individual or collective, to adapt to the new cultural milieu, to renovate the Armenian literature of the period and find new directions and new means of survival in literature, through literature. The exception was the effort of a group of young Armenian writers and poets in France known as the "Paris boys," the writers who gathered around *Menk* (We), the periodical, and aspired to start a new movement in the Armenian literary world, the *Menk* movement. They advocated a change of outlook and direction, a change in literary values and norms, beginning with ruthless attacks on their mentors and predecessors. To what extent they were successful, and how deep and lasting was the dent they made in the diasporan Armenian mindset, were questions that I tried to address in *The Armenian Genocide in Literature*.

The post-Genocide Diaspora was taking shape. The sense of transience was losing ground. Exilic communities were faced with the impossibility of repatriation. The yearning to return to their homes in their ancestral homeland was beginning to transcend practicality to become an emotionally charged perception of the past. Meanwhile, relocations within diasporan communities and new influxes from Armenia imposed new divides conditioned by degrees of integration into the mainstream societies. Khachig Tölölyan, the son of survivors of Turkish persecutions, Professor of English and Letters at Wesleyan University and, since May 1991, the editor

of *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, diagrams the variegated nature of diasporic groups in terms of their level of integration: "the assimilated or nearly assimilated; the comfortably ethnicized; the new migrants or refugees who still hold on to, or are in the grip of, traditional homeland identities; and the diasporic elements."⁴ His articles in *Diaspora*, such as the one quoted here, are informed by his continued close contact with Armenian communities scattered throughout the world.

Along with the temporal transformation within diasporan communities, the crisis of identity and dual loyalty to Armenian roots and the country of citizenship began to emerge, with no solution in sight, as of yet. The only way out was to avoid the issue altogether, either by staying within the boundaries of the ghetto, holding on to the ideal, and not seeing the truth, or by drifting away and surrendering to the sweeping tide of assimilation. It was the second generation—born in the host country to immigrant/exile parents—that would seek new means of survival and new avenues of expression in order to create a niche within the mainstream culture/literature as members of mainstream society and the

⁴ Khachig Tölölyan, "Elites and Institutions in the Armenian Transnation," *Diaspora* 9:1 (2000): 113. Discussion of theories of diaspora as they apply to the Armenian case is beyond the scope of this study. As a source of background information that may be helpful for a better understanding of this book, I recommend Tölölyan's *Sp'iurk'i mej* [In the Diaspora] (Paris: Matenashar "Haraj," 1980), consisting of essays that address the culture and the institutional structure of the Armenian Diaspora. Further reading from the same author is the paper he presented at the High-Level Expert Forum on Capacity Building for Peace and Development: Roles of Diaspora, Toronto, Canada, October 19–20, 2006. His presentation was published as Booklet 1.

Armenian community at the same time. The literature produced by this generation could not and did not evade perceptions of the past and the effects of the past, which clearly demonstrates that Armenian Genocide literature is not limited to literature produced immediately after 1915 and did not end with the responses of first-generation survivor-writers, just as the Armenian Genocide is not limited to the years of World War I, but goes back in time to encompass the massacres of 1894–1896, the Cilician massacres of 1909, and the massacres and deportations between 1915 and 1923, and continues to this day.

Literary responses to the Armenian Genocide thus continue to emerge from successive generations of survivor-writers as a strong indication that the wound is not yet healed, that the source of pain is still undiminished, and that the urge to comprehend the nation's cataclysmic experience, to deal with the past for the sake of a healthy future, still exists.

Second-generation Armenians are affected just as second-generation survivors of the Jewish Holocaust or of any other modern genocide are affected. I have read many Jewish testimonies that speak of the persistent affliction, and in a few instances I have referred to them in this book; however, I did not intend this to be a comparative study, although that could have been enlightening and engaging.

And now I embark on the difficult exploration of the responses of generations once or twice or even thrice removed from the experience. While still entrenched in artistic literature as the focus of my research and the object of my deliberations and findings, I have relied heavily on the psychoanalytic

approach in literary criticism to help me navigate the labyrinth of Armenian Genocide literature.

My field of research and study is, and has always been, artistic or creative literature, because I believe that it is through this literature, and not through facts and figures, that the psyche of a people subjected to an unthinkable and immeasurable collective trauma is revealed. It is by reading deeply in this literature that one can come close to understanding the universal truth that lies at the roots of historical documentations. In other words, it is creative literature that brings inconceivable realities into human perspective and facilitates understanding of the complex concept of genocide. It is impossible to penetrate the world of the Armenian Genocide without reading the literary responses to it. Hendrik Willem van Loon (1882–1944), a Dutch-American historian of the first half of the twentieth century, is quoted as attesting that more than 40 boxes of reports and documents were sent to the League of Nations to help support the Armenian cause but that none of them were able to play the role that Franz Werfel's *Forty Days of Musa Dagh* played. The Nazis were aware of the power of this genre of literature when they launched a book-burning campaign as soon as they came to power. Of course, the Turkish government of the time quickly followed suit, forcing Armenians to denounce Werfel's novel and throw copies of the book, together with images of the author, into a bonfire at a cemetery in Istanbul.

I have relied on the power of this literature, the literature of atrocity, to use Lawrence Langer's term, to understand and to convey to my readers the huge impact of the Armenian Genocide on the generations of survivors. By the analysis,

explication, and presentation of this genre of literature, I have striven to show the world the horrifying reality that escapes human imagination, the landscape of blood and tears, the ugly image of the prototype of the crime against humanity and civilization⁵ that played a major role in inspiring Raphael Lemkin to coin the term "genocide."

Years of exploration in the field of genocide literature has convinced me that while it is not too complicated to draw a map of the immediate literary responses to the Armenian Genocide, a map of the responses of succeeding generations requires broader investigation, closer scrutiny, and a more cautious approach. Without ruling out the role and significance of the first-generation survivor-writers' literature as well as the oral or written testimonies of first-generation survivors in understanding genocide and in their function as effective transmitters of memory, I suggest that in most cases they served as raw material to inspire literary responses by the second and third generations, who take on the role of storyteller, for they rarely leave the raw material untouched. The raw material is transformed into a structured memoir or a novel with a specific form and style, embellished by the author's artistic skill and rich imagination. The most common difficulty in this complicated task is the struggle to overcome one's emotions, to be able to relive the world of genocide and produce an authentic expression of the painful saga. These responses—fictionalization of the first generation's eyewitness

⁵ "Crimes against humanity and civilization is a phrase used by the Allied Powers, i.e. France, Great Britain, and Russia, in a declaration dated May 28, 1915, holding the Ottoman government responsible for the ongoing massacres of the Armenian population of the Empire.

accounts and memoirs in narrative prose or poetry, or texts that only remotely echo the theme of the past cataclysmic experience—are surely different from the responses of the first generation. They cover a very broad spectrum and are immensely variegated.

In general terms, the literary responses of successive generations of survivors are crafted from a distance in time and space, without direct experience of the Genocide, with the impetus of transmitted pain or a suddenly discovered past, and they bear the influence of different cultural, religious, environmental, and sociopolitical factors—as they are created in different locales in diasporan communities worldwide—and with different levels of skill and understanding of the poetics of genocide. These works exhibit a variety of thrust and motivation: they may seek catharsis in order to relieve transgenerational pain, they may strive to establish further factual evidence in order to combat the perpetrators' denial, or they may reflect the author's unabated frustration with the continuing injustice and the international conspiracy of silence. The literary work may not even treat the Genocide as a theme yet still be permeated with the psychology of the survivor of a colossal catastrophe. For all intents and purposes, these responses encompass the echoes of the nation's collective psyche shaped by the violence, the pain of dispersion, the effects of self-accusation, the search for identity or the struggle to cope with a dual identity, and the effects of the past and present roles of the perpetrators and of bystanders worldwide.

The general outline above underscores my vantage point in discussing the functionality of genocide literature, in other

words, the interconnection of the Armenian Genocide and the diasporan Armenian self-image or identity, that is, if we consider the diasporan Armenian communities as minorities within the societies of their host countries. This vantage point implies certain questions, such as how strong is this interconnection and what is its role in the formation of national or ethnic identity; how effectively is the memory of the Armenian Genocide transmitted; how has the suffering of first-generation survivors affected their offspring; and finally, how intimately can these successive generations relive the world of genocide in order to be able to reproduce it in art. The anecdotal reference below can be illustrative.

Jewish tradition tells the story of a youth who was traveling from Jerusalem to Rome at the time of King Herod. He took with him the pillow on which he always slept. One night his pillow caught fire—it was the night the Temple in Jerusalem was set ablaze. Commenting on this story, Elie Wiesel writes, “Yes, one can live a thousand miles away from the Temple and see it burn. One can die in Auschwitz after Auschwitz.”⁶ This analogy supports the presupposition of the impact of the Armenian Genocide on the generations born to its survivors, or to the “former victims,” as Lawrence Langer would call them.

From this point of departure, I venture to demonstrate that the transgenerational psychological impact can shape the outlook and individuality of succeeding generations and can

⁶ For Elie Wiesel’s comment on this tale as told by Uri-Zvi Greenberg, see Alan L. Berger and Naomi Berger, Introduction to *Second Generation Voices: Reflections by Children of Holocaust Survivors and Perpetrators* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001), p. 1.

be as deep and effective in producing the feeling of dying at Deir el-Zor without having been there.

Under the immediate shock and the burden of their own harrowing experience during the calamitous years, first-generation survivor-writers could not and did not prescribe and pass on a recipe for survival and perpetuation. The second generation, on the other hand, attempted to create a narrative to serve that purpose and be a tool for healing, reconciliation, and nation building. But is reconciliation possible?

If it ever does become possible, it must engage both sides, and both sides should espouse the same historical truth: that what began in 1915—and even before that, with the massacres of 1894–1896—and spanned the war years and beyond, was a well-calculated genocidal process that will not end until its last stage, denial, has ended.

Let this book be a thorn in the conscience of governments and officials who still dare to question the veracity of the Armenian Genocide, as well as those Turkish and pro-Turkish historians and politicians who “graciously” admit that in the process of “relocation” (not deportation) from the war zones and because of the hardship of the road, many Armenians died or were murdered by bandits, but after all, it was wartime and Turks were killed too. In fact, they note, Armenians and Turks lived peacefully side by side for centuries, sharing the same culture and even the same language in some areas. But Armenian revolutionaries threatened the security of the Empire, they committed atrocities against innocent Turks and engaged in subversive activities against the government, and the government had to quell the uprisings.

If Armenians lived "peacefully" with Turkish neighbors—the same neighbors who did not waste the opportunity to rob and kill in 1894–1896, in 1909, in 1915–1918—they had to.

If Armenians adopted Turkish cultural traits and even forgot their mother tongue and spoke Turkish, they had to. Under the repressive yoke of Ottoman rule, they were simply forced to.

The sufferings of Armenians during the First World War cannot be compared with the sufferings of Turks during the same period. Capitalizing on the "presupposition" that Armenians and Turks lived peacefully side by side for centuries, and that it was because of Armenian revolutionary activities that the government was obliged to step in with forceful measures, does nothing but lead the process toward deceit.

The truth is that the Turkish government stepped in with violent measures, not to quell the "unrest," but to stifle Armenian aspirations for safer and better living conditions and basic human rights. And let us not forget that the Turkish government, the government of the Young Turks, was in pursuit of a goal epitomized by the simple statement, "Turkey for the Turks only," and was driven by a simple ideology, Pan-Turkism, the establishment of a Pan-Turkic empire with a homogeneous Turkic population in a vast territory under Great Turan, the envisioned Turkic super-state encompassing the Turkic-speaking peoples of Central Asia. Ethnic minorities such as Kurds, Jews, and others within the Ottoman Empire were not a threat at the time. The only obstacle to the realization of the Pan-Turanist, Pan-Islamist dream was the

Christian minority in the Empire—Armenians, Assyrians, and Greeks. The Christians had to be eliminated.

This ideology, despite its failure to be realized, continues to affect the Turkish political agenda. The great dream has not been discarded. Armenia and Armenians are still considered obstacles, and that is because Turkey committed the ultimate crime against humanity and got away with it. And a crime committed with impunity can only encourage future crimes.

With my scholarship on Armenian Genocide literature, with the present study and my preceding studies, I join my voice to those of the millions worldwide who are victims of crimes unpunished and justice undone and who have made it their calling to fight against genocide.

The Transgenerational Experience

Introduction

The children of survivors of the Armenian Genocide are affected.

In an earlier monograph, I compared the transmission of the memory of the Armenian Genocide to the next generation as it occurred among survivors living in Turkey and among those in the Diaspora.¹ With respect to the depth and effectiveness of this transmission in the Diaspora, I suggested that the continuum of literary responses to the Genocide from first-to second-generation survivors is an indication of the

¹ Rubina Perroomian, "Collective Memory Passed On," in *And Those Who Continued Living in Turkey after 1915: The Metamorphosis of the Post-Genocide Armenian Identity as Reflected in Artistic Literature* (Yerevan: Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, 2008, 2012), pp. 147-73.

unceasing effects of the Genocide. This is more evident in the freer and more relaxed diasporic circumstances, as opposed to the repressive circumstances in Turkey or Soviet Armenia. As I reiterated in the Preface of the present study, the degree of this effectiveness is directly linked, first, to circumstances within the new, unfamiliar world in which the survivors took refuge: Is the atmosphere favorable or prejudicial? How much hardship is involved in their daily struggle for survival? The second factor determining the degree of effectiveness of the transmission of memory pertains to the ethos within the survivor families: was the new generation born to these families aware of and attentive to the family history, which was often depressing and discordant with the new environment? Was this new generation sundered from the Old World, busy making a successful life in the New World and detached from the parents' past experience, or, on the contrary, held in the grip of that experience?

Regardless of how the second generation perceived and dealt with their parents' past traumatic experience, the psychological effects of the trauma weighed upon the family atmosphere and internal relationships. What is significant, however, according to what I have observed, is that, aside from a number of bold and dramatic confessions to the bizarre circumstances surrounding their childhood which I will dwell upon, second-generation survivors in the Diaspora to a large extent served as silent transmitters, in some cases passively and in other cases reluctantly bridging between their parents and the next generation. This supports Marcus Lee Hansen's (1892-1938) hypothesis, "What the son wishes to forget, the grandson wishes to remember," which became a

watchword in the study of immigrant societies. In "The Problem of the Third Generation Immigrant" (1938), an essay in which he analyzed the particularities of immigrant societies or ethnic groups in America, Hansen suggested that, whereas the second generation shows indifference toward their parents' past and rejects their foreign ways in order to embrace the mainstream culture, the third generation develops an interest in their grandparents' background, that is, their ancestral history and culture. The fact is that, for all intents and purposes, the effects of the Genocide are transgenerational.

Despite their efforts to provide a healthy and happy environment for their children to grow up free of the scars of the past, the first-generation survivors did not always succeed. The family atmosphere that most of them unconsciously provided was constrained and unhappy. Janine Altounian, an essayist and translator born in France to parents who were both survivors of the Genocide, characterizes her parental home as "a place where the joy of living was hardly the order of the day."² Nava Semel, a daughter of Holocaust survivors and an accomplished writer, born in Israel, has a name for children who were born in such families. She calls them

² Janine Altounian, "Parcours d'un écrit de survivant jusqu'à son inscription psychique ou, Temporalité d'élaboration d'un héritage traumatique," in Vahram and Janine Altounian, *Mémoires du génocide arménien: Héritage traumatique et travail analytique* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2009), pp. 113-47. Quotation from p. 118. Based on her father's memoir and including her own essay as well as contributions from professors and practitioners of psychoanalysis, this book is a valuable contribution to understanding the psychology of descendants of Genocide survivors.

"children of sad people," people who "forgot the habits of joy."³ And it made no difference whether the parents tried to hide their past or, on the contrary, talked about it incessantly in order to make certain their children would know what had happened to them.

Mary Terzian, the author of the award-winning autobiography, *The Immigrants' Daughter*, grew up in Cairo as the daughter of Genocide survivors. In her portrayal of a not-so-ordinary family atmosphere where the past was always a mysterious secret, she writes, "The effects of genocide were present in my mother's glassy eyes and in my father's angry temper. It affected us all and will probably have its effect on a few more generations."⁴ Terzian belongs to the generation who migrated to the Western world as adults equipped with sufficient Armenian education to enable them to produce literature in the Armenian language. But she chose the English language for her creative writing in order to reach her targeted audiences: English-speaking Armenian-Americans who feel the burden of being marginalized as immigrants, and non-Armenians who should understand the immigrants and appreciate their contribution to the mainstream culture.

Terzian's parents did not share their stories of victimization and survival with their children. In many such families, children show an adverse, almost hostile reaction that will be discussed in this chapter. Nor are the reactions often

³ Nava Semel, "Intersoul Flanking: Writing about the Holocaust," in *Second Generation Voices: Reflections by Children of Holocaust Survivors and Perpetrators*, ed. Alan L. Berger and Naomi Berger (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001), p. 71.

⁴ Mary Terzian, *The Immigrants' Daughter: A Private Battle To Earn the Right to Self-actualization* (USA: Booklocker.com, Inc., 2005), pp. xiv-xv.

positive in many families where the subject was freely and copiously discussed, which I will explore in chapter 2. David Kherdian explains the latter phenomenon in his Introduction to *Forgotten Bread*:

[T]he children... didn't want to listen, because the stories were too painful. They, the children, the first generation to be born in America, had a different set of problems; but unavoidably they absorbed the grief and concerns of their parents.⁵

Kherdian was born in Racine, Wisconsin, in 1931 to a family of survivors of the Genocide. He is the author of many books of poetry, memoirs, and novels, and the editor of several anthologies. According to a biographical sketch by Aris Janigian, "He is the most prolific Armenian American writer of his generation and one of the most important of any generation" (318). *Forgotten Bread* is an anthology of Armenian American writings collected and edited by Kherdian. They tell stories of the pain and suffering of survivors of the Armenian Genocide and their offspring "who were also survivors," as he puts it in the Introduction (xii).

The children of survivors of the Armenian Genocide are affected, but to what extent and to what degree?

⁵ David Kherdian, ed., *Forgotten Bread: First-Generation Armenian American Writers* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 2007), p. xi. This anthology includes a comprehensive list of Kherdian's publications (460-62), and the same criterion is adopted for every writer whose work is included in the volume.

The scope of the impact

Jack Danielian asserts that, "Trauma is contagious and the contagion is likely to be insidious. All who come in contact with it can come away marked, including victim, victim families and progeny, observers, bystander witnesses, advocates, researchers, and yes, perpetrators."⁶ Further corroboration comes from Ervin Staub. Writing about the impact of genocidal violence on survivors and its relevance to Armenians today, he suggests that "trauma can be transmitted by survivors to children and grandchildren and on to later generations."⁷ Second-generation survivors are thus dangerously "marked" by the trauma their parents experienced.

Levon Boyajian and Haigaz Grigorian believed that not enough psychological research had been done on second-generation Armenian survivors to afford a clear picture of their mental and emotional status as related to the nation's past. They were among the first to study this aspect through research and interviews with the offspring of Genocide survivors in the 1980s.⁸ They noted that in their own research they had learned quite a bit from the numerous research studies on survivors of the Jewish Holocaust and found it

⁶ Jack Danielian, "A Century of Silence: Terror and the Armenian Genocide," *American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 70:3 (2010): 245-64.

⁷ Ervin Staub, "Healing and Reconciliation," in *Looking Backward, Moving Forward: Confronting the Armenian Genocide*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2003), p. 264.

⁸ Levon Boyajian and Haigaz Grigorian, "Psychosocial Sequelae of the Armenian Genocide," in *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1986), pp. 177-85. According to the authors, Alen J. Salerian, a psychiatrist in Washington, DC, was the first to interview survivors and their offspring and to present his observations in a paper cited by the authors.

conceivable to apply those results to Armenian survivors as well. And indeed, Jewish Holocaust scholars have made tremendous strides in studying and explaining the psychological burden that children of Holocaust survivors carry. One example is a study by Natan Kellermann, former chief psychologist of AMCHA, the National Israeli Center for Psychological Support of Survivors of the Holocaust and the Second Generation in Jerusalem,⁹ and currently a member of its board of directors. In a succinct article titled "Transmission of Holocaust Trauma,"¹⁰ Kellermann recapitulates various theories on the transmission of trauma including those developed from psychodynamic, sociocultural, family-system, and biological points of view. I find the theory of "biological or genetic models of transmission" most intriguing since it is based on the assumption that Holocaust/Genocide traumatization may be transmitted in the same manner as a hereditary disease, and children of severely traumatized parents are predisposed to post-traumatic stress disorders. I leave the study and analysis of this phenomenon to Armenian geneticists of the future.

The truth is that we have lagged behind. Armenian Genocide scholarship has failed in this domain. Nonetheless, psychological studies on the descendants of Armenian Genocide survivors are appearing in scholarly journals where

⁹ Not to be confused with the AMCHA Initiative to investigate and combat anti-semitism at institutions of higher education in America (<http://www.amchainitiative.org>). Information about the AMCHA center for the psychological support of Holocaust survivors can be found at <http://projects.jerusalemfoundation.org/community/elderly/amcha.aspx>.

¹⁰ Natan P. F. Kellermann, "Transmission of Holocaust Trauma" (n.d.), <http://yadvashem.org.il/yv/en/education/languages/dutch/pdf/kellermann.pdf>.

we encounter the names of psychologists, post-traumatic stress disorder therapists,¹¹ and researchers such as Annie Kalayjian, Marian Mesrobian MacCurdy, Ervin Staub, Jack Danielian, Rita Soulahian Kuyumjian, and others who have made substantial contributions to the field.

More importantly, second-generation survivors themselves, albeit late in life, have also begun to articulate their experience of growing up with the burden of an unfathomable bewilderment in the family atmosphere weighing down on their soul. There is an upsurge in the self-analysis of this experience, especially in America where the prevailing sociopolitical atmosphere lends itself well to such individual manifestations. This aspect of Armenian Genocide studies is therefore becoming enriched by primary and secondary source materials.

This upsurge is also explained by the evolution of diasporan Armenian political thought. Researchers agree that the year 1965, marking the fiftieth anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, can be regarded as a turning point. That was when second- and even third-generation survivors began to voice their grievances out loud about the Calamity, the great Injustice that has not been redressed and the Crime against Humanity that has not been fully recognized by the world. In response to this escalation of activism, Turkish denial of the crime rose to new levels with an outpouring of

¹¹ Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was first recognized as a war-related type of anxiety disorder. It was referred to as "shell shock" during World War I, and later as "battle fatigue." Current guidelines for PTSD were formulated in 1980 and relate to reactions to any kind of major atrocity, such as terrorism, genocide, assault, rape, etc.

denial literature. The callous denial and crude distortions of history, in turn, triggered an urge to respond by presenting more documents and further evidence of the Crime. In line with these endeavors, first-generation survivors were encouraged to pen the details of their ordeal as witnesses to the crime. That was a motivation for some, who had hitherto kept silent, to write and publish their life story or tell their story in oral interviews in order to prove that they were there, that they were witnesses to and victims of the Genocide denied.

Becoming more interested in their family history, second- and third-generation survivors began to unearth memories buried in oblivion, urging their parents to tell them about their ordeal during the massacres and the deportations, and even visiting Western Armenia on pilgrimage to the towns and villages their parents or grandparents called home. The emotional journey, which allowed physical contact with the places—or the ruins of places—that they knew from stories often told in the family, resulted in increased activism and inspired literature, films, paintings, and other forms of art in response to the Calamity. In fact, this was a struggle to change the catch-phrase, "The Forgotten Genocide," attached to the Armenian experience as barely remembered and rarely mentioned. Being a child or a grandchild of a survivor of a great calamity confers a duty, a burden, and a privilege, as the second or the third generation come to realize in adulthood. This self-realization sets them apart from others in the society at large and gives them a more serious outlook on life, a sense of the burden of the memories passed on, particularly if they

were named after the parent's sibling, cousin, or parent who fell victim to Turkish atrocities.

Aside from family histories and the direct transmission of memories from parent to offspring, a major source of knowledge and inspiration is the literature—the novels, short stories, memoirs, autobiographies, and poetry—written by first-generation writers in response to their own traumatic experience. Hakob Karapents, a writer of short stories on the theme of the diasporan Armenian predicament created by the Genocide and the dispersion of the survivors, expresses gratitude and appreciation for the first-generation Armenian American writers who recreated the Armenian homeland in their writings. He calls them “the old sowers [seed planters] of the New World.”¹²

Karapents depicts the way the first generation lived in “Jefersen, A.M.N.” (Jefferson, USA), showing the scope of the impact of the Genocide in that microcosm of the American Armenian Diaspora. The wretched, half-educated refugees from the Old World are the first to arrive in Jefferson at the turn of the previous century, fleeing persecution in the Ottoman Empire. They live in America but they have not severed ties with their homeland. “Give them a hundred documents proving their American citizenship, they will still say they are Armenian, and not only Armenian, but kesabtsi, aintabtsi, or other” (22). In the fictional town of Jefferson,

¹² Hakob Karapents, “Jefersen, A.M.N.,” in *Nor ashkharhi hin sermnats’annerē* [The old sowers of the new world] (Beirut: Atlas Press, 1975), pp. 9–23. I have discussed the phenomenon of the first-generation Armenians in “Jefferson, USA” in *And Those Who Continued Living in Turkey after 1915*, pp. 57, 164.

which according to Karapents could be anywhere in the USA, Armenian refugees live in isolation in a tight-knit community. They believe this is the only way they can prevent their assimilation into American society and uphold their Armenian identity. This ghettoization also prevents them from adapting to New World ways, so that they feel different from everyone else and an inferiority complex sets in. They carry an old wound that will not heal. They feel themselves to be victims and therefore incomplete human beings, and in order to compensate and heal their wounded pride, they work harder to provide the best possible education for their children. Karapents shows their initial enthusiasm in establishing ethnic organizations and institutions, their internal quarrels, and the division of the community into opposing camps. He shows the second generation striving to get ahead and succeed in life, and one day in their busy life, they look up and see their offspring headed off in totally different directions. They are Americanized and they view the world and Armenian issues from a different vantage point.

Hakob Karapents, a second-generation writer himself, felt “a huge obligation placed on our shoulders by the reality of life,”¹³ which is to address the problematic aspects of life in the

¹³ Hakob Karapents, “Groghe ev ir champan” [The writer and his path], in *Erku ashkharh, grakan p’ordzagrut’iunner* [Two worlds: Literary essays] (Watertown, MA: Blue Crane Books, 1992), p. 76. For a general idea of the life and work of this important writer, beyond the scope of the present thematic study, see Rubina Perroomian, “Hakob Karapents’ē hayapahpanman zinvor, Sp’iurk’ahay ink’nut’ian p’ntrogh” [Hakob Karapents: A guardian of Armenianness, in search of the diasporan Armenian identity], in *Nork 1* (1998): 119–23. See also Anahit Aramouni Keshishian, *Hakob Karapents’, Ashkharhenkalum ev arvest* [Hakob

post-Genocide Diaspora and the newcomers' struggle to adjust. Karapents, whose work will be discussed under various headings in this book, was born in Tabriz, Iran, in 1925. He immigrated to the United States to seek higher education and became a successful reporter, contributing to major American newspapers and periodicals. His short stories in the Armenian language began to appear in Armenian periodicals in 1955. He was a prolific writer with penetrating insight into the darkest depths of the inner world of his characters, most of whom were Armenians in the Diaspora who shared the common traits of the exile yearning for the homeland, whether it was a real, tangible locus as the place where they were born (as for those who had expatriated, or those who fled from Soviet Armenia), or it was an imaginative spiritual construct of the places where their parents were born and which they nostalgically looked back upon all their lives. Karapents was the author of nine volumes published between 1970 and 1994, the year of his death.

Expressing his appreciation of the first-generation writers, Karapents views the second-generation writers as the bridge between the first generation and the new Diaspora. And indeed, the literature produced by the first-generation survivor-writers is the foundation upon which the responses of the second and third generations are constructed. Unless one understands this primary literature, the artistic history of the Armenian Genocide, the responses of the next generation—historical novels, short stories, metaphysical poetry—would seem fantastical, unreal, figments of the imagination of

Karapents: His world perception and art] (Yerevan: "Gitutun" Press, Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia, 1999).

a sick mind, whereas they are the cry of the nation with an unparalleled trauma in its past, a call for ultimate redress and healing.

Vahé Oshagan's *Ahazang* (Alarm),¹⁴ a collection of poetry in free verse, is a case in point. Indeed, the opening poem that gives its title to the collection is a tragedy and a mockery of life, a torrent of unchecked observations on life, love, humankind, and awkward situations, all from the point of view of "I," the narrator who considers himself unworthy of living, an exile wherever he goes, a person who is alone even when surrounded by friends and loved ones, who hears the alarm when no one else does. Or he is the one sounding the alarm? Perhaps the alarm is for all humankind, hiding behind dreams and illusions in order not to see the truth, yet the truth is unattainable, therefore we live in the absurd, as Oshagan tends to demonstrate. The entire collection has no page numbers and almost no punctuation and thus the idea of continuity is violated—perhaps as a gesture to modernism, or in symbolic representation of the rupture of Armenian continuity, of Armenian life after the Genocide. Or perhaps the author meant to suggest that the reader can start reading wherever he/she wishes, that each page can stand alone as an independent expression.

Vahé Oshagan, whose work will also be discussed throughout this study, was born in Filipe (Plovdiv), Bulgaria, in 1922. He was renowned as a writer, poet, and literary critic. His father, Hagop (Hakob) Oshagan, already an established writer before 1915, barely avoided arrest and fled to Bulgaria,

¹⁴ Vahé Oshagan, *Ahazang* [Alarm] (Philadelphia, PA: Vosketar, 1980).

and continued to write and teach in various countries where Armenian survivors of the Genocide had taken refuge. Vahé Oshagan received his Ph.D. in comparative literature from the Sorbonne in Paris and taught philosophy and French, English, and Armenian literature in various universities. His creative literature in multiple volumes and his critical articles in the diasporan Armenian press were the guideposts of their time. He died in Philadelphia in 2000.¹⁵

Karapents and Oshagan were among the few who wrote in Armenian. The majority of responses by second-generation survivors are in the language of the host country where they were educated and mastered the art of creative writing. Indeed, aside from those raised in Middle Eastern countries where Armenian education was well established, the new generation raised in Europe and America did not receive sufficient training in the mother tongue to use it as the primary medium of their artistic expression. A significant exception is Alicia Ghiragossian (her own spelling), born in Cordoba, Argentina, in 1936 to a family of Genocide survivors

¹⁵ For a general idea of the life and work of this writer, also beyond the scope of the present thematic study, see the following articles, all published in *Asbarez* daily newspaper (Los Angeles): Marc Nichanian, "Vahé Oshagan Ardzakagir" [Vahé Oshagan, prose writer], February 10, 1990, p. 10; Grigor Shahinian, "'T'akardin shurj' hatorin arit'ov" [On the occasion of Around the snare], August 4, 1990, p. 4; Grigor Beledian, "Banasteghsutian masin" [About poetry], February 14, 1995, p. 9; Rita Vorberian, "Grakan Lousardzak t'iv 27" [Literary searchlight no. 27], February 14, 1995, p. 13; Rubina Perroomian, "Sp'iurk'ahay nor tipari p'nrtuk'ë Vahé Oshakani gegharvestakan ardzaki mej, Vahé Oshakan k'narakan herosin chanach'elu chigov" [The quest for the new diasporan Armenian image in Vahé Oshagan's artistic prose: An effort to know Vahé Oshagan, the lyrical hero], February 14, 1995, p. 16.

and educated in Buenos Aires. She began to write poetry in Spanish; then, after immigrating to the United States, she mastered both English and Armenian and subsequently wrote poetry in all three languages. Her literary response to the Armenian Genocide is important to the present study as she encapsulates in her work a kaleidoscope of influences, imprints, experiences, attitudes, aspirations, and expectations. "An Inconvenient Genocide," a 50-page epic poem in free verse, is by itself, aside from her other poems on this theme, a mirror of the soul and the psyche of a child of genocide survivors.

Proliferating today and showing the scope of the impact of the Genocide are historical novels and novels based on a parent's life story by second-generation writers. The increasing publication of such works is evidence of their quest for deliverance and the compulsion to expose the universal truth at the root of historical narratives and documents. Their raw material includes not only their own family history but, first and foremost, the plethora of recent historical research and writing, as well as the wealth of information in newly discovered or reissued memoirs and eyewitness accounts,¹⁶

¹⁶ Eyewitness accounts by missionaries and soldiers active in the Ottoman Empire in the years of the Calamity, published after the war, are now being reissued, and new accounts based on manuscripts in the possession of descendants of these men and women are being discovered and published, with the bulk of the work being carried out by the Gomidas Institute and the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute. Examples include Maria Jacobsen, *Diaries of a Danish Missionary: Harpoot, 1907-1919* (Princeton, NJ: Gomidas Institute, 2001); *The Memoirs of Abram Elkus: Lawyer, Ambassador, Statesman* (Reading, UK: Taderon Press, and Princeton, NJ: Gomidas Institute, 2004); Paul Leverkuehn, *A German Officer during the Armenian Genocide: A Biography*

and the previously published artistic literature of the Armenian Genocide.

These new manifestations of the truth reveal a conscious or subconscious affinity with postmodern history as it pertains to transgression of the boundary between history and fiction.¹⁷ In an interview, Michel Foucault said, "I am well aware that I have never written anything but fictions. I do not mean to say, however, that truth is therefore absent. It seems to me that the possibility exists for fiction to function in truth...."¹⁸ Foucault's postmodernist approach to history, especially as reflected in the statement quoted above, has given rise to multiple interpretations aiming to understand the concept and parameters of postmodern history which differ greatly from traditional approaches and may even suggest rewriting the past for a purpose. Without entering into that discussion, I use Foucault's approach to show the importance and the significance of genocide literature, the literature of atrocities, in constructing the historical narrative of the period with a focus on human relationships rather than documents and statistics. The purpose: writing history to expose the injustice and to emphasize the necessity and the obligation to redress and rectify.

of Max von Scheubner-Richter (London: Taderon Press for the Gomidas Institute, 2008); Jakob Künzler, *In the Land of Blood and Tears* (in Armenian translation) (Yerevan: Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, 2011); and Clara Barton, *Expedition in Asia Minor and Relief Operation* (Yerevan: Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, 2012).

¹⁷ Peter Burke, "Two Crises of Historical Consciousness," *Storia della Storiografia* 33 (1998): 3-16.

¹⁸ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon et al. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), p. 193.

Second-generation writers seek deliverance from the inherited burden of the past. How best to examine and explain this quest? What categories will be useful in this study to provide a clear picture of the truth about the impact of the Genocide on generations of survivors?

An attempt to categorize the responses

My approach to the typification and categorization of the literary responses of first-generation survivor writers in my previous monograph was based on the authors' predicament and disposition in the aftermath of the Genocide, as well as the themes they entertained in their work and the genres in which they chose to work. Mapping the second-generation responses is more complicated. In the first place, they depend on societal perceptions of Armenian survivors in the New World. Are they treated as refugees? Newcomers? A minority/ethnic group? From the point of view of the survivors themselves, how much cultural influence have they absorbed, in other words, what is the degree of their acculturation/integration and adaptation to the norms and exigencies of the host country? These questions probe the overall symbiotic relationship between the survivor and the mainstream society.

While taking into consideration the role of such external factors in the lives of survivors and in the family atmosphere they provide for their children, it is important to also highlight the parent-child relationship as an instrumental factor in determining the process of transmission of the trauma. Curiously, it is this relationship that for the most part shapes the children's perception of the past and affects the interpretive processes they apply to their experience as

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second-generation survivors of a collective trauma. Natan Kellermann categorizes the various forms of transmission of trauma as "overt and covert," "manifest and tacit," and "conscious and unconscious," and cites R. M. Prince ("Second Generation Effects of Historical Trauma," 1985) who underlines the extreme complexity of the mechanism of second-generation effects and enumerates the multiple influencing factors involved.¹⁹

Within the realm of all this complexity, I suggest my own categorization of second-generation voices which I hope will shed light on my approach and criteria in dealing with the subject and make this study more accessible and convincing.

In this chapter, I focus on one major category as regards the transmission of the parents' trauma, namely, second-generation responses as they are shaped and conditioned by a family atmosphere in which the parents' past experience was kept a secret. Under this rubric, I discuss a variety of reactions on the part of the children—such as resentment, aversion, awe, alienation, and distancing—toward or against parents who refused to share their stories. I believe that these reactions are factors and determinants that play a role in shaping the children's character and personality. I further believe that despite the paradoxical nature of trauma being transmitted without verbal communication, the children's various reactions are also influential in shaping their perception of that trauma. Those reactions come into play and are reflected in the literature they produce when, as adults, they face the need to

¹⁹ Kellermann, "Transmission of Holocaust Trauma," p. 4.

deal with their Armenian identity as second-generation survivors of the Genocide.

When the parent's past is kept a secret

I have discussed survivors keeping their past a secret, especially from their children, in *The Armenian Genocide in Literature: Perceptions of Those Who Lived through the Years of Calamity*. Here in this category, in which the effects of this behavior on their children are assessed, a summary of the aforementioned discussion is brought in to serve as a necessary backdrop.

It is a fact that many survivors of the Armenian Genocide chose not to talk to their children about their past traumatic experience. Children were denied entry into their parents' past world of darkness. The reasons are many. There was the fear of the harmful effects these stories of blood and death could produce in the juvenile psyche. Parents consciously or subconsciously protected their children from the paralyzing memory with which they themselves had to live. Then there was the inexplicable self-blame or sense of shame and self-reproach for having survived while other family members perished in horrible circumstances; perhaps having survived by means of a temporary conversion to Islam, or providing "services" to gendarmes or a Muslim "rescuer," or enduring rape or circumcision. Whatever the dark secret of their survival, they chose not to reveal it. Some simply chose not to speak at all. Some futilely believed that by not talking about their traumatic past, they would manage to forget it and stay the frequent recurrence of painful memories and tormenting flashbacks. There were also survivors who, in their haste to

start a new life and adopt new ways in the New World, guarded against revealing their past lest it set them apart from the society of the host country. This is especially true of Armenian communities in Europe and North America where discrimination, prejudice, and social rejection of newcomers were prevalent.²⁰ For still others, the burden of the daily struggle for survival in a new and unfamiliar world weighed so heavily that it kept them from talking about their traumatic past. Talking about it could have been an opportunity for significant therapeutic effect, an opportunity they rejected.

Within the family atmosphere of many survivors, talking about the traumatic past, the Catastrophe, was thus taboo. It could only be mentioned in hushed tones within the tight circle of family friends—mostly survivors themselves—or in brief references, often in Turkish, a language unintelligible to their children. Janine Altounian confesses her lack of interest in tales of the past that were told in her home, especially when family friends, all sharing the same gloomy past, came to visit. These stories were told mostly in Turkish, a language she was supposed not to understand. She knew nothing about her parents' past but she knew that she "was living in a heavy atmosphere, very serious and overly crowded, where you sensed the proximity of this huge disaster which 'they' had certainly escaped but which touched me and kept me apart from the world I encountered 'outside,' at school."²¹

²⁰ David Kherdian writes that his parents were "victim[s] of America who/escaped the Turkish Genocide." "A Family of Four," in *On the Death of My Father, and Other Poems* (Fresno: Giligia Press, 1970), n.p.

²¹ Altounian, "Parcours d'un écrit de survivant," p. 115.

What was the overall effect of this kind of family atmosphere and parental behavior on the children of survivors?

Psychologists believe that keeping secrets in the family, especially secrets of a traumatic nature, can potentially destroy relationships and damage the mental health of family members. When the secret is internalized, it can cause physical pain, depression, and anxiety in the keeper of the secret. The most vulnerable in this situation, however, are the children who grow up in such a family atmosphere, sensing an unnamed anxiety about something that is being kept hidden from them. That anxiety can become an affliction if they come to see themselves as personally responsible for the mysterious something which they cannot identify.

Savyon Liebrecht, an Israeli writer and the author of *Apples from the Desert* (1998), a collection of short stories, is the daughter of Holocaust survivors who kept their experience a secret. In an article analyzing her stories, Dvir Abramovich quotes Liebrecht on how the "eerie shadow" of her parents' silence dominated the family atmosphere.²² "The silence was terrible," she confides. "As a child I felt I was growing up in an atmosphere of secrets."²³ She speculates that, "It could be that one of the reasons for my writing is this conspiracy of silence. How can one break such a great silence, if not with

²² Dvir Abramovich, "Post-Holocaust Identity and Unsolved Tension in Modern-day Israel: Savyon Liebrecht's *Apples from the Desert*," in *Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 3/1 (2002): 1.

²³ Ibid., citing Liebrecht in an interview with Sami Michael, *Be'eretz Israel*, July 31, 1987.

words?"²⁴ And break the silence she did. Her literary work revolves around the theme of the Holocaust, although she herself has no memories of the Event. She explains,

The influence of the Holocaust on my work cannot be separated from the influence of the Holocaust on my life. The very subjects which trouble you and inspire you and haunt you as a person, are those which are—in all sorts of disguises—going to reveal themselves in your work. And since the Holocaust is the event which, more than any other, has left its marks on my life, it has become a subject in my work.²⁵

In an earlier study, I compared Liebrecht's short story, "Hayuta's Engagement Party," and Anelka Karmirian's remembrance of her father, "Hayrs, Arpiar Markaryan." My purpose was to draw a parallel between Jewish and Armenian children of survivors in specific yet typical cases in which survivors who had never spoken to their children about their traumatic past, suddenly, in their advanced age, began talking about it as if they could no longer contain the secret. This happened especially during family gatherings on festive occasions and caused their children and grandchildren shame and embarrassment. Mordechai, the son of Mendel, and Anelka, the daughter of Arpiar, experienced parallel situations. In both cases, some members of the family showed sympathy and understanding for the hitherto silent elder's

²⁴ Ibid., citing Liebrecht in an interview with Amalia Argman Bracha, *Yediot Aharonot*, December 12, 1986.

²⁵ Savyon Liebrecht, "The Influence of the Holocaust on My Work," in *Hebrew Literature in the Wake of the Holocaust*, ed. Leon I. Yudkin (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1993), pp. 125–30. Quotation from p. 125.

need to open his wounds and let the accumulated blood and pus gush out, while others resented him for ruining the party and repeatedly bringing up a past that was irrelevant to their present.²⁶

The mental health educator Suzanne Handler, author of *The Secrets They Kept* (2012), identifies five effects of keeping secrets in the family: it can destroy relationships, affect children's lives, cause suspicion and resentment, create a false sense of reality, and cause illness.²⁷ What would Handler think of the horrendous experience of the Genocide that many survivors tried to keep secret?

We encounter various reactions in the childhood reminiscences of second-generation writers, some overlapping and others contrasting each other. These reactions were mostly cause for pain and misery during their childhood, which they turn into guilt and regret when they reach self-realization.

Resentment and aversion

Victoria Haroutunian, a Genocide survivor, kept her past a closely guarded secret from her husband and children. In *Orphan in the Sands*, by her daughter, Virginia Haroutunian,

²⁶ Savyon Liebrecht, "Hayuta's Engagement Party," in *Apples from the Desert*, trans. Marganit Weinberger-Rotman (New York: Feminist Press, 1998), pp. 84–6. Anelka Karmirian, "Hayrs, Arpiar Markaryan" [My father, Arpiar Markaryan], in Arpiar Der-Markaryan, *Ardzagang ev Ants'ordē, patmvatsk' ev husher* ["Echo" and "The passer-by": Stories and memoirs] (Istanbul: Aras, 2006), p. 229. For a more detailed analysis of these two cases, see Perroomian, *And Those Who Continued Living in Turkey after 1915*, pp. 147–9.

²⁷ Suzanne Handler, "5 Reasons Why Keeping Family Secrets Could Be Harmful," <http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2013/08/22/5-reasons-why-keeping-family-secrets-could-be-harmful/>.

the only life Victoria was willing to admit began with her arrival at Ellis Island.²⁸ "It was the happiest day for me," she once confided to her husband. "Leaving Ellis Island I felt like I could finally survive on my own" (27). On rare occasions Virginia questioned her mother about her past, but Victoria was always adamant: "Don't ask, I don't want to talk about it" (136). Virginia resented her mother, a cold, dry, strict woman who shrank from any word of endearment, even if it came from her husband or children, and "only showed affection when someone was sick." She kept to herself, had no close friends, never visited her neighbors, and refused to join any Armenian groups (42). She had even refused to dance at her own wedding (25). Virginia thought her mother was devoid of any feelings. She recalls attending the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Armenian Genocide at the local church with her parents. The atmosphere was solemn, as members of the congregation lit candles and wept. "Hyreeg's eyes were closed, head was bowed, his hands over forehead. Myreeg sat stiffly staring straight ahead" (50).²⁹

Virginia pours out her frustration over the deprivations she endured growing up in Pontiac, Michigan, where she was born. Her autobiography is also a biography of her mother, a mysterious woman named Tourvanda Ahigian who became

²⁸ Virginia Haroutunian, *Orphan in the Sands* (N.p. [Michigan]: S.p., 1995). In her Acknowledgments, she credits her mother as co-author.

²⁹ *Hyreeg* means "father" and *Myreeg* "mother" in Armenian. These two words recur throughout this study in variant spellings. In all cases I have retained the spelling of the original texts quoted.

Victoria Haroutunian.³⁰ Written in the third person, *Orphan in the Sands* begins when the ship carrying hundreds of refugees, including Tourvanda, docks at Ellis Island. Much to her anguish and frustration, she was detained at Ellis Island for over two months and was almost sent back to Egypt, until finally one of her cousins showed up to fetch her. Apparently, the relatives who had signed the affidavit of financial support that allowed her to immigrate did not themselves have the proper status to be able to claim her.

But what about her life before her arrival at Ellis Island? All Virginia knew was that Victoria had had a hard life, no clothes, no shoes, and that she herself was made to live with similar material constraints, and she hated her mother for that. "'What does this have to do with me?' she thought. 'All I want is a new dress'....'" In her young mind, she concluded, "Mayreeg is stingy. She won't spend a penny for anything!" During mother-daughter shopping trips, she was limited to one hot dog at the snack bar, even if she begged her mother for more (42-3).

Despite her mother's opposition, Virginia's father bought a piano for her. She took lessons and grew up to become an accomplished concert pianist, always dreaming of seeing her mother in the audience. "Virginia used music as an escape from the sound of her mother's harsh criticisms and frequent temper; as time continued she delighted in doing whatever her music demanded while reveling in not doing what her mother expected" (46). And mother expected too much. She was

³⁰ At her relatives' request, Tourvanda changed her name to Victoria to sound more American, and after her marriage, she took her husband's last name.

always angry, always yelling at her, and Virginia could not understand why.

Indeed, what was the source of the anger that some of these survivors discharged on their offspring? Mary Terzian, author of *The Immigrants' Daughter*, is baffled by the question: "Am I the cause or am I a safe target for discharge?" (241). She rejects the Middle Eastern culture of fatalism, she does not believe in internalizing or self-blame, but then again, she contradicts herself and accepts the blame for all the misfortunes that happen around her. Caught in the turmoil of her own conflicting thoughts, she thinks she will never understand the source of her father's strange behavior. Tortured and uprooted men and women like Mary's parents did not have the luxury of psychiatric or post-traumatic stress disorder therapy to help them reconcile memories of their traumatic experience with the schemata of their cognitive-world models. The shadow of death and destruction followed them throughout their lives and generated an array of strange if not anomalous behavior. Stevan M. Weiner, a psychiatrist who has worked with non-Serbian survivors of the Bosnian genocide, observes that, "Survivors of genocide, due to the nature of massive psychic trauma, often have tremendous difficulties in perceiving, registering, and assimilating their traumatic experiences."³¹ The unresolved burden is carried and transmitted.

³¹ See Stevan M. Weiner, "Artists Witnessing 'Ethnic Cleansing,'" in *Genocide, War, and Human Survival*, ed. Charles B. Strozier and Michael Flynn (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), pp. 243-55. Quotation from p. 245.

Mary Terzian also writes about her stepmother's mistreatment of her stepchildren, which was not unusual. A rather unattractive spinster, a remnant of the abuses of the deportation route, she had gladly accepted a prearranged marriage to Mary's widowed father, but once established in his household, she turned into a wicked stepmother. Mary's daring decision to take her fate in her own hands was one that not many in such circumstances were able to make. Her deliberations before she reached her decision are revealing: "Part of me has been buried, another part uprooted, a new self is sprouting. I need fresh soil to grow healthier roots away from the oppressive environment of home" (241). Whether or not she is capable of realizing her objective is immaterial. What is important for her is to be brave enough to take control of her own destiny.

In *Orphan in the Sands*, Virginia Haroutunian also writes about her father, Michael, another survivor who never talked about his past. However, in contrast to his wife, he tried hard to balance her strictness and rigidity toward their children and make things go smoother at home. Virginia discovered Michael's story much later in life when she and her parents visited his cousins in Soviet Armenia. At a dinner reception in their honor, when spirits were high, toasts were drunk, and glasses of *raki* upended, Michael and his cousin Nahzar began to reminisce about how they had escaped that dreadful night when Turkish soldiers had killed Nahzar's father and tried to capture the two of them.³² What a surprise! Michael had never

³² Accounts of ordinary Turkish soldiers personally torturing and killing individual refugees crop up again and again throughout the present study as well as in the survivors' memoirs I have introduced and

revealed his secret past, not even to his wife. "I still have nightmares.... Yes, I still remember. I've tried to forget but it always comes back." Virginia was astounded, while her mother quietly asked, "That is why you cry out in your sleep?" "Always inside my head," Michael answered. "The savage dog of fear never goes away" (126-7). That was in 1975 when Virginia was already in her late thirties.

Victoria's confession about her own traumatic past occurred much later when she was recovering from a series of painful treatments for throat cancer. She asked her daughter to take her to Ellis Island, and there, in the presence of a group of tourists and to Virginia's astonishment, she shared the story of her two-and-a-half-month sojourn in a holding center on the island. It was the opportune moment for Virginia to begin prodding her mother to tell her life story. Now she learned where her mother was born on the Black Sea coast and heard the horrible story of the death march, the killings, the torture, the rapes, the family members separated and lost. Virginia had read about such things in books about the Armenian Genocide but never suspected that her own mother had been caught in that hell at the age of seven: little Tourvanda, separated from her mother, her sister, and her brother, wandering alone,

analysed in earlier monographs. With Turkey being at war, the government had the advantage of deploying troops to facilitate the implementation of the massacre and deportation of Armenians. As Eric Markusen points out, "the government at war can utilize the military forces—men who have been trained to kill in the service of their nation—for the perpetration of genocide. This occurred in both the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust." Markusen goes on to list other genocides in which "soldiers and paramilitary personnel played key roles as killers." Eric Markusen, "Genocide and Warfare," in *Genocide, War, and Human Survival*, ed. Strozier and Flynn, p. 78.

hungry and thirsty, sick with diarrhea, being taken into a series of Turkish homes and running away each time to escape mistreatment, ending up in the orphanage run by American missionaries in Kharberd (Kharpert, Harput, modern Elazig), which opened another period of misery, hunger, and sickness.

For the families of many Genocide survivors, the clock stopped the moment they set foot in America and the natural evolution of traditional rituals and ethnic customs and mores came to a halt then and there. It did not matter if their children, growing up with one foot in the outside world, were embarrassed by their parents' atavistic and regressive practices and expectations. The parents' refusal to change provoked their children to reject those traditions and customs as being irrelevant to the present and to "retool" themselves to fit into the present.

This process of "retooling of the self," in the words of Ashis Nandy, "has gone hand in hand with the loss of large parts of [the] remembered past" which have been consigned to "the dustbin of history." Nandy discusses the "cultural engineering" often violently forced on Asian, African, and South American societies and the shedding of such "allegedly irrelevant aspects of the past" for the sake of development. Despite the fact that "developmentalism is so clearly triumphant in global politics," he believes that a homogenized global mass culture is an unfounded dream.³³ Today, third- and fourth-generation Armenians, more at ease with the environment in which they live—which is, of course, less

³³ See Ashis Nandy, "Development and Violence," in *Genocide, War, and Human Survival*, ed. Strozier and Flynn, pp. 207-17. Quotations from pp. 207-8.

prejudicial and less discriminatory now – are searching for the past their parents and grandparents discarded or repressed. The *Houshamadyan* project “to reconstruct Ottoman Armenian town and village life,” an enormous undertaking by a group of young third-generation intellectuals, speaks to that quest.³⁴

In *My Literary Profile*, Helene Pilibosian, who grew up in the Boston area with parents who were both survivors of the Genocide, writes of the deep and inexpugible effects of their behavior on her psyche.³⁵ Throughout this work of artistic prose, or “prose about poetry,” as she defines it (297), Pilibosian unravels the history of her parents’ “attitudes and expressions, their way of living and their adjustment to this country, their stories and their anger, their relationships to one another” (6). She shows these to be important factors affecting her life. Interwoven throughout her memoir are her parents’ dark and painful memories, beginning with Ichmeh, a town near Kharpert that both parents called home. Ichmeh was “a perennial shadow,” “a mystery to me and my modern life,” one that she strove to discern and reveal (7). Indeed, as a result of extensive interviews with her mother during the last two of her 92 years of life, Pilibosian was able to put together a detailed ethnographic picture of Ichmeh, with its Armenian population in absolute majority over its Turkish population, with its schools, churches, foods, farming, medicines, beliefs,

³⁴ *Houshamadyan* was founded in Berlin in 2010, its mission being “to reconstruct and preserve the memory of Armenian life in the Ottoman Empire through research.” Further information can be obtained from the project’s website, www.houshamadyan.org.

³⁵ Helene Pilibosian, *My Literary Profile: A Memoir* (Watertown, MA: Ohan Press, 2010). For a biographical sketch and a bibliography of her work, see *Forgotten Bread*, ed. Kherdian, pp. 374–7 and 462–3.

and superstitions. Her description more or less extends to Armenian village life in general, with all the voices and varied colors. She wrote it under the influence of stories her father told as well as his storytelling style which, she writes, influenced her “narrative approach to poetry” (17). What is important here is Pilibosian’s observation that survivors brought all of this with them to America or wherever they found refuge, and this baggage of the past, the old manners and mindsets enveloped in the dark shadow of the great loss they all experienced, influenced the behavior and personality of the children they raised.

Looking back years later “with a more mature attitude” to the conflict between her own generation and that of her parents, Pilibosian sees it as having been inevitable and blames their Old World mindset and their refusal to change (76). They raised their children with that mindset and with those inflexible customs, traditions, values, and outlooks, and they molded their character and personality, along with a certain measure of repression, only to find themselves in psychological conflict with their children as well as with the outside world.

The rigid personality and behavior of Helene’s mother come across clearly in her *Literary Profile*. Yeghsa Haboian had somehow survived the years of calamity and joined her sister’s family in Gardanne, a small town near Marseilles. After a short prearranged courtship, she married Khachadour Pilibosian and moved to the United States. She was a shy, unsociable woman and her temperament was never altered by the new environment, her loving husband, and the joy that children bring to any home. She was an embarrassment when

she fell into despair, which happened every so often (31). She became angry for reasons her daughter could not understand, as for example when Helene refused to eat a certain Armenian dish her mother had prepared, or when Helene made pudding, an American dessert (36). It saddened Helene whenever her mother suffered "a sudden attack of claustrophobia" in a crowded place and insisted on returning home immediately (47). She was a strict mother and never showed affection. "Unfortunately, in our family there was little communication of tender emotions, the hug and the kiss seeming nonexistent and sometimes the positive feelings also" (54). Yeghsa was disliked by her relatives because of her "basic pessimism, her temper and her awkwardness" (256).

Altogether, Yeghsa comes across as a negative person, unable to see the good in others, not even in her own children. She constantly criticized Helene and put her down. She considered her incapable of taking care of herself or doing housework (79). She did not value her daughter's creativity or her success in writing poetry. On the occasion of the publication of Helene's first book of poetry, *Carvings from an Heirloom: Oral History Poems* (1983), she commented, "No one knows these stories but us.... Who would be interested?" (258). When Helene, 30 years old and already married, was recovering from major surgery, her mother came to see her only once, and she "hurt me as badly as she had ever done by laughing at the sight of me in this unfortunate condition" (167).

Helene knew nothing about her mother's ordeal during the Genocide and admits that she never really showed any interest in hearing her mother's story until much later when

she studied that period of Armenian history. When, in her interviews with her mother, she learned what she had been through, she was shocked and horrified. At the age of 91, Yeghsa confessed to having been rescued by a Turk and having lived with a Turkish family. This confession made her so distraught that she could not continue. Helene surmised that she had been raped, beaten unconscious and left for dead (21-2). After that, she had spent some years in an orphanage and studied nursing at the American University of Beirut (AUB) before she finally joined her sister in France. Helene now understood the source of her mother's strange behavior: she had seen her own mother walk away, never to return; she had seen the dead and the dying; she had experienced the insecurity of the orphan and the anxiety of starvation. Helene wished her mother could have had the benefit of "psychiatric help to ease the burden of the hurt she carried to give her some satisfaction and tranquility in her life and render our lives with her easier and more satisfying" (170).

Pilibosian's explanation of why she writes about her mother's problem personality is noteworthy. She assures the reader that it is not out of hatred for her mother or revenge for having been subjected to a lifetime of pain and anxiety. On the contrary, it is to help others in the same situation understand their parents' predicament and cope with it, so that they will not keep asking why, as she had done all her life, trying to discover the reason for her mother's behavior (170). But that was not all: she also wrote about her mother in order to solve her own emotional problems through writing, to achieve a sort of catharsis through art (256). She had learned to forgive her mother, had taken care of her in her old age, failing health,

and loss of memory, but she couldn't forget the pain she felt when her mother didn't recognize her and asked Helene's husband to call the police and "get this woman out of the house" (247).

After her mother's death, Helene found her "box of valuables" hidden in the attic. It contained her nursing diploma from AUB and her wedding veil, things she had never shown to anyone (32). Her poem titled "Epitaph: In memory of my mother, who was one of the orphans at Ghazir," sheds light not so much on her mother's past as on the deplorable predicament of orphans of the Genocide in general, "kinder minds caught in/the World War I frame."³⁶ The poem extols the courage and dedication of Dr. Jakob Künzler and recalls the challenging trek he headed that brought thousands of orphans out of the Ottoman Empire:

The exodus bore dry mouth and hunger
for food and sympathetic touch.
Dr. Künzler took the orphans
out by caravan of donkeys and horses.

³⁶ I found this poem in Hagop Martin Deranian's account of *President Calvin Coolidge and the Armenian Orphan Rug* (Arlington, MA: Armenian Cultural Foundation, 2013), pp. 33-5. Deranian relates the story of the Swiss missionaries Dr. Jakob Künzler and his wife Elizabeth ("Papa" and "Mama" Künzler), their dedication to Armenian orphans, their tortuous 1922 journey out of central Anatolia to Lebanon, and the establishment of the Near East Relief orphanage at Ghazir where 1400 orphaned girls were sheltered. Here they were taught various crafts, including rug weaving. A fine "Isfahan-style" rug woven by the girls and measuring twenty-three square meters (eleven feet seven inches by eighteen feet five inches) was sent to President Coolidge in December 1925 as a token of appreciation for America's great moral and financial support for the relief of survivors of the Genocide.

Helene's mother, already a teenager, was one of those orphans who were then sheltered in an old monastery in the mountains some 40 miles northeast of Beirut, later known as the Ghazir orphanage.

Feelings of resentment and aversion are not rare in the children of survivors toward their strict, uncommunicative, and stone-cold parents. In *Passage to Ararat*, Michael J. Arlen (b. 1930, London) remembers hating and fearing his father, although at the same time he confesses that he loved him. He admits that his hatred must have been due to the fear he always felt "of being exposed in some way, or pulled down by the connection," that is, the connection with his Armenian background, the Turkish massacres of Armenians, and everything pejorative that came with it.³⁷ In later years, long after his father's death, when he came to a full realization of the Armenian past and his personal connection to it, he wondered, why all the camouflage? Why did his father, a successful writer himself, avoid the "collective unconscious" of his racial past which was his identity, "the one solid piece of wood that any writer has." And he thought, "If only he could have told me about this! Then what? What would I have done? I realized I would have done nothing, except be more afraid. Besides, he hadn't known it himself" (250).

³⁷ Michael J. Arlen, *Passage to Ararat* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1975), pp. 11-12. For a biographical sketch, see David Stephen Calonne, "Michael J. Arlen," in *Forgotten Bread*, ed. Kherdian, pp. 299-303. For a list of Arlen's publications, see *ibid.*, p. 457.

Alienation, awe, and distancing

David Kherdian's father, Melkon, was a survivor of the 1909 Adana massacres:

My father came from Adana
but his father was born in Kharpert,
where, my mother says:
"Most of the people were educated
at the University," but
my father wasn't educated anywhere³⁸

That was all he knew of his father's past, a past that he could not and would not want to penetrate. Their relationship was shrouded by mysterious untold stories of torture and death, creating an abyss between them that lasted his father's lifetime. The result was a complex feeling of awe, respect, and admiration that young David held for his father, compounded by fear, resentment, and alienation:

legs like piano stumps
chest like a barrel (much
in the manner of Babe Ruth)
he growled like a crossed
lion when Armenian-angry,
but was bear silent when not

and died in a Milwaukee hospital
on my sister's fifteenth birthday
far from any home.³⁹

³⁸ David Kherdian, "My Father," in *On the Death of My Father*, n.p. Of the title poem in this collection (anthologized in *Forgotten Bread*, p. 323), William Saroyan has said that it is "one of the best lyric poems in American poetry" (<http://www.davidkherdian.com/node/24>). For a biographical sketch of Kherdian, see *Forgotten Bread*, pp. 318-21.

David's youthful resentment toward his father echoes most vividly in his collection of poems titled *Letters to My Father* (2004). In "From *Letters to My Father*," excerpted in *Forgotten Bread*, he remembers an incident that occurred between the two of them when he was nineteen. He was driving his father to an event at the Veteran's building:

We are downtown before I realize that
he is uncertain of the address.
He is used to walking everywhere,
and has become disoriented in my car
(but I don't realize any of this
at the time). I am being impatient
with him. I don't like being his chauffeur,
I want to get on with my life, not
be a helpmate in his. (342-3)

His father reads his thoughts and senses his resentment. He orders him to pull over and gets out of the car, and David watches him walk away:

I would call if he could hear me
but he is on his own and alone
as I am
with whatever this is that I am. (343)

Melkon Kherdian's children, born in America and immersed in American culture, remained alienated from him, always at a distance, and then, "after 67 years of refusing life as/a foreign unmanageable experience," he was gone.⁴⁰

³⁹ Kherdian, "My Father," in *On the Death of My Father*, n.p.

⁴⁰ Ibid., "A Family of Four," n.p.

In his own "struggle for identity," David had shunned everything Armenian and whatever his father represented. His "resistance to Armenian food," his "preference for everything American," his arguments with his father "over spading the/vegetable patch, painting the/garden fence ochre instead of blue,"⁴¹ these were all symptoms of an alienated soul caught between a past that he ignored and despised and the world of the present around him that he so enthusiastically embraced.

It was only after his father's death that David experienced a feeling of sympathy creeping into his heart which, as I discussed earlier, is not unusual in this kind of parent-child relationship. The posthumous bonding resulted in a feeling of guilt and regret. He began reading about the history of the Armenian massacres and there he found the explanation of his father's strange disposition. *Homage to Adana*, a collection of poems of love and compunction that he wrote in memory of his father, speaks of this newly discovered past and his newly acquired sympathy for his father. It also resonates with the tormenting, ineffaceable memory of the Genocide which he now knows has been indirectly transmitted to him. "For My Father," in which he speaks of his aspirational identity clashing with his father's ways, ends with an outpouring of regret and compunction:

Why have I waited until your death
to know the earth you were turning

⁴¹ Kherdian, "For My Father," in *Homage to Adana* (Fresno, CA: Giligia Press, 1971), n.p.

was Armenia, the color of the fence
your homage to Adana, and your other
complaints over my own complaints
were addressed to your homesickness
brought on by my English.

In "My Father," he describes him as having "always carried a different/look and smell into the house when he/returned from the coffee houses in Racine":

Years later, reading the solemn and bittersweet
stories of our Armenian writer in California,
who visited as a paperboy coffee houses in
Fresno, I came to understand that in these
cafes were contained the suffering and
shattered hopes of my orphaned people.⁴²

In another poem in the same collection, he speaks of "Armenian Coffee Houses in America" resembling coffee houses in the old country, but there is one big difference: "they also share a/loneliness for Armenia and a/need for old country traditions." Those coffee houses are gone now, as are the first-generation survivors with their yearning for the homeland they were uprooted from.

Kherdian's newly kindled interest in his father's past, which became his own, and his research into Armenian history brought him closer to his roots, but he regrets the seeming insignificance of what he remembers of his father: "It isn't much to remember—/you've been gone more than 12

⁴² Kherdian, "My Father," in *On the Death of My Father*, n.p. "Our Armenian writer in California" is a reference to William Saroyan.

years."⁴³ In "A Poem for My Father," he lovingly paints one of those rare memories, when father and son used to wake up early in the morning and go fishing in Lake Michigan.⁴⁴

In *On the Death of My Father* and *Homage to Adana*, the two collections he dedicated to the memory of Melkon Kherdian, David blames their bizarre relationship on his father's behavior as a survivor of a great catastrophe who bore the burden of crushing memories of past atrocities that impeded his return to normal life, especially when the new world called for new ways and enforced its own peculiar parameters. But he also blames himself for the emotional distance he created in their relationship in order to safeguard his own aspiration to adopt the new ways unhindered, to embrace American culture, forget the past, and live in the present.

Kherdian's *Letters to My Father*, composed more than forty years after his father's death, manifest his continuing search for convincing answers, given the fact that his earlier vantage point brought him no solace or satisfaction. He takes the father-son relationship to another level in this excerpt "From *Letters to My Father*," in *Forgotten Bread* (344-6), when he asks, "Is there a natural antagonism/between father and son/that cannot be avoided"? He pursues the question in general terms, probing Freudian theories, but in the end he returns to his original premise:

They stare at each other
unable to communicate,

⁴³ Kherdian, "A Poem for My Father," in *Looking Over Hills* (Fresno, CA: Giligia Press, 1972), n.p.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

aware of the abyss,
on one side father Armenia
on the other, son America

In 1971, as the editor of *Ararat: A Quarterly*, an Armenian-American literary journal based in New York, Kherdian expressed his and his generation's oscillation between past and present in these terms: "The movement is ever back and forth, from who we were to what we have become, and this is the tension of life that we speak of when we speak of it creatively."⁴⁵ And indeed, his literary response to his parents' stories and through them to his own understanding of the nation's traumatic past is a valuable contribution to our understanding of the second-generation mindset and responses through art. Kherdian's painful quest into the past brought him back to his mother's life story which he had refused to listen to before.⁴⁶

Theodore Kharpertian, the author of *Hagop*,⁴⁷ was born in America of an American-born Armenian mother whose family had migrated long before the Genocide, and a father who bore all the psychological scars of the trauma he had experienced as a child in Malatya during and after the First World War. Hagop was eight years old when his father was arrested and murdered for reasons he could never understand, no matter how much he grappled with it all his life (77).

⁴⁵ David Kherdian, "Editorial," *Ararat: A Quarterly* 12/1 (Winter 1971): n.p. (front cover verso).

⁴⁶ I discuss Kherdian's *The Road from Home: The Story of an Armenian Girl* (1979) in chapter 2 of the present study.

⁴⁷ Theodore D. Kharpertian, *Hagop: An Armenian Genocide Survivor's Journey to Freedom* (Belmont, MA: Armenian Heritage Press, National Association for Armenian Studies and Research [NAASR], 2003).

Hagop had taken the road to exile with his mother and younger brother. At some point during the difficult trek, his mother had relinquished him to an elderly Turk who offered his help. Apparently, the psychological pain of that tragic experience lay dormant during his long trek to freedom and his struggle to adjust to and make a living in the West. Nonetheless, it surfaced vividly and dramatically when, in his forties, he married and had a son in America and came face to face with the reality of life, with his difficulty in maintaining a normal relationship with a woman, and with the deep distrust and insecurity he felt toward women in general. His tender loving mother had abandoned him; so might another woman as well. On top of all this was his mistrust of American justice and societal behavior. "There is no justice," he would tell his son Theodore, "Don't look for justice" (79). And then there was his American-born Armenian wife whom he considered the embodiment of everything American and blamed for whatever he disliked about America. Before immigrating to the USA, he had spent over twenty years in France and grown fond of his adopted country. It was awfully hard for him to adapt to American ways, and the gap between the Armenian-French father and his American son continued to widen.

Growing up, Theodore was caught in the unpleasant environment of these complicated relationships. He tried to maintain a distance from his father, "a quiet and aloof man with whom I seemed to have little in common. It was a predicament that only time and mature effort would ease" (94). Later, he would even see his father as "morally numb or, worse, indifferent" (107). He became more and more American, to the point of total assimilation, and even lost the

ability and the willingness to communicate in the language of his ancestors which was so alien to him. He was able to unravel all this only when he himself married and became a father. Now he was able to see that his father's tortured soul was the source of all the family conflicts during his childhood, and to understand their impact on his own life. By his own admission, he began to resemble his father in terms of attitude and beliefs. "No doubt as a result of Hagop's influence, I had developed an embryonic sympathy for those marginalized or displaced by forms of systemic power but, like him, was sufficiently cautious to want to escape identification" (80).

Ellen Sarkisian Chesnut, the author of *Deli Sarkis*,⁴⁸ describes how the shadow of the Genocide dominated the atmosphere in her childhood home and created that odd and unpleasant feeling of alienation in her and her three siblings toward their parents, both survivors of the Genocide. Ellen Shakeh was the first child of Sarkis and Evelyn Sarkisian, born in Mosul, Iraq, in 1939. She immigrated to the USA with her parents and baby brother in 1941. Her two sisters were born in America. Ellen was educated in public schools in San Francisco and later taught in the San Francisco Unified School District. She is a multimedia artist, specializing in printmaking and watercolors. Beginning in the late 1980s, she incorporated representations of the suffering of the Armenian people during the Genocide in her artwork.

In an interview conducted in 1993, Ellen said that her mother never liked to talk about the past, although it was

⁴⁸ Ellen Sarkisian Chesnut, *Deli Sarkis: The Scars he Carried, A Daughter Confronts the Armenian Genocide and Tells her Father's Story*, (Minneapolis, MN: Two Harbors Press, 2014).

obvious that her experience had impacted her life.⁴⁹ She writes that her mother "was deeply affected by what she heard, which were the screams of people being burned alive in a church, and of the murder of her aunt, Shamiram, and family during the Marash War of 1920" (144). She tried to leave the shadow of the Old World behind and she was more in control than her husband was, at least on the surface. As for Sarkis, he never succeeded in casting off the shadow of the past and revealed its presence in periodic outbursts of rage.

Looking back on her upbringing, Ellen could clearly see the impact of the ordeals her parents had experienced during the massacres, the deportations, and for Sarkis, the subsequent years of wandering and struggling to survive.

When we were growing up, his rages would come and go. Sometimes he would be so understanding and speak so softly and sweetly, like the father we always dreamed about. At other times he would be very critical of us all and beside himself with anger. I tried to understand, but could never discover the reason for this split personality. (158)

Ellen's parents loved their children but showed it very little, especially as they grew older. "I think life would have been so much easier for all of us growing up if both Mother and Father

⁴⁹ The interview is available on the website that Sarkisian Chesnut created to market her book (www.scarshecarried.com). Her mother was born in Marash. Her family was not deported because her father was an established tanner whose products were used by the Ottoman government to make boots for soldiers. The family's ordeal began in 1920 when the French abandoned Marash and the Armenian residents and the deportation survivors who had taken refuge there took to the road in the middle of a winter blizzard under threat of the approaching Kemalist army.

had been more outgoing with affection and had not kept all their good thoughts about us to themselves," she writes. One time, their father told them, "I love you kids very much!" They were "struck dumb and very surprised" (147). Otherwise, there was no emotional support or expression of pride in their achievements. Seeking to understand the reason for this behavior, Ellen attributes it to superstition, i.e. a belief in the evil eye. That may be true. But there was also the trauma of orphanhood and homelessness, and the difficult battle to survive that had forced her father to put up a tough front with no unnecessary emotions. How could she or her siblings have understood and accepted that when they were children who needed parental affection and were unaware of the imposition of the past?

Sarkis was known as a rough tough guy during his youth in Mosul, which is probably where he got the name *Deli* (crazy). But that was only a façade behind which the injured man was hiding. He was scarred both psychologically and physically. He bore two ugly scars where a bayonet had entered his head and his leg as constant reminders of the horrors of the past. He was indeed the embodiment of the Turkish epithet, "leftovers of the sword," which referred to Armenians who "undeservedly" survived. Hemmed in by the responsibilities of providing for his wife and four children, burdened with his tragic losses and horrifying memories, he found solace in alcohol. It seemed to lighten his soul and ease the burden of life he found difficult to bear. Within the family, he tried to keep his temper, not always successfully. Sometimes when something reminded of the Turkish atrocities, he

lost it. Ellen observes that "suppressed memories jump out at the strangest times" (150).

The most dramatic clash between the first and second generations in Ellen's family occurred between her younger sister Janet and their parents. Jan was an artist too, a free soul, perhaps the most acculturated member of the family yet at the same time the most eccentric. Ellen writes that when Jan was in high school, "she hit a wall" with their parents over her clothes and hairdo. She was always angry and threatening to move out, which she did as soon as she graduated. But physical distance from her parents proved to be only a temporary solution (146).

It was the 1960s in America and young people were attracted to the Hippie movement, moving out, living free, experimenting, and using recreational drugs, especially in the San Francisco Bay Area. This happened in many Armenian families during that period. But even if parents were not immigrants with the burden of Old World culture and traditions, if they were a little more permissive toward their children's New World ways and lifestyle, could they prevent the breakdown of moral order and the breakup of the family? Janet led a turbulent life. After she moved out in 1960, she lived with her American boyfriend, an art student, supporting him by working as a waitress. But after ten years of living together, her lover betrayed her. She was devastated. After that, she traveled near and far until she ran out of money, then returned to San Francisco with broken wings (146).

By the late 1960s, the three older children had all moved out and it was the lot of their youngest sister, Lucy, to bear their father's alcoholism and their mother's despair.

Eventually Evelyn's health broke down and she suffered a heart attack and died in 1983 (159-60). Sarkis lived on in the family home for a few years, and then in assisted living and finally a nursing home until his death in 1995. He died alone, but Ellen believes that he died having found redemption in the love of his daughters.

A long time ago, we had forgiven him for the difficulties of growing up with such a wounded, but at the same time such a vibrant and charismatic human being. We knew that he would be forever in our hearts, and his story, along with that of our beloved relatives and the villagers of Keramet, would be with us also. (166)

At roughly the same time, another family lived a comparable life in Tulare, California, which was more peaceful than nearby Fresno,⁵⁰ with less internal skirmishing among followers of opposing Armenian political parties, and more importantly, with less discrimination and prejudice and more tolerance on the part of the local Americans toward the Armenian newcomers. This was the family of Kaspar Gavroian, son of Hovhanness, registered as Kaspar Hovannisian upon entering the USA at Ellis Island in 1920. At 20 years of age, after five turbulent years on his own as the sole surviving member of his family, he had come to join the small community of Armenians in Tulare, mostly refugees from the Kharpert region like himself. For these wretched

⁵⁰ Indeed, Armenians in Fresno suffered a great deal of discrimination and restrictions on landholding, employment, and membership in social clubs. They were even called "Fresno Indians." Many Armenians changed their last name to sound more American or left the city to escape the humiliation.

people driven out of their beloved village of Bazmashen, Tulare was very much like home. Kaspar brought his village along with him to impose upon the family he formed in Tulare, as well as the iron fist that had used a rifle against the Turks at Garin with Andranik's troop, to rule over his four sons.

The image of Richard Hovannisian as a second-generation survivor of the Armenian Genocide, his difficult journey, his effort to distance himself from his father and his strict upbringing and gain the open space of America and the multiple opportunities available to an aspiring young man, comes across clearly in Garin Hovannisian's narrative, *Family of Shadows*.⁵¹ Richard Hovannisian, an accomplished historian, an authority on the history of the first Republic of Armenia (1918–1920) as well as the history of the Armenian Genocide, and a much respected professor of history today, was Kaspar's third son. Unlike his older brothers, Richard did not fit the macho mold his father had created for his sons. "That son of a gun," Kaspar would say. "He'll never amount to anything." Richard could not understand his father, "an angry man, a man consumed by a ferocious, unpredictable temper," who expressed a "violent resentment of his youngest son's inadequacy." This man, so happy and relaxed in the company of Armenian friends, would turn his rage on his son, a belt

⁵¹ Garin K. Hovannisian, *Family of Shadows: A Century of Murder, Memory, and the Armenian American Dream* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010). Interestingly, it took a member of the fourth generation, Kaspar's great-grandson, Garin—named after the city where Kaspar had joined Antranig's troop and taken up arms to fight the Turks in 1917—to undertake the research and pen the history of this extraordinary family some forty years after Kaspar's death.

would appear in his hands, and manic shouts of "Richard! Richard! Richard!" would echo in the house (51–4). Richard could not imagine the source of his father's temper and intolerance toward his own son. How could he have known that such behavior is typical in a survivor of the Genocide? His father never talked about his ordeal during those trying years. And then there were his father's frightening cries in the middle of the night, "Վայ, մայրիկ, վայ" (Oh, Mother, oh!). "The fearless, defiant man whom night and memory had returned to his childhood, to the banks of the bloody Euphrates," was helplessly reliving the past (55). How could Richard have known that this too is typical of a survivor of the Genocide? His father never talked about how a Kurd had snatched him from his mother's embrace (12). It was only a few months before Kaspar Hovannisian died in October 1970 that he allowed Richard to record the story of his ordeal.

He spoke about his mother, Heghnar, his brother, Gabriel. He spoke generously, emotionally, plainly. He remembered everything in fresh detail: the stroke of the sun and the scent of the mountain flower. It was as if a part of him had stayed behind in 1915, stayed with his mother and brother, stayed to die with his people (92).

But when Richard was still at a young and tender age, all he knew was that, despite his awe and respect for his father, he resented his manner. He felt alienated and he longed to escape, and escape he finally did after he graduated from high school. Rebellion was Richard's response to the predicament of living under his father's authority. From an early age he had been fascinated by international ideologies, and the liberal atmosphere of Berkeley and San Francisco was where he could

pursue his freedom, his American dream. But curiously, what his strictly Armenian home and his very Armenian father had failed accomplish in him, his participation in the San Francisco Armenian Youth Federation, his sojourn in Beirut, the influence of Simon Vratsian and his aura, classes in the Armenian language at the Jemaran, and endless hours of reading in the Armenian classics at the library of the American University of Beirut did. "Richard's Armenian identity had been activated" (78).

The circumstances of Richard Hovannisian's life gave him the equilibrium he needed to comfortably navigate his way through a stormy adolescence to a successful life and career. For some children of survivors, the emotional impediments of resentment, alienation, and distancing lasted much longer, affecting their character, their behavior, and even their future career. Realization of the true meaning of their difficulties with their survivor parents, and the opportunity and the readiness for self-analysis, for direct confrontation with the problem, came to different children at different times.

A time for self-realization

Research on the children of Holocaust survivors indicates that "the trauma of the parents does not usually result in psychopathology in the children. However, some of the children, especially those whose parents do not talk about their own suffering, are affected in their interpersonal relationships."⁵²

⁵² Staub, "Healing and Reconciliation," in *Looking Backward, Moving Forward*, ed. Hovannisian, p. 265.

In *Orphan in the Sands*, Victoria Haroutunian's confession about her past was an agonizing revelation, painful for both mother and daughter. Now Virginia could understand everything that had seemed strange and repellent about her mother, had alienated her and even driven her to hate Victoria. But there, sitting on a bench with her on Ellis Island, she experienced a moment of self-realization. She now understood "why she grew up having difficulty becoming close with school friends, and later, intimate with boyfriends" (159).

Virginia had been a lively child, full of energy, often praised by her teachers for work well done, but the transmitted psychopathological effects were there from early on and during her teens they began to manifest in her interpersonal relationships and continued to do so in her adult life. She never married. Several times she decided to move out and live independently, but her escape was always short-lived and she returned to her parents' unhappy nest as if by some mysterious magnetic attraction.

Virginia had become a replica of her mother in her relationships, behavior, and outlook. She had unconsciously adopted what she detested in her mother. But what was more important was the realization of the painful fact that "the scars of her mother's battles had been passed down to her" (174). She concludes that there were "two orphans in the sands" living in that house in Pontiac, Michigan (176).

Helene Pilibosian's life followed the same pattern. As we see in *My Literary Profile*, she became an extremely shy and introverted person, just like her mother, unable to socialize with people, unable to date, anxious in crowded places,

always alone, depressed, fearful, and insecure. Did she inherit these traits, or were they effects of her mother's traumatic past indirectly transmitted to her? Surely it was her parents' influence, even if she consciously denies it (70). Or perhaps this case supports the "biological or genetic models of transmission" suggested by Natan Kellermann. In any case, the influence or the transmitted pain of her parents' past and her conflict with her mother were so severe that she landed in a mental hospital under psychiatric care and even went through shock treatments. To top it all off, her mother ridiculed her for seeking psychological help and accused her of having an affair with her therapist. Helene courageously describes her condition in those trying years as "extreme depression, hopelessness, lack of self-esteem with a brief psychotic break" (133), worsened by her psychotherapists' misguidance which deepened her alienation and loneliness, and intensified by some of the things she did for which she still felt remorseful later in life.

Helene is engaged in self-assessment and analysis throughout her memoir. She took courses in psychology and studied the theories of Freud and Jung, trying to determine her personality type and striving to heal herself through self-knowledge. She even achieved some change in her personality. Around the time she turned 50, she says, she felt that she had got over it all and "was better able to cope with life's vagaries" (110).

Mary Terzian, *The Immigrants' Daughter*, struggled all her life to find "a place to fit in" (xvi), but she still felt like a misfit wherever she went. In order to escape the suffocating atmosphere of her father's home governed by his "iron rules,"

and where her wicked Turkish-speaking stepmother did everything she could to make Mary's relationship with her father more stressful, she took a job with the United Nations World Health Organization that involved a lot of traveling. Leaving Cairo, she started work in Alexandria, then took an assignment in the Congo, followed by travels in Europe and postings in Togo and Lebanon, before she finally settled in the United States.

Mary knew that in venturing out she had "left [her] identity behind." She felt "lost in this Babylon of United Nations," and when she tried to explain what an Armenian is to a class of fellow UN recruits in Leopoldville, she felt "like a hybrid, not knowing exactly what the Motherland looks like...." At that point, she realized "the need to redefine" herself (xv-xvii). She needed a moment of self-realization in order to realistically face the world and life ahead.

As an added challenge, Mary had to endure her family's overt gender discrimination, in contrast with the privileges and the impunity enjoyed by her older brother. The imposition of this Old World mentality implanted feelings of inferiority and inequality in her. At home, her every failing was pointed out and she was always being put down, despite her struggle to be an obedient daughter and to do well in school, to be the first in her class, even "the pride of the class." She tried to do whatever was expected of her, "whatever 'it' is—correcting papers, teaching math, mentoring a student, or doing household chores.... [but] I would have been much happier being me" (64-5). All that effort, as if to compensate for her fault in having been born female. Even so, her father complained every time he had to pay for her school tuition or

a textbook. He was firmly of the opinion that girls "don't need books to cook *dolma*" (67).

Mary was also aware of another shortcoming that required her to work harder and accomplish more than others did, and that was the fact that she did not have a country she could call her own, a government to take care of her, provide her with an education, and prepare her for her future life. She felt the weight of this burden when, as a student in an English Catholic school in Cairo, she was discriminated against and looked down upon as an Armenian. Years later, writing *The Immigrants' Daughter*, she describes the predicament that was hers and that of all the second-generation survivors of the Genocide:

As children of a massacred generation, we are used to being ignored so we take it in our stride. We double our efforts at everything; learning foreign languages, mastering a few crafts, overcoming segregation, or living by ingenuity. We are veterans at facing hardships head on. In competition with other supremacist claims.... We Armenians can boast of our supremacy at survival. (189)

Mary learned to take the blame for everything, whether it was her quarreling with her brother or her stepmother's constant complaints about her own misfortune in being married to a man with such unruly children and so much housework. Strangely enough, she even took the blame for her mother's death. While her mother was in the hospital fighting for her life, Mary unknowingly blew out the candle of a household shrine. She was ten years old at the time, and for years afterward, she grappled with the tormenting suspicion that that act had caused her mother's death. "The voice of

conscience roars in my ears for years" (77). Her father's admonishments to his children cut deeper into the wound: "She'd be alive today if you behaved yourselves!" (102). Much later in life, Mary found out that her mother had died of a self-inflicted abortion.

As if that weren't enough, Mary grew up with the vexing memory of a frightening experience she was too embarrassed to share with anyone, which might have alleviated her humiliation. It happened in a park where her extended family was having a picnic. Playing alone, she had strayed from the crowd when a man in a galabieh, an Arab lemonade vendor, approached her. Nailed in place, she could not move. He grabbed her hand and.... There was no escape. She would have been molested if her cousin had not shouted from afar and run toward them (16). Mary recalls this incident several times in *The Immigrants' Daughter* which indicates that it left a deep impression on her young soul.

More disturbing was her anxiety related to a dreadful "event" in the past which, although it was never revealed to her, she knew had left permanent scars. "When Papa and Mama talked in hushed tones, in Turkish.... I suspect they are reminiscing about people who died during the 'event' and whose photos are now stashed in that room. I am afraid to go in that room at night because of the ghosts I may find." She remembers how her mother would sometimes scream and shout in Turkish, alone in her bedroom, as though she were fighting with someone, but she never explained these mysterious spells (3-4). She did confide to Mary once, wiping away her tears: "I lost my Mama when I was fourteen. I became an orphan... It's tough when you grow up without a

Mama. I hope it never happens to you" (45). But her mother's fear came true. Mary was left motherless at the tender age of ten, an orphan like her mother.

Like many others of her generation, Mary chanced to learn of her father's hideous experience as a young man when she was an adult. This happened during a visit to her father's people in Aleppo. At a gathering of his extended family and old friends, he reminisced about his experience in Damascus during the 1920s: Armenians who had survived the massacres and the deportation were now dying of starvation and disease. There were so many corpses that the government hired a group of youths to remove them at night and carry them to the tram lines, there to be picked up for burial by the government. Mary's father was one of the young men paid to do the job. As he spoke, she saw his eyes brimming with tears. "For one split moment, I see him full of feeling and devoid of anger. I do not recognize this side of him." But there was more. His name was Dikran but his old friends called him Mejid, another enigma. Under what conditions had he been given a Turkish name? A window briefly opened on the past, offering a moment of self-realization, but Mary still had many unanswered questions (171-2).

Her father remained strict and unforgiving and never showed her any fondness and that made her hate him. Reconciliation came too late, long after his death, when Mary had her own daughter to raise. It was then that she arrived at self-realization. She understood that the everlasting burden of the past was the root cause of his bitterness. "Under the guise of relocation, his family left home, dignity, and dreams behind, running for life. He arrived in a foreign country with

no marketable skills and no knowledge of the local language. He worked hard and did his best only to see his family disintegrate" (272). With these circumstances compounded by the early death of his beloved wife, how could Mary have expected him to be loving and gentle? She had achieved more than she ever dreamed of and that attenuated the hatred, anger, and frustration in her heart. Her own bitterness was gone and what remained were "the ghosts of the massacred who lived on in Mama's vision and Papa's angry green eyes." She realized that she was "the vicarious victim of ethnic cleansing" (273), like most second-generation survivors of the Armenian Genocide.

Michael J. Arlen, the author of *Passage to Ararat*, grew up in a family in which any association with Armenia was denied. His father, Dikran Kouyoumjian, had severed his ties to everything Armenian, changed his name to Michael Arlen, married a Greek countess, and made a name for himself as an English writer.⁵³ He always brushed off his son's questions about anything related to Armenians. His mother, on the other hand, found a compromise position: "Your father's family have Armenian blood, but he is English and so are you." When his family moved to America as a result of the Second

⁵³ Michael Arlen (senior) was born in Ruse, Bulgaria, in 1895 to a well-to-do merchant family who had fled persecution in Turkey. He lived most of his adult life in England where he became a popular novelist, satirist, and playwright. He moved to New York and spent the last ten years of his life in the city, producing practically nothing, and died of cancer in 1956. For references to the life and work of this author, see Rubina Perroomian, *The Armenian Genocide in Literature: Perceptions of Those Who Lived through the Years of Calamity* (Yerevan: Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, 2012, 2014), pp. 79, 188-90.

World War, Michael J. Arlen defined himself as Anglo-American, and then gradually, more American than Anglo (6). However, something different was apparently developing in his consciousness: "I became conscious of being accompanied by a kind of a shadow of 'being Armenian,' which other people sometimes noticed, or casually commented on, but which my father had said, in effect, did not exist. And so I, too, said that it did not exist" (7). He grew up with the impression, marked by his father's attitude, that there was something inferior and even dangerous in being Armenian, otherwise his father "would not have been so determined to move beyond it" (7). However, that shadow finally caught up with him, shattered the identity he had built for himself, and forced a long and painful search for the true identity his father had denied to him. The past and the trauma of the past that his father had tried to erase from his life extended their influence to the son.

Growing up under an unexplained shadow, surrounded by a mysterious secret, these children of the survivors of the Genocide had to come to self-realization by themselves. They had to struggle through the process of reconciliation with their own past, and with their parents, in most cases posthumously. The guilt, the sorrow, and the regret they experienced in that process drove them to another realization: with the secret now revealed, it must be shared with the world.

The story must be told

Despite being shut off from their parents' past, a realization occurs shortly before or soon after a parent's death that opens a complex world to the son or the daughter of a survivor, the

world of suffering and survival of the whole nation. And it is then that the urge to share the story with the world sets in. In some cases, the adult child has a chance to interview the aging parent before they pass and collect enough information to piece together the survivor's life story.⁵⁴ In other cases, the elderly parent is encouraged to write down what he or she remembers, and the adult child, out of a sense of filial duty or deeply impressed by the story of the parent's and the whole nation's macabre past, undertakes the task of presenting that story in order to make the whole world know about the colossal crime, a crime against humanity that was committed with impunity.⁵⁵ In still other cases, the information collected or the rough draft of the parent's memoir becomes the raw material for a novel presented as a fictionalized story of the Armenian Genocide.

⁵⁴ In Kaspar Hovannisian's case, for example, it was only a few months before his death that he consented to allow his son Richard to record his oral history of his traumatic past, a past that cast its shadow over four generations of that close-knit family.

⁵⁵ In my previous book, *The Armenian Genocide in Literature*, I introduced a number of memoirs by first-generation survivors published by their children, either in the original Armenian or in English or French translation. Examples are: *To Armenians with Love* (1996), Hovhannes Mugrditchian's memoir translated into English and published by his son, Paul Martin; *A Hair's Breadth from Death* [2003], Hampartzoum Chitjian's life story, dictated in Armenian, translated into English by his daughter Sara Zaruhi Chitjian, and published in Armenian and English editions; *Le journal de mon père* (2008), Hrant Sarian's diary translated into French and published electronically by his daughter, Louise Kiffer; and *Im housheri chanaparhov* (2009), Yervand Kyureghyan's manuscript published in its original form by his son Varouzh Kyureghyan with Introduction, explanations, and commentary.

It took decades for Janine Altounian to come to the realization that she must undertake a serious study of her father's manuscript, elaborate and enhance his narrative with historical context and additional documentation, and share it with the world. It was during the 1970s that her interest in her nation's tragic past began to direct her reading and research on the subject. She needed to find out for herself what had really happened. She needed to learn the story of her own family, "*l'histoire de la famille Altounian*," as Armenian commentators referred to it and which was essentially unknown to her.

Her mother had somewhat indifferently told her about a manuscript her father had left which had remained "abandoned to its fate at the bottom of a cupboard."⁵⁶ The problem was that it was written in Turkish using the Armenian alphabet. Altounian knew that she must do something with this document which was an "orphan" itself, left in a vacuum and condemned to muteness. She had the manuscript translated into French, and through its succinct description of his ordeal, she got to know the father she had known so little and a grandmother she had never known at all. She now understood the effects of the memory of those incredible but real events that had "pressed" like a weight (*plombait*) upon her parents' home life (114-15).

The book containing Vahram Altounian's memoir—with reproductions of the original manuscript, page by page, together with Krikor Beledian's revised annotated French translation, along with essays by Janine Altounian and five

⁵⁶ Altounian, "*Parcours d'un écrit de survivant*," pp. 114, 120.

other collaborators, all psychoanalysts, analyzing the narrative and providing further documentation—was published more than ninety years after it was written. What is significant is the therapeutic effect of this labor of love by the grown daughter of that unassuming youth. By her own assertion, the publication of this archaic text annulled its traumatic impact and "transformed it into a precious, identifying treasure and an object to love" (129).

Agop Hacıyan was born in Istanbul in 1931. After graduating from college, he fulfilled his military requirement by serving as liaison officer between the Turkish Port Detachment at Izmir and the American military mission supplying US forces assigned to NATO in Turkey. He subsequently pursued graduate studies in the USA and the UK, received his Ph.D. in literature in London, and immigrated to Canada, where he began his teaching and literary careers. He is the author of many novels and the editor of a three-volume anthology of Armenian literature.

While growing up in Istanbul, Hacıyan never heard anyone talk about the Armenian past in Turkey. Of course, it was something that was not talked about. The massacres and deportations and everything else pertaining to the Armenians and their presence in pre-Republican Turkey were consigned to silence and covered up. His knowledge of the Armenian past was limited to his parents' occasional references to the hardship of deportation which they surreptitiously called *aksor* (exile). They had both experienced it but never spoke about it openly.

After settling in Canada, Hacıyan felt driven to tell the story of his parents' and his people's suffering. He filled the

gaps in his sparse knowledge of the past by delving deeply into the study of Armenian history. The result was a series of novels depicting his perception of the Armenian Genocide. One of those novels, *A Summer without Dawn*,⁵⁷ is based on true events, as he indicates on the title page verso. It begins with the Prologue, an atypical fusion of historical, political, and topographical information that skillfully summarizes the situation in Europe and Anatolia at the beginning of the First

⁵⁷ Agop J. Hacıyan, with Jean-Yves Soucy, *A Summer without Dawn*, trans. Christina Le Vernoy and Joyce Bailey (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2000). The French original, *Été sans aube* (1991), has also been translated into German, Italian, Spanish, and other languages. The Armenian translation by Amalia Shahumyan was published in Yerevan in 2005. Quotations here refer to the English version.

I discussed this novel thematically in *And Those Who Continued Living in Turkey after 1915*, where my focus was the experience and the psychological turmoil of Maro, the female protagonist, and how women endured and reacted to their fate during the years of calamity. After her husband, Vartan Balian, was exiled into the unknown, Maro took to the road of deportation with their only son, Tomas. Riza Bey, the governor of Aintab, found them in a deplorable state and fell in love with Maro. She agreed to go with her Muslim rescuer in order to save Tomas. The emphasis in my earlier discussion was on how Maro felt after her miraculous reunion with Vartan, having abandoned Nourhan, the son born to her during her conjugal life with Riza Bey. Heartbroken by her loss, she was unable to enjoy her freedom and the love of her caring husband. "Her wound was the loss of Nourhan and she did not see how it would ever heal" (505). As the story ends, young Nourhan is being raised by Riza Bey's third wife. Looking at a picture in his paternal grandmother's photo album, "He admired the face of the woman who had given him life but he never knew she was his mother" (540).

Interestingly, Hacıyan develops this theme in a sequel titled *The Young Man in the Gray Suit* (Dec., 2012), in which Nourhan, now a successful lawyer known as Nour, searches for a mysterious woman named Maro Balian to whom his father, Riza Bey, has left the legacy of a large sum of money.

World War and the start of the Turkish effort to annihilate the entire Armenian race. The Prologue then focuses on the locus of the novel's events in Sivas, a city and province with a mixed Armenian and Muslim population living together "more or less peacefully for over four centuries" (15).

The novel portrays the torturous journey of the family of Vartan Balian, as well as other characters on the road of deportation, as a flagrant example of the experience of the whole nation. Hacıyan's protagonist, Vartan, represents those Armenian citizens of the Ottoman Empire who were well educated and prosperous, usually in careers that served their country, but were nonetheless persecuted and subjected to imprisonment and despicable torture. When Vartan asks the police commissioner what he is accused of, the latter coldly and cynically replies, "Of being what you are, a *giaour*" (104-5). Hacıyan mobilizes all the themes that make up the texture of the first generation's conceptualization of the Armenian Genocide. He dramatizes various reactions to the astonishing news of the deportation order. One reaction is disbelief: how could the government order such a thing against an entire ethnic group, its own citizens? "We're really worrying about nothing," says one character. "This deportation order is just a way to intimidate us. They want to scare us so they can levy another tax on Christians." Another character argues, "We have too many Turkish friends. They won't allow it. It would impoverish the town... the province, and they know it" (54). Disbelief is followed by shock and disillusionment which in turn generate a strong determination to survive.

The plot involves a series of psychological upsets and vicissitudes such as we have seen in first-generation accounts.

Hacikyan masterfully portrays the Turkish barbarism, contrasting it with examples of Turkish goodwill and altruism, as when individual characters jeopardize their own lives to save Armenian friends. One example is Vartan's friend, Colonel Ibrahim, who "grieved not only for his country but also for these poor people. Instead of fighting the enemy who were pushing against its borders, they were waging war on innocent civilians" (113). Hacikyan's characters appeal to God, lament or protest His abandonment of the nation, even doubt His existence. The novel is replete with sound analyses of Turkish politics and the irreparable damage brought about by the government's extermination policy. Characters deliberate whether to resist harsh measures and the outcome is always deplorable in the vignettes portrayed. Absurd trials are staged, Edgar Hilsenrath-style,⁵⁸ with ludicrous accusations (111, 129). Vartan is offered conversion to Islam and cooperation with the government as conditions of his release, which he rejects. When the verdict is announced, he is found guilty of treason, guilty of being Armenian. One of his fellow inmates scratches a statement into the wall of their prison cell in both Armenian and Turkish: "The just are condemned because of their race, their language and their faith, and here they await their death" (142). That epitaph encapsulates the author's

⁵⁸ In an extraordinary novel titled *The Story of the Last Thought* (1990, originally published in German in 1989), the German-Jewish author Edgar Hilsenrath presents a preposterous illustration of the trials of Armenian notables in that of his protagonist, including the ridiculously hyperbolic accusations, the infamous Turkish prisons, and their "creative" tortures. Reviewed in Rubina Perroomian, "The Truth of the Armenian Genocide in Edgar Hilsenrath's Fiction," *Journal of Genocide Research* 5/2 (2003): 281-92.

perception of the impetus for the Armenian Genocide. His native familiarity with Turkish manners and customs, with the layout of the land and the twists and turns of every road, and his convincing subplots skillfully woven into the narrative make his story comparable to eyewitness accounts.

A number of second-generation writers have grappled with the causes of the Genocide, trying to understand the perpetrators' motives for engaging in such barbarous acts. Born and raised in Turkey, Hacikyan utilizes his personal experience of Turkish society and the Turkish-Armenian relationship to express his take on the issue which, incidentally, is shared by many Armenians, especially those still living as marginalized members of Turkish society.⁵⁹

Was it "filial piety" that caused Theodore Kharpertian to labor over his father's memories, put together his life story in *Hagop: An Armenian Genocide Survivor's Journey to Freedom*, and offer it to the world? Or maybe it was his mother's insistence that, given his training as a scholar of language and literature, he should and must undertake the task of textualizing his father's story as another testimony to the Turkish atrocities and the Genocide. Once, when Theodore was in his teens, he asked his father about life in the "old country" and his father began to reminisce. But as soon as he uttered the word *mayrig* (mother), he started to cry. That conversation ended almost before it began. Three decades passed. "In the summer of 1994, when I was forty-five and my father a robust eighty-seven, I

⁵⁹ My observation is based on research in articles and interviews originating in Turkey by Armenian and Turkish authors. A thread of this impression runs through *And Those Who Continued Living in Turkey after 1915*.

felt compelled to ask again the 'old country' question of thirty years earlier" (xi-xii). Multiple intensive interviews subsequently provided the raw material for a well-wrought story of Hagop's life.

Hagop's story began long before he was born, with the assassination of his maternal grandfather, Father Karian, the priest of a small country church in Malatya (23). The year was 1895. Sultan Abdul Hamid II had launched the massacres of Armenians in Malatya as a component part of the plan systematically carried out against the entire Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire.

Theodore narrates his father's past with abundant details: an idyllic life, "not an unhappy childhood" (5), yet constantly plagued by threats of sporadic Turkish assaults, robbery, and murder, and all this against the backdrop of the larger unfolding events. The first psychological blow of several that rained down on Hagop and ended his carefree childhood was the arrest of his father and then his disappearance from jail, apparently murdered. That was in May 1915 when Hagop was eight years old. The next blow was his mother's astonishing surrender of her son to an elderly Turk who offered his help. That was the last time Hagop saw his *mayrig*, the mention of whose name, even in his old age, brought tears to his eyes and tremors to his heart. The unbelievable sequence of events in the life of the orphaned boy in the Turk's house, in successive orphanages, and in the domestic captivity of his wicked aunt came to an end in 1922. Then, after a lengthy sojourn in Aleppo and over twenty years living in France, he traveled to the USA in 1947 to visit some long-lost relatives and decided to marry and settle in America.

As the story unfolds and their interview sessions bring father and son closer than ever before, Theodore is able to see deep inside his father's psyche. He realizes that "the Genocide itself is Hagop's great wound, one that has never healed, an experience to which he says he can never be reconciled." When he asked his father whether there was ever a time when he let go of the memories of his past ordeal, Hagop told him that "not a day went by when he did not think of the events of spring 1915." Theodore concludes that "it is the consequences of the Genocide, not its causes, that are profoundly and enduringly affecting" (124-5).

Clear evidence of the invisible effect of transmitted pain is the fact that Theodore felt "obliged to ask his [father's] permission to be happy" and to let go of his own survivor's guilt for having so much: "stable, loving parents, a good home, a nation that, in principle, strove to guarantee my fundamental human rights," in contrast to his father's abiding pain for all the loss and injustice he had suffered (127-8). Theodore's request is evidence of the subconscious inheritance of his father's feeling of guilt for having survived while others perished, which is quite common among first-generation survivors of the Armenian Genocide.

When Ellen Sarkisian Chesnut, the author of *Deli Sarkis*, was growing up in San Francisco with her parents and three siblings, their parents' ordeal during the deportation and their resulting psychological scars were not matters for open discussion. Yet Ellen was deeply conscious of the shadow cast over the family by unresolved trauma. As an artist, she became interested in ancient and medieval Armenian art, and of course, Armenian history, which led her to the history of

her own family. Lest her father pass away with his story untold, every time she visited him during his last seven years, she would prompt him to recount his memories while she took notes. She would then transcribe her notes and read them back to him and receive his approval (xii). But publishing her father's life story as he had told it was not her only goal. Her own additions and interjections in response to the Turkish atrocities and the fate of her family and her nation make the book an account not only of a survivor, but also of a second-generation survivor and how she too was affected by her parents' past.

Deli Sarkis' life story is book-ended with two testimonies by Ellen Sarkisian Chesnut. The first is an account of her 2009 pilgrimage to the places in Turkey where her father had lived or passed through as a refugee. She needed to understand and construct a physical and historical context for his story. She went out of her way to bring in historical facts and gather information about his village, the people, the victims, and their experience. Her first testimony serves as an introductory historical survey, but what differentiates it from similar apparatuses in the genre of the memoir is that she associates each historical fact, event, or place with the related personal experience of a parent or relative.

Ellen's second testimony is a reflection on her life as a second-generation survivor of the Armenian Genocide living with parents who were anything but normal, compared to the easygoing American families she knew. She needed to understand them in order to be able to evaluate her own existence.

Sarkis' story is told between these two testimonies as another torturous life and miraculous survival with permanent physical and psychological scars. A native of the village of Keramet (ironically, *keramet* means kindness in Turkish) on the shores of Lake Iznik in the Province of Bursa, Sarkis describes his horrifying experience during the deportations and massacres. It all started on October 29, 1915, when a messenger on horseback arrived from Constantinople and posted an alarming notice: Armenians had two days to prepare for a journey by train away from the southern Marmara, and that was "for [their] own safety" (41). The panicked and frightened Armenians knew the meaning of this trek to an unspecified destination. Rumors of the same thing happening to Armenians all over the Empire had been going around for some time. Now it was their turn. Sarkis was ten years old.

The caravan of 1500 men, women, and children, the entire Armenian population of Keramet, began to move on foot or in ox-driven carts toward the train station at Mekece, some thirty miles away. Cattle cars took them to a point where they were ordered to disembark and start walking. Ghastly scenes of unimaginable atrocities follow as Sarkis describes in detail their passage to Meskene (Maskanah), Raqqa, Deir el-Zor, and Ras el-Ayn. Finally, a very few reached Mosul. The caravan had been gradually depleted. Sarkis' father and siblings had succumbed to the hardship of the road and he was left alone with his mother. These two miserable creatures, homeless in the streets of Mosul, begged for food during the day and at night they slept in their spot on the street next to a building. One day, Sarkis came back from one of his "scavenging

missions" and found his mother dead (53). Now he was all alone, an orphan wandering from one place to another, suffering from hunger and the excruciating pain in his trachoma-infected eyes, always in fear of being caught and killed. He found one of his brothers slaving in the home of a wealthy Arab who agreed to take him in too. After the war was over, Sarkis left the Arab's home and went to the new orphanage founded in Mosul by the Armenian General Benevolent Union. He left the orphanage six months later, carrying cherished memories of his teachers and caretakers.

Sarkis' ordeal continued, from the orphanage to Constantinople and back to Keramet in 1919. He wanted to see what had happened to his paternal home. What he found was agonizing. The house was stripped to the bare walls. On the floor of the dust-covered bedroom where his parents had slept, "I found a couple of strands of long, brown hair. Could they be my mother's, I wondered? I sat up and ran my fingers along the strands and caressed them.... This was all that was left of my mother besides my undying memories of her. I started to sob" (66-7).

There was no way that a few returning survivors could revive Keramet. There was lawlessness. Thieves and murderers controlled the roads. "Young boys... were especially vulnerable to kidnapping, torture, rape, and brutal murder" (68). Keramet was not safe. Sarkis decided to move on. He enlisted with the Greek army and fought in the Greek-Turkish War. After serving for a year and a half, he decided not to reenlist and received an honorable discharge, only to find himself under fire from the advancing Turkish army in Manisa and then Smyrna. There he survived a mass execution

by Turkish soldiers. He witnessed and survived the great Smyrna fire. Much later he was asked which experience was worse: "the massacres and deportations into the wasteland of Syria, or the burning and destruction of the population and the city of Smyrna." He did not hesitate to answer: "I would have to say Smyrna. I don't think anyone can imagine the heartrending scenes that I witnessed" (91).

To complement Sarkis' account, Ellen brings in the short memoir of Hagop Nigogossian, another native of Keramet. Here we read about acts of retaliation by a band of young Armenian men. They attacked the neighboring Turkish village, took some forty men hostage, and killed a number of them. These Armenians were full of rage and resolve. They were avenging the murder of their parents, their wives and children, the destruction of the whole nation. They "had nothing to lose because they had already lost everything" (77). That was in September 1919. Ironically, Turkish denialists use such incidents to substantiate their claim that it was wartime and both sides killed each other, or that people on both sides died as the Ottoman Empire was disintegrating. Their chronology and sequence of events are grossly distorted and misleading.

The rest of Sarkis' story covers his passage to Greece, back to Turkey, Bulgaria, France with a League of Nations-issued Nansen passport, back to Bulgaria and finally back to Iraq. Lacking any specific training or skills, he went from one job to another. Most of the time he lived in Mosul, where he married Ellen's mother in 1938. He immigrated to the United States with his wife and two young children in 1941, and the family settled in San Francisco.

How to deal with Stina Katchadourian's *Efronia*,⁶⁰ the biography of her mother-in-law, a survivor of the Armenian Genocide? When this book was first published in 1993, it became one of my favorites among the literary works produced in response to the Genocide. I wrote an overall positive review in the *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*.⁶¹ Later on, I quoted excerpts in articles I wrote on literary responses to the Armenian Genocide. Then I put the book away to take it up again when I came to second-generation literary responses in my work. Now, looking back to my previous book, *The Armenian Genocide in Literature*, which covered as many memoirs as I could handle, I regret that I neglected Efronia Katchadourian's story, so clearly and masterfully is it incorporated into her daughter-in-law's work which is both biographical and autobiographical. At this stage of my research, I return to *Efronia* and find myself at an impasse.

What can I say about the Finnish-Swedish and now American Stina, the Katchadourian family's *odar hars* (foreign bride),⁶² except to express my appreciation for her deep understanding and sympathy for the hardship Armenians endured during the years of calamity? Her effort to study the history of that period in order to provide an accurate historical context for her mother-in-law's memoir is remarkable. Stina

⁶⁰ Stina Katchadourian, *Efronia: An Armenian Love Story* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), based on a memoir by Efronia Katchadourian, trans. Herant Katchadourian.

⁶¹ Rubina Perroomian, review of Katchadourian's *Efronia*, in *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 7 (1994): 205-8.

⁶² In the Armenian family setting, the word *odar* (*otar*), meaning "foreigner," refers to the non-Armenian spouse.

lived the first three years of her married life in the 1960s among the tightly knit Armenian community in Beirut, where she was able to observe survivors of the Genocide who had come from all over Turkey. "They were always looking back, back to the past, trying to find it," she writes (23). This is how she describes them in their plurality:

They were teachers and peasants and jewelers and blacksmiths; clergymen and doctors and merchants and nurses; weavers and dressmakers. They owned land and they farmed it. They went to church and they married; they had children and they died. There was a sense of continuity and of history and of deep ties to the land. But then that land was gone, and everyone was suddenly from somewhere else. (24)

Settled in the United States with her husband Herant for a decade, Stina welcomed her 82-year-old mother-in-law when she fled the civil war in Lebanon. Efronia was in her late eighties when Stina encouraged her to write down her life story. And when Efronia handed the 500-page manuscript to Herant, Stina asked him to translate it into English. She was impressed by the content and especially by the secret Efronia revealed for the first time ever, so much so that she embarked on a grim journey into the past in order to create a unique combination of history, biography, and autobiography for her book which captures the Armenian struggle for survival from "an outsider's perspective." But here I was discussing the perceptions of second-generation Armenian survivors, thus with no relevance to an "outsider." To correct my mistake in not having taken up Efronia's memoir when and where I should have, I looked into the possibilities.

Obviously, this section of my study headed "The story must be told" is the suitable place to discuss Katchadourian's *Efronia*, since it is quite clear that once prodded by her daughter-in-law, Efronia started to write with so much enthusiasm that "it was as if she had been waiting to be asked" (5). She wanted to reveal her secret before she passed on and to leave her life story for her son, her grandchildren, and the world to know her better. Furthermore, after entrusting the manuscript to her son, she insisted that her story to be preserved for posterity.

To refresh my memory, I reread the book and I was fascinated by Efronia's character. Like Stina in her Introduction, I too wondered how this woman, who "had endured enough hardship in her life to make her an embittered and constricted person," could be "so expansive, joyous, and forward-looking." She was strong, well educated, and very modern for her time. Anyone reading her memoir would agree that "embedded in her story about personal love and loss is also the story of the regenerative powers of the human spirit." Stina believes this is "the deepest reason why she wanted so much to have this story told" (xv-xvi).

Efronia was two months old in 1895 when her father was murdered at the hands of a Turk in their hometown of Aintab. She grew up an orphan, always in dire need of financial support and a father's love and care. Yet she managed to graduate from high school and was getting ready to go to the women's college in Marash when the war started. She describes her family and the years of turmoil. Then comes a shocking subheading: "The First and Last Time in My Life That I Was in Love."

The year was 1913. Efronia had fallen in love with a handsome, educated young man from a Persian diplomatic family in Iskenderun (Alexandretta). Their courtship was a short-lived dream from whose effects she never recovered. Ramzi pursued her, showered her with loving words, even promised to convert to her faith. His parents loved her and urged the couple to marry and go to London where Ramzi planned to continue his higher education. But it was an impossible love affair, one that her family and her community would not tolerate. The hope she held out while Ramzi went to London ceased abruptly when he was seriously injured in a car accident and died two days later in hospital with her photograph pressed to his chest (153, 207). For years afterwards, Efronia turned down every suitor until Aram Katchadourian came along, a prosperous 35-year-old businessman, ten years her senior, whose persistence broke her resistance. Her only son Herant was born after ten years, several miscarriages, and various folk cures. As she confesses in her memoir, although she was a good and loyal wife, she never felt love and affection for her husband since her heart had been locked once and forever.

Why did she decide to spill her secret? After all, she told herself, it was "a love lost and unfulfilled; it's better not to write, not to remember. I have kept it secret so far; let it go to the grave with me" (54). Yet she decided to eternalize the memory of her only love. She wrote her memoir and it was translated into English by her son. Who was this only son of a secretly tormented woman? He is a second-generation survivor of the Armenian Genocide, born in Iskenderun and raised in Beirut. What is his take on growing up among a

community of survivors? How did he react to his mother's life story and the revelation of her secret inner life? According to the premises of the present study, he is, after all, a second-generation survivor, the subject of my inquiry.

A search on the Internet brought me into virtual contact with Herant Katchadourian, Professor Emeritus of Stanford University, a psychiatrist by training. Lo and behold, he has written his own memoir titled *The Way It Turned Out*.⁶³ Like his mother, he too deliberated, mulled it over, wondered whether and why he should write, expose his private life, reveal his inner world. But his mother had set the bold and courageous example by making a shocking revelation that, in his words, "opened new vistas into her and my own life." Her memoir would serve as a valuable source of insights and information about the details of his childhood and his life in the Old World. He set out in pursuit of the truth about himself in order to reveal who he was for his own sake and for the whole world to see how he reached his own sense of identity as an immigrant in America, the son of survivors of a great calamity (x-xi).

In the post-9/11 atmosphere of astonishment and fear in the USA, and with the drastic change in American attitudes toward Muslims,⁶⁴ Herant writes,

⁶³ Herant Katchadourian, *The Way It Turned Out* (Singapore: Pan Stanford, 2012).

⁶⁴ On September 11, 2001, the United States was attacked by an Islamic fundamentalist organization known as Al-Qaeda. Four hijacked airplanes were used in four coordinated attacks. Two hit the World Trade Center towers in New York and two targeted Washington, DC. Approximately 3000 lives were lost and the material losses were in the billions of dollars. What is important is the psychological effect of this

I took it upon myself to go around talking about Islam... even though I was neither a Muslim nor an Islamic scholar. I had come a long way from my childhood perceptions of Turks/Muslims as the murderers of my grandfather to my view of Muslims as people who needed to be understood and respected. (23)

Was it Herant's Protestant upbringing, his professional training, his deep knowledge of the human psyche and its disorders, his readiness to give advice and help that made him so tolerant, forgiving, and compassionate? Neither in Iskenderun nor in Beirut had his parents ever spoken to him about Turkish atrocities. As members of the Protestant congregation, his mother's family had been spared from deportation, so that she had not personally experienced the unbearable suffering that other Armenians had. There is also the fact that Armenians in Aintab and most Cilician towns and villages mingled with Turks more than anywhere else and were bilingual in Armenian and Turkish. Some even spoke Turkish at home. "No matter how Armenian my parents felt they were," says Herant, "there was also a lot of the Turkish in them" (34).

His perception of Turks is reflected in his attitude during a trip to Turkey with Stina in 1985. They visited Aintab, Efronia's hometown. This was a sort of pilgrimage that many

event on people in the United States. The families of victims, the rescuers, and the caregivers suffered traumatic effects and many turned to therapeutic treatments in order to be able to return to normal life. An important aftereffect of this disaster was the widespread development among the population of negative attitudes, intolerance, and even animosity toward Muslims.

second-generation survivors make to the places their parents called home and from which they were brutally driven away. Efronia had given them clear instructions on how to find her paternal home, next to the house of the Muslim Mufti, a friend of the family. The Mufti's grandson greeted them coldly but politely, and even though Herant had seen and recognized his mother's old house right next door, the Turk assured him that no Armenian had ever lived in that part of town.

I had just seen my mother's house, but many pairs of eyes were looking at me intently, and I didn't want to get into a confrontation.... I then walked into a nearby shop and found a copper plate with an Armenian name inscribed on its back. It must have belonged to another of the "nonexistent" Armenians in the area. (48)

The Khatchadourians also went to Iskenderun to find Herant's childhood home. It had been torn down and replaced by an apartment building. He tried to find the last owners of the house but was told "they were old and unwell. I did not quite believe it but decided to let it go; I now wish I had been more persistent. Yet, I shudder to think what my reaction would have been had I seen my parents' brass beds there" (30). An accomplished psychiatrist with a vast capacity for patience and tolerance, Herant controlled his emotions and walked away.

He goes on to praise his mother's family and Armenian intellectual life in Aintab before the calamity. He discusses the Genocide and the denial of it. Obviously, no matter how accommodating and moderate he may be, the great loss haunts and hurts him. He admits that his family considered the loss of their home, their position, and their opulent life in

Iskenderun a disaster, and that he too had accepted that view. But in hindsight he came to see it as a blessing, one that led to a better and more rewarding life for himself (31). Nonetheless, the loss of everything Iskenderun represented fueled "a relentless ambition and a drive to excel at whatever I did to make up for the loss" (68).

Herant Katchadourian's life experience as the offspring of Armenian Genocide survivors differs from that of others discussed in this chapter, as the others likewise differ from one another. In this section I have tried to offer a sampling, a kaleidoscope of testimonies reflecting the impact of the secret of their parents' past and the aftereffects of its revelation.

To conclude

My main focus in this chapter was on literary responses by the second generation who grew up without knowledge of their parents' past traumatic experience, in accordance with the categorization I adopted in order to guide the reader through the gloomy labyrinth of Armenian Genocide literature. The literary responses that fall under this rubric show the difficulty of living with parents who chose not to share their stories full to overflowing with pain and horror. There was no psychiatric help to guide them out of the prison of the past by breaking and taming their secret, be it embarrassing, shameful, or unthinkably horrifying. They had no psychological counseling to persuade them that keeping silent about their past, refusing to communicate about it, does not lead to forgetting it. That was not the way to overcome a trauma of that magnitude that inevitably surfaced now and then in nightmares or inexplicable behavior. Children suffered in such a family

atmosphere and the literature they produced reflects that experience as the subtext of their perception of the Armenian Genocide as second-generation survivors.

In the next chapter, I will deal with other categories of second-generation responses to their parents' and their nation's past not necessarily conditioned by whether or not their parents shared their stories with their children.

2

The Inherited Memory

Introduction

Many survivors chose not to speak to their children about their past. Children were denied entry into their parents' dark and secretive world of pain, suffering, and survival. In the previous chapter, I discussed this type of parental behavior and its various ramifications as my first category of second-generation voices. Following the criteria for categorization that have devised, in this chapter I proceed to focus on literary responses that have not necessarily been conditioned by a family secret. I will discuss literary works that were spurred by parents who persuaded their children to speak out on their behalf, to tell the world their story, and to let the world know about the inhuman and unimaginable atrocities the Turks committed. I will discuss Turkish denial of the Genocide and the anger, the frustration, and the desperate actions this

callous denial has generated, all reflected in literature produced by second-generation survivors.

This chapter brings together my study and analysis of literary works produced under the effects of the inherited memory of the Genocide, of the obligation to perpetuate that inheritance, and of the duality of the strictly Armenian home and the vast societal opportunities outside the home. That duality prompted questions in the children of survivors: Who am I? Where do I belong? Such questions persist and become a challenge to their perception of their identity once they are adults and comfortably ensconced in the culture and lifestyle of their birthplace, which their parents considered a haven of refuge, sometimes even with temporary significance.

I will take up cases in which the memory of the parents' traumatic past was so deeply etched in the children's psyche that they live the past like the present; the pain of the past is present, if subconsciously, and may spring to vivid consciousness when stimulated by a slight association with that past in present time. After all, the generation born in the aftermath of the Genocide is a generation of survivors of the Genocide, whether or not their parents were caught in the burning hell of the calamity, or they were living their lives far away where Turkish atrocities did not touch them directly. A total of nine more categories will encompass the spectrum of the second generation's literary responses to their parents' and their nation's collective past.

"You grow up and tell my story"

In a lecture organized by Facing History and Ourselves (FHO), David Kherdian attests that when he was growing up in

Racine, Wisconsin, women would get together and reminisce about the past. They shared their horrible stories of massacres and deportation and constantly told their children, "You grow up and tell my story."¹ In his Introduction to *Forgotten Bread*, Kherdian reiterates, "The parents pleaded with their children to tell their stories when they grew up." For most children, this admonition either meant nothing to them or they "didn't want to listen, because the stories were too painful" (xi). For some, however, the message eventually became a mission.

Kay Mouradian was one who accepted the mission when she finally committed herself to the idea that her mother's story must be told. She had heard her mother's horrifying account of the death march and the unthinkable suffering she had endured, and she had often heard her weeping and mourning the loss of her entire family. She also knew about her mother's happy childhood in Hadjin, but writing her story was a cumbersome task that Kay would rather have avoided. In the Author's Note to *A Gift in the Sunlight*, she talks about the transformation in her mother's heart during the last years of her life and how she urged Kay to write and publish her story for the world to know.²

¹ Kherdian's lecture was uploaded to YouTube by Facing History and Ourselves on September 9, 2011. FHO (<https://www.facinghistory.org>) is headquartered in Boston, with a mission to develop methods, strategies, materials, and lesson plans to facilitate teaching school children about gross human rights violations. At its inception in 1976, FHO was primarily focused on teaching the Holocaust. Today, it maintains one of the richest repositories of teaching tools for the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide, and other major violations of human rights around the world.

² Kay Mouradian, *A Gift in the Sunlight: An Armenian Story; A Novel* (London: Taderon Press, 2005), p. 5.

Kay Mouradian's mother, Flora, lived a comfortable married life in the United States with a caring husband and four children, but the shadow of the horrors of the Genocide was still bound to her psyche. As Kay explains in the Epilogue, "She was filled with anger and self-pity and dwelt on the horrors of the past. She often talked about her family who had perished at the hands of the Turks" (200). This psychological disposition was no doubt passed down to her children, and she chose Kay to carry her memories and transmit them to the world. After her first cardiac arrest, she suffered four near-death experiences, but she fought death and recovered. "Do you know why I'm still here?" she asked Kay. The truth was that the family had not produced any heirs. There was no next generation to keep alive the memory of the family's experience during the Armenian Genocide. Flora was worried: "You don't have any children," she told Kay. "If I died, no one would know" (203). So she commanded, "You're going to write a book about my life" (204). Flora had assigned the mission and she could rest in peace. Kay admits that this had an effect on her and drove her to read more and more about the Armenian past. She came "to understand the heartbreaking scars on my mother's heart and on the hearts of Armenian survivors everywhere" (205), and she became the agent who passed on those memories.

Kay Mouradian labored to create a historical novel, a true story embedded in a fairly accurate historical framework,³ a

³ In writing a historical novel, the creative writer must also be a meticulous historian and take care not to misrepresent historical events. It seems that Kay Mouradian did a lot of research in this respect. However, one instance of gross misrepresentation in *A Gift in the Sunlight* is a reference to the self-defense of Van in 1915 as "the Van

story about Flora's ordeal that was, in Kay's words, "the story of every Armenian who survived that tragic historical event that continues to be glossed over by the modern world" (5).

Flora's life story as rendered in *A Gift in the Sunlight* corroborates many elements common to eyewitness accounts of the Armenian Genocide. One is the determination to survive against all odds, buttressed by a supernatural survival tool, such as Flora's father hearing the voice of her deceased mother—the first death in the family on the deportation route—warning him about the imminent danger threatening his two teenage daughters. "It sounded like his mother's voice. He shook his head thinking it had to be his imagination, but then again maybe not" (90). He heeded the voice and took measures to smuggle his daughters to safety in Aleppo. Another common element is Flora's resort to God's mercy and over-zealous prayers. She considered this key to the survival of her family and of the orphans from Hadjin whom she had taken responsibility to protect. Another element, also involving divine intervention, was a sign from God: in a moment of crisis, she was overwhelmed with a flood of love and surrounded by a "mellow light of joy" that "carried her through the hardship of the last two days—her hunger and thirst, the intense heat and the incredibly cold nights—she seemed to be beyond it. She couldn't explain it" (85). Still another element is the presence of a kind and benevolent Turk, "A Compassionate Man," as described in the chapter

rebellion" (27). It is important not to use the Turkish label for this event, particularly when the term "rebellion" is used in Turkish denial literature to justify the government's "precautionary measures" to defend the country.

devoted to Captain Khourshid, the Turkish officer in charge of the convoy (52-5).

With a genuine effort to stick as closely as possible to the historical truth and the reality of the period, Mouradian describes in detail the refugees' struggle to survive the hardship of deportation; their misery as they beg from house to house in Aleppo and die in the street of starvation and disease; the Protestant Armenian orphanage in Aleppo and the superhuman dedication of Reverend Eskijian and his wife, as well as his agent, Hovaness Juskalian; and finally, the harem of the infamous Ahmed Pasha. All this is somewhat undermined by coincidences that are more akin to little miracles than what could plausibly have happened.⁴

Alice Agnes Tashjian's mother, Frances Iskouhi Parounagian Franguelian Frank, had confided her life experience to her children and insisted they transmit it to their children. The story was intended to be passed on. Tashjian labored to weave together all the stories she had heard from her mother during mother-daughter conversations when she was growing up in the 1930s in Johnson City (old Lestershire) in upstate New York. These stories provided the "tapestry I needed to finally understand who my mother truly was," she

⁴ An example is the smooth operation of Flora's rescue from Ahmed Pasha's well-guarded house. Another unlikely coincidence is that whenever Flora and her sister are out in the streets of Aleppo, they run into the same dreadful pair of Turkish soldiers who always try to snatch them and sell them to white slave traders. And then again, maybe not. Perhaps these incidents really happened and remained imprinted in Flora's memory.

writes in the Introduction to the slim volume she published, appropriately titled *Silences*.⁵

Tashjian knew that in order for these stories to be presented to the public, they had to be placed in historical context and corroborated by other survivors' reports of the same experiences. The short overview of the history of the Armenian people in the Preface is intended for the benefit of non-Armenian readers who may have no idea who the Armenians are and why they went through a calamity of that magnitude in the Ottoman Empire of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁶

Alice Tashjian offers her mother's story in her mother's voice, as it was told to her. It begins with Iskouhi's (she took the name Frances in America) recollections of her native Sepastia (Sivas), a description of their house and lifestyle and of each member of the family, the grandparents, parents, four brothers, and two sisters. She had fond memories of the school, the church, and the religious rituals, traditional festivities, customs and social activities. Then the cataclysm overtook them all. Her father and oldest brother were arrested, tortured, and killed. The remnants of the family were deported. All became victims of the hardships of the road, the pillaging, the assaults, the random killings, the unbearable hunger and thirst. And so the tragic events unfold, taking the reader into the unthinkable suffering endured by a teenage girl.

⁵ Alice Agnes Tashjian, *Silences: My Mother's Will to Survive* (Princeton, NJ: Blue Pansy, 1995), p. 1.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Preface, pp. ix-xii. There may be some inaccuracies and lack of coherence in this four-page précis of Armenian history, but these drawbacks in no way diminish the value of this biography-testimony.

Five years of wandering in unfamiliar places, naked and hungry, her unending trek from Sivas to the desert, going with a Muslim man and living in his house for a while, sleeping among a pile of dead bodies to keep warm and hide from the executioners, sleeping on the floor in a hospital, then to Constantinople, then Izmit, teaching in an orphanage there, then back to Constantinople, until she finally made contact with a brother in the United States.

Frances Iskouhi's life story was ready to be published in 1995, twelve years after her death. Alice accomplished what she had promised to do. In a poem titled "Dearest Mother and Father" which she places at the end of her parents' stories (67), she writes,

The story I promised to write
is finished.
May your children's children
know your story,
The birds of nature
sing sweetly
on your graves,
And the red roses you love
bloom gloriously
in your honor,
On this April 24, 1995,
the 80th anniversary
of the genocide.
Your loving daughter,

Alice

Alice accomplished more than she had promised. By publishing her mother's story, she not only entrusted it to her children, but also to the world to know about her people's

ordeal and their unanswered plea for justice. In this story, Frances' eventual triumph over her horrible experiences during the genocidal years and subsequently functioning as a wife and mother is an example to be heeded. She put all her courage and determination to work in order to survive and continue living as a normal human being. Despite the pain of remembering the past, she related her life story in the hope that at least her children and grandchildren would know what had happened to her and her people. Her daughter shared with the world not only the poignant story of her survival but her favorite recipes too.

Frances' message was heard by her grandson, Edward Michael Tashjian, who focuses on its moral import in a fine Foreword addressed to third-generation survivors of the Armenian Genocide. "This book is worth reading because it is a call to action to all of us who live in a troubled world [...] filled with places where people are persecuted, tortured, and 'cleansed' because of their race, religion or ethnicity" (vii).

The message, "You grow up and tell my story," was rather late in penetrating David Kherdian's mind. He had already done quite a bit of research and paid his dues to the memory of his father through his evocative poems, or so he thought he had. He was a respected intellectual in the Armenian community. In 1971, as the editor of *Ararat*, an important English-language Armenian-American quarterly, he was invited to Soviet Armenia. In the aforementioned lecture organized by Facing History and Ourselves (FHO), he mentions that after he returned from Armenia, he felt ready to work on his mother's life story. He admits that she had tried to pass on her tragic life story and leave it for posterity, but "I

refused to listen to my mother's story... too bitter... it was preventative to living my life." He had turned away from his family's past and was struggling hard to find his own identity independent of the Old World memories Armenians lived by. Shoring up this attitude was his father's reluctance to share his stories and his harsh and unforgiving behavior at home.

Contrary to his feelings for his father, however, David held a tender affection for his mother whom he called the "visionary poet of the family," a "sparrow" who ate like a bird, who "ask[ed] for little/having once lost all." Veron Dumehjian was a survivor of the Armenian Genocide, or rather, as her son says, "a victim of America who/escaped the Turkish genocide."⁷ Veron was a mail-order bride, wedded at the age of 17 to David's 35-year-old father. Unlike her husband, she was an educated woman, "proficient in both English and Armenian, kept church records and taught Armenian school" in Racine.⁸

Now, after his father was long gone and his widowed mother was living alone in Fresno, he felt he was ready to write her story. He asked her to jot down what she remembered. In his FHO lecture mentioned earlier, he recalls that she came up with an 11-page typewritten manuscript. This was not going to work. He would have to approach it differently. He subsequently spent many hours interviewing and recording. That was how he began work on his first prose

⁷ Quotations from David Kherdian, "My Mother and the Americans" and "A Family of Four," in *On the Death of My Father, and Other Poems* (Fresno: Giligia Press, 1970), n.p.

⁸ Biographical sketch of David Kherdian in *Armenian-North American Poets: An Anthology*, ed. Lorne Shirinian (St. Jean, Quebec: Manna, [1974]), p. 16.

narrative, *The Road from Home*,⁹ a fictionalized, or rather an elaborated and embellished memoir. His Author's Note, along with a map of the Ottoman Empire showing Veron's deportation and escape routes, provides the historical background to facilitate an understanding of Armenian life in the Ottoman Empire from the mid-nineteenth-century imperial decline to the Young Turk takeover, the entry into World War I, and the decision to get rid of the Armenian population.

The story is told in the first-person voice of Veron Dumehjian. She describes her hometown of Azizya in the Afyon region and each member of her extended family, along with details of the traditions kept alive in the family, the festivals, rituals, customs, and mores, and everyday life—"the warm evenings of home that I shall never forget" (5). She remembers playing in the street with Turkish girls her age and exchanging treats they each brought from home (10). She remembers the Turkish *kaimakam* (mayor) often visiting as a friend of the family and of the Armenian community as a whole, to the extent of enrolling his own daughter in the Armenian school (13).

The narrative is a touching account of the young girl's miraculous survival during the death march from Azizya to Afyon, Konya, past Adana, Gatma (Qatma), to the infamous concentration camp at Meskene. She was one of the very few who escaped the camp, a temporary holding place where the number of refugees was reduced by random killings, kidnappings, and the spread of disease, leaving the survivors

⁹ David Kherdian, *The Road from Home: The Story of an Armenian Girl* (New York: Greenwillow Books, 1979).

to continue into the Syrian desert. Ironically, her destiny took her to Smyrna to suffer yet another catastrophe, the Kemalist destruction and annihilation of the city's prosperous Armenian community.

Veron was eight when it all began. Her grandmother foresaw what was coming and cautioned the family: "However we may be dispersed, we are one family. If one of us should die, something in all of us will die, and if only one of us lives, then some part of each of us will live" (32). And indeed, the hardships of the road and the typhus, cholera, dysentery, thirst, and famine at Meskene took their toll. Veron lost her sister, brothers, aunts, and cousins. Lightheartedness and perseverance were her survival tools: "I tried not to think of the ones who were gone—it was too painful" (92). And she did come through the massacres without becoming embittered (176). She succumbed to cholera in Meskene and lost consciousness, for how long she did not know. When she awoke, she was alone with her mother who stopped talking altogether and would disappear for hours on end. Veron found out that her mother would walk to the river and sit under a tree where she cried and wailed in front of "three large, evenly spaced stones" (92). Veron's father was employed by the government, transporting supplies in his horse-drawn wagon and thus mostly away. After her mother died of heartbreak for the loss of her children, Veron's father arranged her escape to Birijik. Soon he died too and she became an orphan, wandering here and there. She joined a group of widows who took her to Aleppo where she spent a year or so in an orphanage. Returning to Azizya, she was reunited with her grandmother. But when the Greek army

bombarded the town in 1921, she was severely wounded in the leg and unable to walk for a year. She was sent to the Armenian Hospital in Smyrna (Izmir) and was there when the city burned in 1922.

This is not a simple narrative of events. There are detailed conversations between Armenians and Turks and among Armenians themselves, reasoning, explaining, analyzing their situation, assessing their options, attempting to see into the future. One wonders whether Veron remembered all this, or was her son and scribe editorializing, interweaving his own insights and views and incorporating the historical knowledge he had gained through years of research.

David Kherdian confesses that writing his mother's heartrending story was not an easy task. "When I got to Smyrna, I could not go on. I asked questions from my mother in Fresno. I guess I wanted to steal some of her strength. She had the courage to survive...." Obviously, relating the details of his mother's ordeal in the great Smyrna fire nearly surpassed his emotional strength. Now he could see her in a different light. He could idealize her character as the survivor of a great catastrophe. She was a hero, or the "Little Hero" as she was called at the hospital in Smyrna, which inspired Archbishop Tourian to say, "It is courage such as hers that has permitted our nation to survive for as long as we have" (175). And indeed, the detailed account of the burning of Smyrna and the atrocities committed by Mustafa Kemal, his army, and Turkish irregulars, together with Veron's eventual escape, are related as the reliable account of an eyewitness (186-201). Even up to the last minute, as Veron and other refugees boarded a Greek tanker to sail toward freedom, Turkish

irregulars shouted and cursed them: "We're going to come over there, too! We're going to follow you to Greece and kill you there!" (200). The fear of Turks followed Veron all her life, wherever she went.

Veron faced many choices and challenging situations before she reached America. At one point she was offered the opportunity to lead a comfortable life as the adopted daughter of a Greek general, but that would have meant losing her church, her nation, and her grandmother who was waiting for her back in Azizya, as well as losing all those who had died. "I had to remain an Armenian, a Dumehjian, the girl my parents and grandmother had reared" (164). She evaded adoption and took refuge in the Armenian church.

Kherdian's *The Road from Home* is not only a life story of personal interest but an important historical narrative of the years of calamity and a powerful response from the second generation to the Genocide of their parents and their entire nation.

In this category of literary responses, we recognized the insistence of a parent as the principal driving force. There are other incentives that trigger the undertaking.

The perpetrator's continuing denial

The perpetrator's continuing denial and the world's indifference become sources of anger and frustration in second-generation survivors and trigger their response. Geoffrey Robertson QC, a preeminent international lawyer and the author of *An Inconvenient Genocide: Who Now Remembers the Armenians?* (2014), had this to say about the impact of Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide in a

statement before the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) at Strasbourg in the case of *Perinçek v. Switzerland*:

[G]enocide denial can have a double impact: It makes survivors of genocide and their children and grandchildren feel the worthlessness and contempt and inferiority that the initial perpetrators intended, and it incites admiration for those perpetrators and a dangerous desire to emulate them.¹⁰

Living the years of calamity all over again, the survivors penned their memoirs to show the world the magnitude of the Catastrophe. And the world responded with indifference and conveniently accepted the Turkish side of the story. Dirouhi Kouymjian Highgas, a survivor, irately retorted, "I am living witness to these outrageous lies...."¹¹ Bertha (Berjouhi) Nakshian Ketchian asserted, "We—the survivors—are living eyewitnesses of the Genocide of the Armenians by the Turks. What was documented in writing and pictures at the time is

¹⁰ Quoted in "European Court of Human Rights Grand Chamber Hears *Perinçek v. Switzerland* case," *Mirror-Spectator*, February 6, 2015. Doğu Perinçek, a Turkish lawyer and politician, was convicted of racial discrimination under Article 261 bis 4 of the Swiss Criminal Code in a Lausanne district court in 2007 for publicly denying the Armenian Genocide which he described as an "international lie" while visiting Switzerland in 2005. Swiss cantonal and federal courts dismissed his appeals. He then appealed to the ECHR where a Chamber judgment found that the Swiss decision had violated Perinçek's freedom of expression. The Government of Switzerland then asked to have the case referred to the Grand Chamber, which Robertson addressed during its first hearing in the case on January 28, 2015.

¹¹ Dirouhi Kouymjian Highgas, *Refugee Girl* (Watertown, MA: Baikar, 1985). Quotation from the Prologue, n.p. For a discussion of Dirouhi's memoir, see Rubina Perroomian, *The Armenian Genocide in Literature: Perceptions of Those Who Lived through the Years of Calamity* (Yerevan: Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, 2012, 2014), pp. 253–9ff.

now being denied.... Recognition of the crime does not bring the victims back, but it eases somewhat the pain of the living."¹² And the torch of the struggle against the callous denial of the crime and for world recognition of the colossal injustice was passed on.

The struggle took the shape of peaceful political activism, lobbying, and using the power of the pen to educate the world and promote the cause. It also took the shape of acts of violence against the deniers, descendants of the perpetrators. And the struggle reverberated in poetry and fiction.

In Hakob Karapents' "*Seneak t'iv 842*" (Room number 842), Manuel is accused of assassinating the Turkish consul.¹³ He is incarcerated and being tortured to confess and to provide information about the terrorist group, their leader, and the higher organization. In his fictional protagonist, Karapents portrays the unyielding young Armenian activist who resists the unspeakable tortures that apparently take place in a Turkish prison. Manuel is the author's alter ego in his thoughts and ideals. He does not regret the act. He silently responds to his torturer's accusations, "You wouldn't understand the whole picture, Mr. Colonel, because the consul wasn't merely a consul but the symbol of an unfathomable barbarism whose direct heirs are you and the whole of humanity" (223). In silence he continues, "The genocide of an

¹² Bertha Nakshian Ketchian, *In the Shadow of the Fortress: The Genocide Remembered* (Cambridge, MA: Zoryan Institute, 1988), pp. ix-x. Also discussed in Perroomian, *The Armenian Genocide in Literature*, pp. 278-82ff.

¹³ Hakob Karapents, "*Seneak t'iv 842*" [Room number 842], in *Ankatar* [Incomplete], a collection of short stories (New York: Vosketar, 1987), pp. 219-40.

entire nation is written in tiny letters in the margin as an unavoidable event in the global tragedy of World War I" (228). Karapents treats Armenian activism in the context of the universal struggle for human rights, against inhumane exploitation and injustice committed against disenfranchised people and nations in the world.

The period between the 1970s and the early 1980s was marked by a revival of the Armenian armed struggle or liberation movement, as it was alternatively called. Groups of young Armenians targeted Turkish establishments, embassies, and diplomats, and by bombing buildings and gunning down diplomats, tried to draw attention to the Armenian Cause and Turkish denial of the Great Crime. Of course, those actions provoked reactions around the world. Some news media labeled the actions as terrorism, others explained them as the response of Armenian freedom fighters who were frustrated by the perceived ineffectiveness of peaceful struggle in the international political arena. There were strong reactions among Armenians as well. Many condoned the actions and praised the new martyrs to the Armenian Cause. Others condemned them as terrorist acts and considered them contrary to the image Armenians had been able to create as peaceful, law-abiding citizens everywhere in the Diaspora. Interestingly, Janine Altounian relates that it was after the hostage-taking at the Turkish consulate in Paris in 1981, when there was an uptick in media interest in Armenian history, that the idea of publishing the French translation of her father's memoir occurred to her. "I felt that my father would approve that act.... I felt I had the right to take this relic out of its protective clandestinity and transgress the taboo

surrounding it."¹⁴ Altounian was reacting to the Turkish denial by presenting yet another testimony as proof of Turkish atrocities.

Needless to say, the Turkish government made use of those actions to exculpate the modern Turk and to serve as retroactive evidence of the type of Armenian behavior (unrest and revolt) during World War I that forced the Ottoman government to take necessary countermeasures. Those "terrorist acts" are still cited by Turkish denialists to equalize the suffering on both sides in their strategy of "shared pain."

Vahé Oshagan's short story, "Ahabekich" (The terrorist) juxtaposes the two opposing interpretations of such actions.¹⁵ Late one winter night, a young Armenian man who is near death collapses at the door of Dr. Arthur Aslanian, a respected and very conservative member of the Armenian American community in Philadelphia. The youth has been wounded during his escape after assassinating a Turkish diplomat. Dr. Aslanian staunches the bleeding and treats his wound. A heated discussion develops between the cultured physician and the coarse and inarticulate "terrorist," while the doctor's American mistress watches in awe, not understanding the words but somehow picking up what the argument is about.

¹⁴ Janine Altounian, "Parcours d'un écrit de survivant jusqu'à son inscription psychique ou, Temporalité d'élaboration d'un héritage traumatique," in Vahram and Janine Altounian, *Mémoires du génocide arménien: Héritage traumatique et travail analytique* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2009), p. 121. The first French translation of this memoir was published in *Les Temps modernes* 427 (February 1982).

¹⁵ Vahé Oshagan, "Ahabekich" in *P'akhstakanē* [The fugitive], a collection of short stories (Antelias, Lebanon: Cilician Catholicosate Publishing, 1987), pp. 123-43. This story was written in Philadelphia in 1977 at the height of the modern-day Armenian armed struggle.

Oshagan portrays the youth in his unyielding resolve and unwavering devotion to the Cause. He strongly believes that peaceful action cannot make any difference in the world. He sees the first generation of survivors passing away without having found a meaning for their suffering or any kind of deliverance for the nation. He has left everything behind and dedicated his life to his nation. He believes that he and a group of like-minded devotees can shake up the world's indifference and force a solution to the Armenian predicament. In his eyes, people like Dr. Aslanian are on the verge of assimilation. These people make good money. They marry American wives. They drive expensive cars. They talk big about the Armenian Question but they are lost to the nation, including this well-educated doctor who even believes that a visit to Soviet Armenia could harm the reputation of Armenians living in the United States.

As a physician performing his duty, the good doctor attends to the young man's medical needs, but at the same time he vents his disapproval. "This is not a matter of courage, my friend. You are neither a terrorist nor a patriot.... You are a criminal. This is pure stupidity, simply the act of a discouraged and overpowered individual. And we have to bear the consequences" (131). Dr. Aslanian firmly believes that Armenians have no territorial claims on Turkey, and that even if the Armenian lands were returned, no Armenian would go there to live. "The past has passed, the dying have died.... Today's Armenian needs no land and no homeland. It is enough Armenian Cause, Free and Independent Armenia. These are all empty words" (135). Their conversation sets up two prevalent opposing views, one that sees the young man as

a terrorist and the other that sees him as a freedom fighter. Oshagan does not take sides. It is the American woman who judges the situation, and when Dr. Aslanian angrily drives the youth out of his house, she walks quietly toward the bedroom, not sure which of the two fulminating Armenians is the real terrorist.

Vahé Oshagan entertains the theme of Armenian armed struggle, or terrorism, in other short stories as well. One is titled "*T'elefonē, Lizboni nahataknerun*" (Telephone: To the martyrs of Lisbon).¹⁶ The subject is not so much the freedom fighters or their deed, although the story begins with a news report on it which the protagonist reads in a local newspaper. The front-page article, with a photograph of one of the boys lying dead on the sidewalk, reports that Armenian terrorists have blown up the Turkish Embassy in Lisbon. Oshagan's story focuses rather on the impact of that report on two totally assimilated American Armenians, both strangers to each other, whose pallid and pitiful faces he brings to life. Both have long been separated from their roots, married an *odar*, and cut their ties with the Armenian community, but the memory of the zealous Armenian boy of yesteryear persists somewhere deep in their souls.

Harry Mouradian is a traveling insurance salesman, married to an American, no children. He is visiting Denver, Colorado, for a sales pitch. The newspaper article shocks him to the core and takes him back to his teenage years when he

¹⁶ Vahé Oshagan, "*T'elefonē, Lizboni nahataknerun*," in *T'akardin shurj* [Around the snare], a collection of prose writings (New York: Vosketar, 1988), pp. 145-54. Quotation from p. 148.

was a member of the *Ts'eghakron* Youth Movement.¹⁷ The buried memory of his youthful enthusiasm is all that remains with him today. He has avoided Armenians all his adult life, yet the more he wallows in the pleasant present, the more his Armenian past, like a sin or an addiction, feels like a guilty secret. He loves his country and he fought for it during World War II. And now, five youths try to avenge the murder of their grandfathers at the hands of the Turks in 1915 by blowing up an embassy, "'but not his [grandfathers].' He has no desire for revenge. There is no passion or rage left in him. 'But this is not taking revenge on the Turks,' he thinks. 'This is taking revenge from the world, from God.... Those boys will take my revenge in my place'" (147). Harry Mouradian is restless, overexcited. He needs to talk to someone, an Armenian, someone to share his enthusiasm with. He doesn't know anyone in Denver, so he looks in the local telephone directory and randomly finds the name of Arthur Hakobian. It is already late at night, but he dials the number and strikes up a conversation with the man who answers the phone. Arthur Hakobian turns out to be another Americanized Armenian, and like him, a veteran of

¹⁷ *Ts'eghakron*, literally "the religion of the race," was a nationalistic ideology advocated by Garegin Nzhdeh (1886-1955), the great Armenian statesman and military strategist. In 1933, Nzhdeh was sent to the United States as a fieldworker by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF, *Dashnakts'ut'iun*). He visited many states and witnessed the assimilation of the second generation. Through the teachings of his *Ts'eghakron* ideology, he strove to stir Armenian youth and revive their sense of Armenian identity and belonging. The *Ts'eghakron* Youth Movement gained traction and branched out into several youth groups throughout the USA. It became the foundation of the ARF-affiliated Armenian Youth Federation which is still active today.

World War II. He is married to an American, has grown children who are well educated and respected in American society. One of his sons served in Vietnam, the other is an Air Force officer stationed in Germany.

At first, Arthur Hakobian is reluctant to talk about the incident in Lisbon, though he too read the same article. "Look, Mister, I don't know who you are or what you want, but I'm against killing innocent Turks" (151). But Harry won't give up. He needs to find "a witness to and an echo of his emotions" (153). Their conversation continues, the ice gradually melts, and before long they are real friends, sharing their concerns about the Armenian situation. Arthur's wife nags at him to hang up the phone and come back to bed. Who is this Harry? Where did he come from? But from now on, nothing will be the same for Harry and Arthur. They will meet for lunch tomorrow. The suicide mission of five Armenian youths, an example of pure devotion and self-sacrifice, resonates in the cold hearts of two Americanized Armenians.

Unlike Oshagan's relatively small-frame narratives on the subject of the Armenian armed struggle, Boghos Kupelian (Poghos Gubelian) constructs a wide-ranging novel in the form of a love story that offers a different perspective on terrorism. In *P'asp'ort'* (Passport),¹⁸ he does not focus on a specific terrorist act or group, but rather portrays the mental state, the motivation, and the sociopolitical influences that gave rise to the movement, as well as with the perception of

¹⁸ Boghos Kupelian, *P'asp'ort', vep merorya hay azatamartikneru keank'en* [Passport: A novel about the life of Armenian freedom-fighters in our day] (Yerevan: Yot'nagir hratarakch'ut'iun, 1999). For a survey of Kupelian's life and work, see Stepan Topchian, "Havat'k' Mardu handep" [Belief in mankind], in *ibid.*, pp. 184-214.

the movement in Europe and within Armenian society at large. He draws on his childhood memories of the suffering of Armenian refugee families in Beirut and his personal experience growing up in that milieu to create his protagonist, Vaché Margarian (Markarian), and the setting and atmosphere in *Passport*. Information he provides in his autobiographical work, *Merci beaucoup aspetakan Fransa* (Thank you very much, knightly France), supports this thesis.¹⁹

Kupelian was born in Alexandretta (Iskenderun) in 1936 when it was still attached to French Mandate Syria. When the French abandoned the district to Turkey a couple years later, they provided transportation to Beirut as a favor to the Armenians under threat of a second massacre. Kupelian's family was among the hundreds of refugees driven out, and he grew up in dire conditions in a poor suburb of Beirut. In his twenties, he migrated to Africa and spent two decades there before immigrating to the United States in 1978. In *Passport*, Vaché Margarian's trajectory follows that of Kupelian until he migrates to Africa.

Now an exporter of used cars, Vaché is waiting at a small airport in Salzburg for a crew of young Belgians he has put together to help drive his cars to the Greek port of Piraeus, from where he will ship them to Beirut, all in order to avoid transiting Turkish territory. But airport officials mistake the dark-complected Vaché for an Armenian terrorist and try to arrest him. Vaché flees, and at this point, the real terrorist group comes to the rescue. The leaders of their organization have a plan for him. He is a well-educated and well-respected

¹⁹ Boghos Kupelian, *Merci beaucoup aspetakan Fransa* [Thank you very much, knightly France] (Yerevan: "Nairi," 1998).

man, and they want him to speak out on the external front and tell the world that what happened to the Armenians is not an "old story," that it cannot be forgotten. On the internal front, they want him to break through the cold indifference of some Armenians and the frank opposition of others and convince them of the sincere dedication of the devotees who put their lives on the line for the Cause. And finally, they want him to expose the real culprit behind the assassinations: "No one is born a terrorist from his mother's womb. The oppressive foreign yoke, the fact of having no homeland can turn anyone into a terrorist, a freedom fighter" (83).²⁰ The purpose of their acts is less to avenge their ancestors than to shake up the world's indifference to the Cause and the continued suffering of Armenian survivors of the Genocide. And indeed, Vaché embodies what Kupelian wants to see in second-generation survivors of the Genocide in the Diaspora (155).

Over the years, Vaché has come to realize that constantly repeating the stories of massacres, pain, and suffering turns off even the most sympathetic supporters of the Armenian Cause (59). Pictured in the background is the licentious and enticing European lifestyle that has nearly engulfed Vaché, a lifestyle where moral responsibility has lost all value. He had outgrown hating the Turks and had gone with an open heart to the Turkish consulate in Brussels to apply for a visa on his Lebanese passport to visit Iskenderun, his birthplace, but he was shocked by the consul's aggressive and contemptuous

²⁰ The same idea recurs on p. 173, when Vaché blames Turkey and its "Machiavellian allies" for driving Armenian youth to resort to such extreme measures, but he concludes that "only a desperate person is apt to do these acts."

behavior and his refusal to issue a visa (24). Perhaps the recollection of that moment facilitates the process of Vaché becoming a collaborator of the Armenian terrorist organization. Kupelian guides the reader through the amazing transformation of this lusty lover and successful businessman into a committed fighter for the Armenian Cause.

Lorne Shirinian treats the theme of the liberation movement, the armed struggle, as a challenge to the old ways in a collection of poems with the telling title, *Poems of Dispersion and Other Rites of Movement*. In "Warning," he rejects the way "We recognize each other/by our dead 'Where were they from?'/How many did you lose?'" Enough of mourning and tears for the dead. Born in Toronto in 1945 to a family of survivors of the Genocide, Shirinian is bilingual in French and English, a poet and writer, a professor of comparative literature, and of course, a scholar. He is the author of numerous publications including poetry and artistic prose as well as valuable studies and analyses of Armenian American literature. He believes that his generation should act differently. Sitting around in smoke-filled rooms with a bottle of raki, swearing revenge and then burying our hatred and lying "back in deep cushions and/listen[ing] to the music our fathers sang/in dream villages"²¹ is no different from what the first generation did.

(Parenthetically, a young Armenian immigrant from Iran was taken aback by this perpetual mourning and constant identification with the losses borne of the Genocide. Recalling her childhood in Westchester County, New York, Kinora

²¹ Lorne Shirinian, "Warning," in *Poems of Dispersion and Other Rites of Movement* (St. Jean, Quebec: Manna, 1977), p. 23.

Nercessian asks "why family and friends met each new Armenian acquaintance with, 'Where were *you* when—?' Invariably the cut-off question was followed by stories of atrocities during the Genocide of 1915–1922 in Turkey.")²²

In the second installment of Lorne Shirinian's "Warning," he evokes the new ways, clearly advocating armed struggle: "Prepare fuses Gather rifles boxes of bullets." Be prepared and act, "Until that day/when we will join hands/to dance around Ararat." Bear in mind that this was published in 1977 during the heyday of Armenian armed activism. Shirinian believed in the movement, "And I have passed the shadows/of our movement/to my son" (24–6). Despite his enthusiasm, a disappointing compromise is in sight. He comes back to diasporan reality. The liberation movement has not borne fruit. Shirinian resorts to the power of his poetry. Yet he is not detached, he lives the horrors of the Genocide. He is there and he feels as if he is "lifting/the butchered buggered and raped/the babies torn from mothers' wombs." He fights, but once again, tears and lamentation are the way out.

The spirit throbs
in a closed capsule
and we take comfort
in lamentations

²² Kinora T. Nercessian, *Arax* (Independence, MO: International University Press, 1987). Quoted from her biographical sketch, n.p. Kinora knew nothing about the Genocide when her family immigrated from Iran, but her environment among survivors and the stories she heard inspired her write this novel. *Arax* is a love story and a story of Turkish atrocities and Armenian self-defense in Iran. It is valuable in the sense that it is set not in Western Armenia but in Eastern Armenia during the First World War when the Turkish army crossed the Iranian border and committed barbarities in Armenian villages in the northwest.

And sometimes
in my fight to rise
I rub my eyes
until they hurt
and tell myself
Let's get on with living²³

This is the last poem in the collection, the final word, bearing the message of Shirinian's *Poems of Dispersion and Other Rites of Movement*.

In 1997, Herand Markarian toured Western Armenia with a group of eighteen, tracing the route his father and thousands of others took after leaving their homes and belongings with barely a moment's notice and marching toward the unknown which, for the majority, ended in death. All along the way, Markarian's tour group met with the local Kurds and Turks' ignorance or feigned ignorance of Armenians having lived on these lands, of the previous owners of houses, churches, and institutions. At every step of the way, Markarian experienced a close encounter with denial of the Armenian Genocide.

Herand Markarian was born in Basra, Iraq, in 1938. His father had survived the Genocide but lost his wife and child to the hardship of deportation. He then joined the Volunteer Army as an artillery bomber. Herand was the son of his father's second marriage. He came to the United States as a student in 1962 and subsequently became an accomplished scientist and a well-respected playwright, actor, poet, and literary critic. Among his numerous plays, *Mirrors* (1995), *Georgetown Boys* (1998), and *Silence in a Circular Rainbow* (2012) in particular touch on the subject of the Genocide and its

²³ Shirinian, "I Was in Armenia," in *Poems of Dispersion*, pp. 27–8.

aftereffects, the impact on families and individuals decades after the Event. These plays were well received and they made a great contribution in bringing the theme of the Armenian Genocide to the stage in the form of drama and thus to the attention of non-Armenian-speaking audiences.

It is evident in the case of many "pilgrims" like Markarian that their pilgrimage does not bring them closure. The sight of ruined Armenian towns and villages and the vestiges of Armenian culture—churches deliberately destroyed or turned into mosques, stables, or museums at best—and local ignorance/denial of the Armenian presence in the places they visit cannot attenuate the pain of the memories or work toward reconciliation, as some believe it will.

Once back in New York, Markarian assessed the Turkish policy of denial and its impact in a prose piece titled "*Mets Tarapank'/The Great Agony*" and a series of poems which he published a year later in his bilingual collection of prose, poetry, and travelogue, *K'aradzayn patarak'/Liturgy-Sound of Stones*.²⁴ The denial was textualized in the brochures published by the Turkish Ministry of Tourism: there was distortion and deceit in the history and description of every site the group visited. Markarian repudiates those distortions with historical facts, but what is important is the impact of that denial literature on the soul of this second-generation victim of the continuing Turkish genocide of Armenians. Is it not true that

²⁴ Herand Markarian, *K'aradzayn patarak'/Liturgy-Sound of Stones* (New York: Hamazkayin Armenian Educational and Cultural Society, New York Chapter, 1998), pp. 166–89. I will return to this book further on in this chapter.

denial of an act of genocide is the last stage in the process of that genocide?

Examining the Turkish policy of denial and distortion of history, Markarian writes, "It is this policy, aimed at the very heart of our national existence, that shakes the very foundations of my personal existence.... A deep, immense and eroding pain tortures me.... I fluctuate between what I have dreamt and what I now see. I am shaken, perplexed, turned inside-out" (173). But not everything is dark and gloomy. Markarian resorts to Armenian mysticism, the secret of survival that we call on in times of despair and that inspires courage and perseverance. This resolute pilgrim concludes, "Armenia was our past, it is our present and it will be our future. This is the message that I have learned from my Yergir, from the Liturgy of the Silent Stones" (185).

In "Keri's Curse," Diana Der Hovanessian echoes her uncle's outrage infused with unmitigated irredentism and a deep sense of vengeance:

This land which you unpeopled,
this land stained with our blood,
cannot be held,
cannot be kept.

.....
This soil with its unburied dead
will heave beneath your feet
and our shattered scattered seed
blown from this soil will breed
strangers with unimagined dreams.

But who are those "strangers" who will breed a "child of fire," a reincarnation of Vahagn, the pagan Armenian god of war, thunder, and lightning, to do what is beyond the power and

possibilities of the survivor generation? Der Hovanessian expects that "child of fire"

to come avenging,
shrieking back
for his birthright.

This land is his,
ours, plowed for centuries
with our sweat.
This land will wait.
It waits for you
to be swept off its face
with wind.²⁵

Diana Der Hovanessian, who was born in Worcester, Massachusetts, is an accomplished poet. Her work has been published in many prestigious American and international newspapers and magazines such as the *The New York Times*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Paris Review*, *The International Herald Tribune*, *The Nation*, *Harper's Magazine*, and *Look*, as well as in *The New York Times Book of Verse* (1970). She has also translated Armenian poetry old and new and published her translations in leading English-language poetry journals.

In 1965, Diana's father, John (Hovaness) Der Hovanessian, a survivor of the Genocide, delivered a speech in New York in which he called the Armenian massacres a successful genocide and the Turkish cover-up and distortion of historical facts a perfect example of historical revisionism. Years later, Diana wrote "The Political Poem," echoing and explaining her father's idea: It is "more than a song of love/praise of life,

²⁵ Diana Der Hovanessian, "Keri's Curse," in *About Time* (New York: Ashod Press, 1987), pp. 26-7.

mourning/of loss. It calls for change. It insists/on restoration/..../It starts with/the recognition/of injustice...." "The Political Poem" ends with the spectacular image of the burning sun in Turkey:

It is reflected back
in so many grains
of irritant, the dust
of so many unburied
Armenian poets,
so many poems.
This dust, these grains
which winds blow
blow, blow into
the eyes of all the living.²⁶

But the present is bleak. The world remains indifferent. Der Hovanessian admits the inability of the Armenian people to make a difference and the failure of the American-Armenian struggle to affect American policy toward Turkey, an indispensable ally that must never be offended. Standing at her father's grave in the Mt. Auburn Cemetery, she speaks to him about the shocking news report that "Defense Secretary Weinberger fears acknowledging genocide by Turks will offend them."

... "Hairig,"
I say, "I am so sorry.
What can I do? How can I talk to you
when this soil that gave you haven
and home with its government

²⁶ Diana Der Hovanessian, "The Political Poem," in *RAFT: A Journal of Armenian Poetry and Criticism* 5 (1991): 17-19.

says you never existed.
What can I say, I who therefore
cannot be here to say it?"²⁷

That was in the early 1980s during the presidency of Ronald Reagan, when Armenian-Americans had high hopes. During his election campaign, Reagan had promised Armenians that once he was elected, he would recognize the Armenian Genocide. Der Hovanessian fights back the best way she can against this hypocrisy, against political exigencies dictating immoral policies and unfulfilled promises. She fights with her cutting words, her artistic skills.

"No One Tattooed My Skin," a powerful poem published in *About Time* (1987), portrays her keen sympathy with female victims of the Genocide. Seventy years removed, she feels their suffering, describes the torture, the rape, and the starvation they endured and the suicide they committed to put an end to their disgraced existence. She was not one of them, she did not endure any of those hardships, but what she cannot tolerate is that the world has remained silent:

But oh, my sisters,
now that 70 years
have passed and
no one has spoken for you,
I spit out words
You swallowed unsaid. (31)

The world turned a deaf ear, and now Armenians are being massacred in Azerbaijan at the hands of the Azeri brothers of the Turkish executioners. The year is 1990 and

²⁷ Der Hovanessian, "At Mt. Auburn Cemetery," in *About Time*, p. 63.

there are pogroms in Sumgait, Ganja, Baku, and elsewhere in the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan where Armenians have lived in communities for centuries. Significantly, the memory of the 1915 Genocide comes alive in Armenian literature in response to these pogroms. The Genocide is the precedent, the yardstick, the reminder of genocidal minds at work against Armenians. Der Hovanessian's poem, "What If," is a step back in history, the history of massacre, rape, and plunder.²⁸ As a soldier in 1918, her father reached Baku and took part in the defense of the Armenian population against the assaults of the Muslim masses and the encroaching Turkish army.²⁹ Now she asks, what if her father had stayed with that strong Armenian community in Baku and raised a family there. Caught up in the latest turmoil, he would see history repeating itself. "What if," she asks her father, "everything that had happened to

²⁸ Diana Der Hovanessian, "What If," in *Forgotten Bread: First-Generation Armenian American Writers*, ed. David Kherdian (Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 2007), pp. 285-6.

²⁹ After the Bolshevik Revolution, and as a result of Lenin's decision to pull Russia out of the First World War, Russian soldiers evacuated the Transcaucasian front and abandoned the defense of Western Armenia. Following the same policy, Soviet Russia signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with the Central Powers, led by Germany, in March 1918, relinquishing Kars, Ardahan, and Batumi to the Ottoman Empire, whose nearly defeated army marched forward with renewed zeal to claim the promised territories. Despite the efforts of the Armenian volunteer army to hold them off, the Turks continued their advance into Eastern Armenia, committing atrocities, plunder, and massacre on their way. Their last bid before the Armistice was the capture on September 15, 1918, of Baku where Bolshevik rule had been established. Unable to resist any longer, the Armenian forces surrendered. The Turkish army entered the city and together with the local Azeris began looting and massacring the Christian, mostly Armenian, population of the city.

you/was happening again/and again the world did not believe you?"

In "An Inconvenient Genocide," Alicia Ghiragossian derides the politicians who prefer to call the Armenian Genocide a "*tragedy*./It is more convenient."³⁰ It is more convenient, she explains, because the perpetrators "were covering their crimes" by bribing and lobbying (12). They and their cohorts deny the truth which she has heard

from innumerable survivors
and from my father
from his lips
his tears
and the voice of his genes
registered in mine. (12)

And she repeats this conviction further along in the same poem:

I have inherited all the scars
at a cellular level.
I can feel them stamped
in my genetic code. (20)

In the above lines and elsewhere in this epic poem, Ghiragossian alludes to an important concept: the genetic transmission of trauma to the next generation. In support of this idea, she quotes Carl Jung: "history is not contained/in thick books/but lives in our very blood" (19).

Earlier, I pointed out this interesting concept put forward by Natan Kellermann in his insightful article, "Transmission of

³⁰ Alicia Ghiragossian, "An Inconvenient Genocide," Glendale, CA: "A New Age" Publications, 2009), p. 11.

Holocaust Trauma." The models of transmission he suggests are consistent with the Armenian case and the responses of the second-generation survivors I come to witness and analyze. Most intriguing to me, however, as I said earlier, is the "biological or genetic" model of transmission to which I also referred in discussing Helene Pilibosian's literary responses. Can the child of a survivor of a catastrophe be genetically susceptible to inherited trauma, as with any other inherited disease? Can severe traumatic experience affect the genetic condition of a survivor such that his or her offspring may inherit the affected gene? I will wait for Armenian researchers to take up the question and present their findings.

Ghiragossian enumerates the facts, the documents, and the eyewitness accounts, and wonders at continuing Turkish denial despite all the evidence:

It would be funny
if it were not tragic
to hear the Turks
insist on their denials
.....
And I don't understand.
So please explain to me.
How can all this be denied.... (18-19)

But the Turks continue to deny, and this means "dying every time/we are invalidated/through denial" (21). It hurts the generations of survivors to realize that they are only "a small group" — as if created by a lesser god — and do not have the power to impose upon politicians who find alliance with the perpetrators' denial more attractive (20). And when a righteous American politician, a proponent of recognizing the

Armenian Genocide, insists, the answer is a cold, "*It is not the right moment./...../So it was revealed/that our genocide is extremely/INCONVENIENT*" (24).

The pain caused by the perpetrators' denial appears repeatedly throughout the poem as a deep-rooted feeling passed on from the first-generation survivors to rise to the surface with every occasion: "because the perpetrators/never say *We're sorry./And the children/of their children affirm:/It never happened.*" And her response to this flagrant denial:

So we
the children of survivors
of an inconvenient genocide
are reporting
with earthshaking resonance:

*Yes. It happened.
And we have not forgotten.* (30-31)

Every Armenian feels the pain of that denial, Ghiragossian affirms, and for her, as for every Armenian, to be an Armenian

... is to understand
deep in our bones
the unfairness
of humankind
who denies us the chance
to be revived
in our rights.³¹

³¹ Alicia Ghiragossian, "To Be an Armenian," in *Stormy Seas We Brave: Creative Expressions by Uprooted People*, comp. Helene Moussa (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998), p. 15.

For Ghiragossian, a simple apology could start the healing process. She is aware of individual Turks such as Kemal Yalçın who have publicly apologized to Armenians and to all humanity for the "*organized massacre*" of Armenians (32), but she wants to hear that apology from the Turkish government. She insists that

The present Turkish government
must assume ownership
of the crimes committed
by the Ottoman Empire.
That does not signify guilt
but national responsibility. (48)

Ghiragossian's poem takes on strong partisan overtones in protesting against foreign governments that sided with Turkey and forced Armenia to extend the hand of unconditional friendship and sign the "Protocols."³² Turkey

³² The Protocols signed between Turkey and Armenia on October 10, 2009, in Zurich called for the normalization of relations between the two neighboring countries. It was obvious that the Armenian government was under international diplomatic pressure to sign the Protocols, in particular, from the American government. In order to save face, the Armenian representatives did not admit that the document contained clauses that required dangerous concessions to Turkey and were counter to Armenian national interests. Before it could be implemented, it had to be approved by the Parliaments of both countries. Fortunately for the Armenian side, for a number of reasons including Azerbaijani government dissatisfaction and pressure on Turkey, the issue was not brought up for discussion and to date it remains in limbo. Despite pressure from the Armenian Diaspora, the Armenian government has not taken any concrete, decisive action to retract the Protocols. It is taking advantage of the impasse created by the Turkish side.

As a very recent development, on the eve of the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide, the President of the Republic of Armenia declared that the issue of the Protocols was to be dropped from the Armenian

even went so far as to advise the Armenian government to deliver itself from diasporan Armenians who so vehemently protest the signing of the Protocols and advocate for Turkey's recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Calling the Protocols "the seal of impotence" meant "to obstruct our existence/and bury our demands" (37-8), Ghiragossian reveals pernicious conditions buried in the text that would put an end to Armenian aspirations for the return of their sacred Mount Ararat and a resolution of the Karabagh (Artsakh) issue that respects the will and determination of its Armenian population.

Significantly, this powerful epic poem ends on a note of optimism. Ghiragossian believes that the Turkish government will eventually acknowledge the Armenian Genocide, not only for its own benefit but also for the sake of all humanity:

It would be their contribution
to the progress of civilization
and universal history
would elevate
from one of its darkest pages
to one of its most sunlit heights. (52)

The depth of the act of genocide against Armenians cannot be understood solely within the framework of massacres and stories of tears and blood. A colossal injustice was committed and the denial of that historical truth is an insurmountable

Parliament's agenda. According to *Lragir.am*, the President sent a letter to the Speaker on February 16, 2015, informing him of this decision. It should be noted that the Parliament has not taken action, but that still does not signify the annulment of the Armenian signing and official retraction of the Protocols.

obstruction of justice. Demands for justice take different faces and various expressions in the literary responses of the second-generation survivor-writers. Alicia Ghiragossian turns to God for an answer and addresses all her complaints and grievances to Him. In a poem titled "Injustice," she seeks explanations from God for human actions and for His silence while massacres are committed and an "entire race/[is] scattered in the deserts/or the concentration camps."³³ She is physically there in Deir el-Zor, making a pilgrimage to that macabre corner of the Syrian desert where hundreds of thousands Armenians met their death, where

... you can feel
the anger
of the unburied bones
and you can hear
the pounding
of dried blood
jolting the earth. (115)

"There is no rest/without justice" (118). She pleads with God to help her confront the world's indifference, "to cure our orphaned roots" (116), and to "[l]et the truth of my people/echo through the waves of the universe." It is ultimately God's will, she says, that justice prevail on earth and that people "live in freedom" (119).

It was rage and frustration caused by Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide that drove Mae Derdarian to take up a project she had overlooked for years and never imagined it

³³ Ghiragossian, "Injustice," in *Stormy Seas We Brave*, comp. Moussa, pp. 114-19. Quotation from p. 114.

would bring her recognition and renown. When she read an advertisement sponsored by the Turkish government stating that what happened was not a genocide, as Armenians claim, but a civil war between Turks and Armenians, she was outraged. She remembered a manuscript that her mother's best friend, Vergeen Meghrouni, had entrusted to her twenty years earlier, before she died in 1975, asking her to prepare it for publication. Mae was the only writer Vergeen knew. The manuscript contained Vergeen's life story, focusing on her experience during the years of the Genocide and how she survived. Mae set to work. The result was *Vergeen: A Survivor of the Armenian Genocide*,³⁴ a book that received well-deserved accolades for its author-editor. Some reviewers considered it the Armenian version of Anne Frank's Diary.³⁵ The book was Derdarian's powerful response to Turkish denial.

Mae Derdarian was born in Detroit, Michigan. She lived a productive professional life before and after her retirement in 1985 from her position as director of public relations and education for United Community Services. A resolution by the Washtenaw County (Michigan) Board of Commissioners in 2008 honoring her years of dedicated service provides ample evidence of her multiple accomplishments.

The Turkish notice denying the Armenian Genocide which galvanized Derdarian into publishing Vergeen's memoir also provoked her to quote Adolf Hitler's infamous statement as an

³⁴ Mae M. Derdarian, *Vergeen: A Survivor of the Armenian Genocide* (Los Angeles: Atmus Press, 1997).

³⁵ In an important monograph, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2006), Adam Jones selected Vergeen Meghrouni's story as a case study in his chapter on "The Armenian Genocide." See "One Woman's Story: Vergeen," pp. 109-11.

epigraph: "Who today still speaks of the annihilation of the Armenians?" She returns to this question in the conclusion to her Acknowledgments: "Most important of all, I must acknowledge the objective of Vergeen's own powerful words: *to immerse the reader in her story and to refute historical revisionists who deny and distort the facts of the Armenian holocaust.*"

The narrative begins in the voice of Vergeen who declares to the world, "I was THERE! I was an EYEWITNESS! I was a VICTIM!" (1). And what she witnessed and endured is beyond imagination. Vergeen takes the reader to the killing fields to hear the cries of pain, the supplication for mercy, "*Khentrem, khentrem*" (Please, I beg of you), and the helpless call, "*Allah nerdehseen?*" (God, where are you?). Vergeen lost her innocence, her spirit, and her faith to the atrocities: "My faith in religion destroyed, I hadn't prayed or gone to church since fleeing from my Arab captors; and my aversion to prayer has continued since then" (213).

Vergeen was thirteen years old when she started on the deportation route from her childhood home in Kayseri with her widowed mother, who had rejected the option of accepting conversion to Islam and being spared. They passed Qatma, then Aleppo, and finally reached Ras el-Ayn in the Syrian desert where the surviving refugees were crowded into a camp to die of starvation and disease. Four months later, soldiers raided the camp and rounded up the remaining refugees for liquidation. Vergeen was at death's door when a Bedouin offered to take her in. She agreed, on condition he also take her mother and a few other women, and for a while she was spared. Her name was changed to Noura and her face was tattooed. But the Bedouin had other plans. He killed

Vergeen's companions, lured her away from the tribal encampment and raped her. The wretched thirteen-year-old tried to run away and was caught several times, but finally managed to escape to Aleppo where she found work as a nurse's aide. In 1920, Vergeen made contact with Armen, to whom she had been betrothed when she was eight years old and he was eighteen. Armen had immigrated to the United States before the war and now he arranged for her to join him there. They married in Milwaukee in 1921 and later moved to Southern California. Vergeen began writing her memoir more than half a century after coming to America: the horrible images were still gnawing on her soul. It would have been inconceivable to forget them, and the tattoos on her face were a constant reminder and a source of embarrassment and depression. She finally got rid of them through a lengthy series of surgical procedures, but she never got rid of the burden of her memories of the past.

At the end of Vergeen's story, Derdarian appends a short chapter of "Historical Notes" on Armenian history, the process of the Genocide, and quotations from non-Armenian eyewitness accounts (259-64).

Hatred and revenge, the burning feelings passed on from the survivors of inconceivable Turkish atrocities, are continually being fueled by Turkish denial. The irony is that the unyielding stance of denial is bolstered not only by "historical facts and documents" but with new strategies asserting that Turks and Armenians both suffered and died, and unearthing and sometimes inventing stories of good Turks who rescued Armenians and showed benevolence toward them. These ever-flourishing biases have an influence

on the second generation's response to the past. Some are beginning to advocate that not all Turks were murderers, that there were those among them who helped to rescue a boy, a girl, a family. I have discussed these altruistic gestures as I spotted them in the memoirs I studied in my previous work.³⁶ In many instances I found that these rescue actions were in fact inspired by ulterior motives or hidden agendas. But it is deemed civilized to see the good. Shahkeh Setian's *Humanity in the Midst of Inhumanity* includes sixteen stories of such good Turks, Kurds, and Arabs who risked their lives to save Armenians.³⁷ Sixteen stories, added to perhaps another hundred scattered in survivors' memoirs, do not amount to much in comparison with the overwhelming evidence of mass participation in the rampage in the vast majority of survivors' accounts.

Turkish denial of the crime, distortion of the facts, and fabrication of stories are sources of additional impetus for the second generation to respond and set the record straight. That is, in addition to the power of the transmitted memory and the effort to perpetuate it.

The obligation to remember

The memory is transmitted and the burden of remembrance is passed on. Agop Hacikyan is a second-generation carrier of the historical memory which he believes must continue living

³⁶ See the section titled "The good Turk" in Perroomian, *The Armenian Genocide in Literature*, pp. 362-70.

³⁷ See Shahkeh Yaylaian Setian, *Humanity in the Midst of Inhumanity* ([USA]: Xlibris Corporation, 2011). Setian is the daughter of a Genocide survivor.

through the generations of survivors. His artistic representation of this belief is captured in the final scene of his novel, *A Summer without Dawn*. After the protagonist, Vartan Balian, finally locates his long-lost son, Tomas, in an Armenian orphanage in Geneva, the reunited father and son pose for a photograph to celebrate the happy occasion. "They're standing behind us!" Vartan remarks, and explains to his puzzled son, "Our forefathers, my father, his father. You're the end result of dozens of generations who have created the culture which is your legacy. You must learn about it and enrich it so that it will never die. That way your ancestors can live on" (537-8).

Richard Hovannisian dedicated his life and career to building a monument of remembrance through his many academic publications on the history of the Western Armenian provinces and the independent Republic of Armenia, as well as his activism for international recognition of the Genocide. He had felt in his own skin how painful it was to be the child of a survivor of a great catastrophe. He had suffered and he knew very well that the suffering would not end with the next generation. Announcing the birth of his first son, Raffi, to Simon Vratsian, he wrote, "Raffi is growing.... He is laughing. He does not know what the future has in store for him. He does not yet know that he has been born into a race in which all children, if they are good, must suffer."³⁸

³⁸ Garin K. Hovannisian, *Family of Shadows: A Century of Murder, Memory, and the Armenian American Dream* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), p. 84. Simon Vratsian was the principal of Neshan Palanjian Jemaran in Beirut where Richard Hovannisian spent a year learning Armenian. During that period, he bonded with Vratsian, who had served as the last Prime Minister of independent Armenia before its Sovietization. As a

The burden of memories took Herand Markarian on a pilgrimage to Western Armenia in 1997, as noted earlier. It had taken him eighty-two years to "fulfill my father's unspoken wish and return Home to say a prayer for the unburied dead. I return on the path of history as a pilgrim to realize his unfulfilled dream," he writes in *K'aradzayn patarak'/Liturgy-Sound of Stones* (13). Markarian's pilgrimage to Shoushants (today's Kevenli), his father's village near Van, and to Yergir, the historic lands of Western Armenia, was a conscious effort to come into physical contact with what he had always thought of as "HOGHS/MY LAND!" and to deal with that puzzling question mark that always appeared in his mind whenever that thought occurred to him: "Your land?" He went to fill the "emptiness" in his mind which he could not define: "Is it Longing? Demands? Anger? Vengeance? Bitterness? Inability? Injustice?" (17). He embarked on this "soul-stirring journey" in search of a Fatherland, there to lay down the burden of inherited memories.

Herand Markarian memorializes every site his group visits in a vignette with a brief history of the place since ancient times, its original Armenian name, its new Turkish name, the Armenian presence/absence, the buildings, institutions, and houses that now either exhibit distinct Muslim markers or else are total ruins. His vignette on Van is followed by a poem titled "At the Shores of Lake Van" which he dedicates to the place with passionate flare. Standing on the lake shore, he visualizes his father spending his happy childhood in his village nearby:

symbol of the Armenian struggle for independence, Vratsian played a decisive role in Richard's future academic endeavors.

Like an innocent child
 I gather pebbles and make them dance
 on the surface of the lake.

 But with every pebble I remember my father
 who spent his happy childhood
 along the shores of this Lake.
 I whisper tenderly,
 "Envelop me, O, Lake, for
 I have brought you my father's memory."

 and now
 I bring you my orphanhood." (95)

It is worth highlighting his overwhelming emotions on the banks of the Euphrates, that մարդակուլ river (the "man-gulper" river, which he translates as the "haunting" river). Facing the "tombstone of a nation clinging to dignity," Markarian stands "silent and weak.... I bow my head in reverence... to the holy memory of brave Armenian women." He hears their screams swirling in his head. In his mind's eye, he sees the horrible atrocities that took place here. Sights and sounds deep in his memory come alive, creating a state of hallucination, but "the running river and the victorious and indifferent humming of the cars on the distant highway" bring him back to present reality which is the total erasure of the past and the bustling life of a country that has no memory of the past (65-7).

Markarian's pilgrimage, however, is incomplete. The village church in Shoushants, where his father was a choir boy, is in ruins. Tombstones have been overturned and graves dug up, apparently in the search for hidden gold. He cannot

find his father's house whose deed he has preserved. What for? His claim to the non-existent house can only provoke laughter. But the people are nice. They invite him to their garden for tea. "In front of me is the estranged village of my ancestors that treats me like a guest. How ironic that I am a guest on my own land!" (117-25).

After the journey has ended and Markarian is back at home, he lines up on his desk the stones he collected from various sites in Western Armenia. These and a bottle of water from the spring in his father's village, "the fragments of my LAND, *Yergir*... my orphaned and brutally destroyed land," are "now a part of my everyday life." Gazing at these reminders of his homeland, "'I am home,' I say... Am I home?" (177). The enigmatic question calls for an answer. After all, do the comfortable Armenian homes in the four corners of the world, far from the homeland, feel like home to them? He has returned to his home in New Jersey, but "a part of me stayed behind," hiding "behind the shattered stones," a part that visits him every night, tossing him "between faded reality and dreams," and becomes

the fearful and dark
 endless, thorny
 black liturgy
 of my
 great agony. (179)

Although outcast from her own family, Mary Terzian, a second-generation survivor of the Armenian Genocide and a suspect foreigner wherever she went, was fully aware of the burden of memory she carried. In the Prologue to *The Immigrants' Daughter*, she writes, "My forefathers were

massacred for their Christian faith and identity. I can't betray them" (xviii).

Margaret Ajemian Ahnert was born in New York to a family of survivors. Her mother, Ester Minerajian, born in Amasya, was fifteen years old when the Genocide began. Margaret's father, Albert Ajemian, born in the town of Divrig in 1895, served in the Turkish army before he escaped to Constantinople and then to America in 1919. Both of her parents were the only surviving members of their large families. They married in New York on April 24, 1921. Margaret was their first born and was given the name of the deceased daughter of the Zovickian family, with whose documents Ester had been able to travel to the United States in 1920. Margaret Ajemian Ahnert's book, *The Knock at the Door*, is tribute to her mother's memory.³⁹ It tells the story of her survival and the incredible horrors she lived through during the deportation and four years of captivity. These tragic memories remained with Ester all her life. She confessed that "The only thing I brought with me to America was my memory—the thing I most wanted to leave behind" (177). What differentiates this narrative from other survivors' memoirs is the daughter's presence throughout. Margaret reacts to her mother's stories, becomes one with her,

³⁹ Margaret Ajemian Ahnert, *The Knock at the Door: A Journey through the Darkness of the Armenian Genocide* (New York: Beaufort Books, 2007). I have done a thematic analysis of Ester/Gezeer Kateejeh's experience as an Armenian girl abused and exploited during the Genocide in *And Those Who Continued Living in Turkey after 1915: The Metamorphosis of the Post-Genocide Armenian Identity as Reflected in Artistic Literature* (Yerevan: Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, 2008, 2012).

surrenders to the rush of emotion, and lives her mother's life with her.

Margaret remembers a day in 1979 when she stood with her mother before the eternal flame at the Armenian Genocide Memorial in Tsitsernakaberd. She envisioned Amasya on the other side of the mountains and the road along which her mother and her family had marched:

I thought about the day Mother and her family left their beloved Amasya. I thought about the long road she had traveled, to me and my father; to my children, her grandchildren.... And then I saw myself, Margaret, on the road with her, years and years ago, before I was even born.... Her history was mine. Her death, when it happened, could mean only one thing. I was next in line. Let this story live larger than we ever could. (85-6)

In addition to stories of her happy childhood in Amasya, Margaret's mother used to tell her stories of the years of hardship and suffering during the deportation, the death camps, the starvation, and the torture, and those stories "had a profound impact on my life" (7). The memory had been transmitted effectively. Margaret "grew up with a deep sense of fear of all Turks" (8). That inherited fear surfaced one day in the 1970s when she met a Turk for the first time. He was a visiting diplomat who stubbornly pursued her, who wanted to befriend her and tell his side of the story. She was not ready to face the perpetrator of her mother's ordeal. "What was wrong with me?... Had mother tainted my life with the bits and pieces of her stories?" (184).

And now, as she begins to write, she does not hate the Turks as her mother did not. "I write, not for revenge, but for

the record: of my mother, of me" (xix). At least this is what she wants to believe: just a record of two lives impacted by the Genocide. She is in constant conflict with the psychic imprint upon her soul. She feels guilty questioning her mother and making her relive her painful memories. But perhaps this is a subconscious effort to process the fear and the hatred. "Could it be that I had lived with this story for so long that I was enjoying the act of fearing and hating Turks?" (180-81).

There is a pejorative term for those of us who delve into the catastrophic and painful past of our people. I remember an occasion when I told someone about my academic field of interest and research and was called a "masochist." Margaret was apprehensive about that label and that state of mind, but she had her own answer: "Yes, it's good to be able to block things out. But maybe the terrible images persist for a reason: to tell the truth" (185). And she was brave enough to break through that barrier and confront the ravaging memories. With a sense of her obligation to remember and the burden of remembrance she carried, she traveled to Turkey with her American husband under her married name. She visited the land where her ancestors had lived and were subjected to that most heinous crime called genocide. She even quietly put up with the distorted information their Turkish guide gave them about Greek and Armenian cultural vestiges (184-5).

But the fear persisted in Margaret's life, which is quite understandable. This generation has heard stories of ordinary Turks and Kurds, next-door neighbors, a business partner, taking part in the mayhem. The destructive feelings of fear and hatred are therefore felt not toward a particular killer, rapist, or looter, but toward the entire population, toward

people who would be considered normal, everyday human beings. Israel W. Charny believes that "the mass killers of humankind are largely everyday human beings—what we have called normal people according to currently accepted definitions by the mental health profession."⁴⁰

Margaret's granddaughter Sara was cradling her hand between her own when a chilling thought occurred to Margaret: "Sometimes I feel terror so acute, so delineated, the world closes in. Terror, like genes, gets passed down" (107-8). Her reaction is significant: she pulled her hand away. "I did it, understand, out of love. I did it to keep her safe." Subconsciously aware of the possibility of the genetic transmission of trauma, she avoids physical contact as if it could "get passed down" that way. But the memory has been transmitted through her and her mother's joint memoir/narrative which together they offer the younger generation and the world.

Sara would feel the impact years later when, as a teenager, she visited Ellis Island with her mother and grandmother to look for her immigrant great-grandparents' names engraved on the Wall of Names, to follow in their footsteps as they embarked on freedom, and to read a few pages of her grandmother's manuscript that describe that unforgettable day (202). The memory was passed on to the third generation.

Margaret's writing project began when her 98-year-old mother was dying in an Armenian old age home. She was ready to tell her stories "as they popped into her head" and

⁴⁰ Quoted in Eric Markusen, "Genocide and Warfare," in *Genocide, War, and Human Survival*, ed. Charles B. Strozier and Michael Flynn (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), p. 75.

Margaret was eager to listen and record (34). "When I die, the truth will die with me. You must know and your children must know what I lived through" (10). Her frequent visits and prodding her mother to tell every detail of her horrible ordeal produced the material Margaret needed to tell the story. The narrative covers Ester's childhood memories of Amasya, her paternal home, the garden full of flowers and fruit trees, the school only three blocks away, the sewing lessons ("The girls were taught to embroider and sew and some cultural history, but the boys were taught addition and subtraction and how to balance account books") (38). Then comes the deportation order, but some Armenian notables are incredulous. They cannot believe what the Turks have planned for them (72-3). Ester's father and other townsmen are arrested and then the death march begins. From a distance, they see houses burning in Amasya (90). The endless march without food or water and the repeated attacks on their caravan rob them of strength and the will to go on. There are dead bodies all around. The starving deportees eat the dead, despicable cannibalism. Ester remembers her half-dead stepbrother begging her not to let anyone eat his flesh after he dies (92). Her stepmother gives birth on the road, away from the eyes of the gendarmes, and after the pain of her labor, she picks up her newborn and continues marching with the rest (95-6). Ester's family dwindles until she is all alone, half-dead and half-alive, and taken to be dumped with the other dead bodies. Miraculously, she is rescued and cared for by an Islamized Armenian woman named Seranoush. After a while, she is adopted by an elderly Turkish couple (110).

By knowing her mother's life, Margaret hoped to know herself better. By preserving her mother's life in her narrative, she hoped to preserve her own life (35). The book she produced was her response to the world and to her father's admonishment, "*Mortseer*" (*Morts'ir*, Forget it). That was his answer when, as a child, she had asked him why all her friends at school had aunts, uncles, and cousins, but she didn't have a single relative. "But how could I forget what I never knew? I tell my father, 'Now I know'" (xiv). Margaret was only thirteen when her father died and she never recovered from the effects of that sudden loss. She could feel her mother's agony when Turkish soldiers stormed their house and dragged her father away. Ester had been fifteen. Neither she nor her mother had a chance to say good-bye (65).

By her own testimony, Diana Der Hovanessian grew up in a house where there was very little talk of the Genocide. Her father was a survivor who tried hard to provide his children with the happy childhood he never had. Diana remembers,

His childhood was stolen, but he endowed
ours with laughter as we rode his feet
lifting us over the past somehow.⁴¹

In fact, she admits, "I didn't become Armenian until I went to New York and sang in a chorus, and joined a dance group."⁴² The influence, however, was there from the day she was born to a survivor family: her father and her maternal grandparents

⁴¹ Diana Der Hovanessian, "May I Have This Dance," in *Forgotten Bread*, ed. Kherdian, p. 281.

⁴² Quoted by Nancy Kricorian in her biographical sketch of Diana Der Hovanessian, in *Forgotten Bread*, ed. Kherdian, p. 271.

were all first-generation survivors. Poetry was her powerful medium of expression, and Tadem (a village in the Kharberd region in Western Armenia), the natal village of her father and her mother's parents, was a faraway but never forgotten center of the universe, origin of life, and source of artistic inspiration. It was a place where a fairytale-like way of life suddenly came to a halt with a tragic calamity that wiped out its hard-working, happy population. Describing a dreaming shepherd boy and his village, Diana writes,

... a strange thing happened.
His goats, the school, the children,
their teacher, the church,
priest and parish disappeared
in a terrible way. Too terrible to tell.

One morning there was an Armenian village
that turned into a Turkish fire.⁴³

The more Diana tried to escape the painful memories of the past, the deeper she was drawn into the whirlpool of her nation's suffering, the suffering eternalized by Siamanto and Varoujan whose poetry she adored: "I would run, run/to escape your blood/filled poems...." But she could not escape, so she made it her mission to let the world know about that blood and suffering, and to let the world know in the language that it speaks: "And now I take your poems/and pound, pound them/into a raw new language/using all the force/of unshed tears."⁴⁴

⁴³ Diana Der Hovanessian, "Once in a Village," in *Forgotten Bread*, ed. Kherdian, p. 273.

⁴⁴ Ibid., "Translating II," pp. 295-6.

Always longing and searching for the childhood her father never had, she strove to bring at least one day back from the past,

Any one day,
when there was such a thing
as childhood.
Before the genocide.

Before the nation
was orphaned. Any day
before we know we are cut down.⁴⁵

The full consciousness of being an Armenian, her total immersion in her Armenian identity, arrived later in life, but Diana knew she was the daughter of a revolutionary and she was proud of him. "You knew how to use bullets;/you had one lodged inside your forehead/from the battlefield when Murad fell."⁴⁶

Diana's paternal grandfather had been murdered by the Turks in the 1890s when her father was still in his mother's womb. His mother, Zarif, was a simple peasant but a brave woman

who did not teach her son
to be a revolutionary
but when revolution came, hid a gun for him

⁴⁵ Ibid., "Recycling Today," p. 283.

⁴⁶ Ibid., "It's Hard To Be the Child," p. 276. Sebastatsi Murad, an Armenian *fedayee*, was commander of the Armenian volunteer troops defending the Armenian population of Baku against the encroaching Turkish army in 1918. Diana's father, Hovaness (later known as John), who had survived the Genocide and reached Baku, was Murad's secretary and first lieutenant.

in the garden, against bad days.

And when her son became a revolutionary, Turks tortured Zarif to reveal his hiding place, but she did not, although she knew. That was Diana's Grandmother Zarif,

... whose arm was smashed
then made raw then broken to pieces
then cut off while she repeated when she waked
she did not know.⁴⁷

Born into a culture where getting married and making a family was the norm and a natural way of life, Diana Der Hovanessian is vividly aware of her Armenian ancestors, those who "walk like shy Christian/brides," and behind them, "pagan mothers/parading with shields."⁴⁸ She must navigate her own path, bearing the burden of an entire past history and a present totally distant in time and space.

Diana vowed to remember and pass on the memory when she was only twelve and her father took her to Michigan to visit the grave of her Grandmother Zarif. She had heard many tales about Zarif during the Turkish persecutions, but her grandmother was always away up in Michigan, where she lived with her elder son who she said needed her more than Diana's father did (Diana's uncle had suffered shell-shock while serving as an American soldier in France). And now Diana was facing Zarif's tomb.

Standing at her grave I wanted
to promise her something

⁴⁷ Ibid., "This Is for Zarif," p. 290.

⁴⁸ Ibid., "Teaching a Child to Dance," p. 280.

about remembering.

I wanted to tell her
if I had children they would know
how she lost her arm. I wanted
to tell her that although
most of her family was killed by
Turks those of us who were left
were hers too
but I didn't know
how to talk to the dead.

When I came home
I wrote my first poem.⁴⁹

That day marked the birth of Diana Der Hovanessian the poet. She found the language of poetry to remember and to remind her offspring and the future generation to become the bridge between the Armenian past and the future.

Mae Derdarian's *Vergeen* is an expression of her own protest against Turkish denial, but it is also the dutiful fulfillment of her promise to Vergeen Meghrouni, victim and survivor of Turkish atrocities. Mae's mother Serpouhi, also a victim and a survivor, had met Vergeen in 1917 at a military hospital in Aleppo where they both found work as nurses.

Vergeen was a compelling influence in my life, someone whose valor and inner strength I admired greatly.... In the cauldron of this catastrophe, their lives had converged leading them to a close, lifelong friendship that has endured with their children and even with their grandchildren. Before she died in 1975, Vergeen asked me to prepare her

⁴⁹ Diana Der Hovanessian, "How to Talk with the Dead," in *RAFT: A Journal of Armenian Poetry and Criticism* 11 (1997): 20-21.

story for publication. Thus, I was entrusted with the mission of her storyteller.⁵⁰

And thus, Mae opened her soul to the influence of these two survivors. She describes how painful it was to revise Vergeen's memoir for publication, reliving the degradation and deprivation Vergeen had experienced during her time in captivity, and Serpouhi's experience too as she told her story to Vergeen.

Marilyn Johnson writes about a meeting of the Lit Group, a book club in suburban Detroit where Mae Derdarian was invited to talk about her book in the spring of 1998. She describes Mae, then aged 76, breaking into tears when she spoke about her mother's ordeal. "'I'm sorry,' she said, touching her face with her napkin. 'There were times I sat at my computer and cried my eyes out.' She wasn't alone; most of us were tearing up."⁵¹ The burden of remembrance had been passed on to them too.

Haroutione Berberian, born in Aleppo and long resident in Canada, cannot forget his father's last days as he lay on his deathbed, having lost his battle with prostate cancer. He was hallucinating under the effects of heavy medication, confusing the past with the present, reliving his deportation experience, losing his parents and his siblings again, one by one, miraculously escaping from a pile of dead bodies. He had told this story to his children many times. Now, in his last hours,

⁵⁰ Mae M. Derdarian, Acknowledgments, *Vergeen: A Survivor of the Armenian Genocide*, n.p. Serpouhi's account of her own ordeal was tape-recorded before she died in 1982.

⁵¹ Marilyn Johnson, "LIFE—"The Book Club'," *Vergeen Reviews*, August 1998, http://www.cilicia.com/armo7_vergeen.html.

he was reliving the agony of those days, mistaking his son for his brother and his daughter for his aunt. Haroutione remembers it all and sometimes in his dreams he sees his father at different stages of his life. That is the burden of remembrance and Berberian has responded to his obligation by memorializing the life of this victim of the Genocide in a long poem titled "*Ts'avazertsum*."⁵²

When Helene Pilibosian, the author of *My Literary Profile*, found poetry to be her inspiration and strength relatively late in life, she wrote poems about her father and her mother and her grandparents, as if to immortalize their suffering and their memory through art (60). After her father's death, she and her husband discovered his life story written in English, as if addressed to his children and grandchildren. They brought it out with some photographs under the imprint of Ohan Press, the small publishing house they had founded together. Helene's husband, Hagop Sarkissian, likewise translated his father's Armenian memoir and it too was published by Ohan Press (262-3). This was their duty toward their parents to remember and to have the world remember the Calamity they had endured.

The urge and the obligation to remember is also reflected in Pilibosian's poetry. In a review of her third volume of poetry, *History's Twists: The Armenians* (2007), I articulated my view of the book and its author as follows: "A quest for peace and equilibrium in an existence that rose from a chaotic mix of

⁵² Haroutione Berberian, "*Ts'avazertsum*" [Painkilling], in *Sahmanner [Borders]*, a collection of poems (Yerevan: Lusakn Press, 2007), pp. 59-81.

two worlds always in conflict with each other, contradicting each other and refusing to reach a synthesis."⁵³

As an adolescent, Helene Pilibosian had turned a cold shoulder to her parents' and her people's past and showed no interest in hearing their stories, but as she grew more secure and self-confident, she dug into her nation's history and read stories of the Armenian Genocide. In her later years, after her parents were gone, she set out to celebrate their memory with the powerful tool of poetic expression, and to eternalize her nation's history in the context of the American present. Her struggle to define her identity, strongly rooted in her ancestral land, reverberates in her poetry, and the pain of separation is ubiquitous, in scattered references to "the Turkish sword" and "the hoary history," and in lines such as, "The apricot spoke Armenian,/and there I found my seed," "My mouth is dry/with stories of the desert/of Der-el-Zor so long ago," and "Remembrance is the epitaph/for the ghosts of humble glory."

In concluding this section in which I have tried to present narratives of the Armenian Genocide as monuments of remembrance erected by second-generation survivor-writers, I want to discuss an anthology that, in my view, embodies the collective monument. I have already referred to it many times in this study to quote individual poets. Here I would like to underline David Kherdian's devotion to the importance of Armenian American literature, its birth, its development, and the place it gradually created for itself in mainstream American literature. It was this devotion that drove Kherdian to undertake the difficult task of researching, assigning,

⁵³ Rubina Perroomian, review of *History's Twists*, in *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 18/2 (December 2009): 145-8.

writing, editing, and publishing *Forgotten Bread: First-Generation Armenian American Writers* (2007). Of course, by "first-generation," he means the generation born to survivors of the Genocide, that is, the first generation of American-born writers whose language of artistic expression is English, but their Armenian heritage and the burden of the traumatic past played a major role in their worldview and in the formation of their identity and is echoed in their writings. This generation, in my present study, represents the second-generation survivors of the Armenian Genocide.

A flyer publicizing the launch of *Forgotten Bread* in 2007 at the headquarters of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) in Belmont, Massachusetts, quoted David Kherdian as follows: "Our stories contain us and reveal us and inform us, filling us with the real pride that comes from having lived and endured, not only with our lives intact, but with our stories told. For without our stories we are nothing." He has met that implicit challenge with this anthology. It presents seventeen poets and writers, and significantly, the editor chose to delegate the writing of biographical sketches of these seventeen writers to promising younger writers, creating a continuity and a bridge between the two generations and casting it to the next generation and the next. I have not included all seventeen of these writers in my present thematic study. I wish I could have taken up Peter Sourian (b. 1933, Boston) and his novel *The Gate* (1965), in which tragic stories of the Turkish massacres and the deportation of Armenians first found their way into the realm of American literature. I wish I could have taken up Harold Bond (né Bondjoukian, b. 1939, Boston), the brilliant writer

and university professor who celebrates the resilience and survival of the Armenian people, challenging the idea that "The Armenian is an historical/phenomenon. He should have/been extinct decades ago" ("Postscript: Marash," in *Forgotten Bread*, 357-8). And other writers as well. But this study was becoming unwieldy.

David Kherdian carried the burden of remembrance and gave it the physical shape of a book as a monument.

The past is lived like the present

It is difficult to explain how the past, the traumatic experience of a past that one has not personally experienced, can have such a dominant presence in one's life. In Alicia Ghiragossian's "An Inconvenient Genocide," parts of which I discussed earlier, she speaks of the ever-present and life-affecting pain that the transmitted memory of the Genocide causes her:

Pain is always fresh
hidden
in the mysterious wiring
of the billions of cells
playing tricks on our mind
mingling with the vibrations
of our blood
infecting and affecting life. (16)

In "To Be an Armenian," she describes how hard it is to live with the burden of the transmitted memory. She calls it an Armenian obsession to let the world know,

how hard it is to survive
with the memories

of our lost ones
still fresh and vivid
in the folds of our minds.⁵⁴

Further along in "An Inconvenient Genocide," she attests to the trauma that was transmitted to the next generation:

Entire generations are born
with traumas
and psychic wounds
from those crimes.

I know it.
I am a victim. (27)

The past is lived like the present and sometimes it overtakes the present with such intensity that a subconscious present-time association with a memory of the past transports the second-generation survivor back to the time and place where the adopted past event occurred, and this despite the fact that he/she is not only a generation removed, but also at a temporal and geographical remove from the event. I have discussed this phenomenon as a common occurrence in the lives of first-generation survivors in *The Armenian Genocide in Literature*, citing a psychological explanation according to which the traumatic past produces ineffaceable "iconic images" that "pop up unbidden" as the result of a subtle sensory reminder that may be insignificant to the conscious mind.⁵⁵ It is significant that this phenomenon occurs among

⁵⁴ Ghiragossian, "To Be an Armenian," in *Stormy Seas We Brave*, comp. Moussa, p. 15.

⁵⁵ Perroomian, *The Armenian Genocide in Literature*, pp. 89-90, quoting the psychologist Marian M. MacCurdy, "From Trauma to Writing," in *Writing and Healing: Toward an Informed Practice*, ed. Charles M.

the children of Holocaust survivors too. Helen Epstein, both of whose parents survived the Holocaust, speaks of such unbidden mental images arising at idle moments: "the safe world fell away and I saw things I knew no little girl should see. Blood and shattered glass. Piles of skeletons and blackened barbed wire with bits of flesh stuck to it...." The images did not let go of her when she grew older. Crammed into a New York subway car at rush hour, "the Seventh Avenue local became a train of cattle cars on its way to Poland."⁵⁶ It should be noted here that Epstein's contribution to the understanding of the psychology and outlook of second-generation survivors is unmatched. In *Children of the Holocaust*, she speaks of the atmosphere in the home of a schoolmate whose parents were survivors too: "There was an intensity there, a kind of fierceness about living that was absent from the more casual, easygoing atmosphere of other homes. There was mystery of great consequence" (7). She felt an unnamed pain which she figuratively describes as an iron box, "collecting in darkness, always collecting, pictures, words, my parents' glances...." She knew that someday she would have to force open that box which was growing heavier and heavier with "undigested things." In order to reach that "most elusive part" of herself, she set out at the age of 29 to meet people who, like her, "were possessed by a history they had never lived" (5). The rest of her book contains her

Anderson and Marian M. MacCurdy (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2000), p. 162.

⁵⁶ Helen Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Survivors* (New York: Putnam, 1979), pp. 1-2.

interviews with the children of Holocaust survivors all over the world.

Diana Der Hovanessian experiences the strange feeling of being transported back into the past while driving at night, looking for "street signs in the dark," when a bizarre psychological mechanism sparks fleeting hallucinations: she reads "Channing" as *Chankeri*, and at the next turn, "Ayer" as *Ayash*. And she is with Siamanto, Rouben Sevak, Grigor Zohrab, and other Armenian poets, writers, and civic and religious leaders who were arrested in Constantinople on the eve of April 24 (11), 1915, and murdered in *Ayash* Prison on the road from *Chankeri*. She keeps asking herself, why this association? "What is that to me?/To us?" Coming to her senses, she manages to re-inhabit her safe New England environment where, she writes,

... No one comes at night for me.
I drive out at any hour. Or stay home
to write poems. And if the poems have
secret messages, no one cares. Poets
are ignored, not feared, not rounded up
at night and shipped to Ayash Prison
on the road from Chankeri.⁵⁷

Lorne Shirinian considers Diana Der Hovanessian an Armenian poet who "use[s] English like a native," but "absence and longing are [her] heritage." In a poem dedicated to "DDH" and titled "Armenian Poets," he writes about her close association with the dead land, with Armenia. "In the time warp called America/you mythologize the dead land/find yourself stranded between fable and reality." This

⁵⁷ Diana Der Hovanessian, "Ayash Prison," in *About Time*, p. 72.

close association produces hallucinatory encounters in Diana's life:

you spot Varoujan dancing in Harvard Square
you bump into Siamanto at Wordsworth's bookstore
you receive a phone call; Tourian is lost in Watertown.⁵⁸

But Shirinian himself is not immune to that strange feeling. He too is one of those Armenian poets who live in the present but dream of the past they have not experienced. In a long and complex abstract poem titled "Delirian,"⁵⁹ consisting of five parts—"Gynecology," "Etymology," "Geneology," "Delirian Bumps into Gigo," and "Delirian the Scribe"—Shirinian records the birth of his alter ego, Delirian, and his interest as a young boy in reading the bloody history of his parent's homeland, the massacres, and the two million of 1915, and looking at the pictures, "astray among the remnants/of his family." *Delirium* is the root of the lyric hero's chosen name and that is his predicament. Hallucinations of Geyve and Marsifon—birthplaces of the poet's parents—make his head spin and his pen incoherent. But he is the Scribe and so he must record: "1990/*In this bitter year/we are again betrayed/To the east they burn our people alive...*" (53).⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Lorne Shirinian, "Armenian Poets, for DDH" in *Earthquake: Poems* (Lewistown, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), pp. 18–19. Daniel Varoujan (Varouzhan) is another poet that Der Hovanessian admires. He too was murdered in 1915. Bedros Tourian (Petros Dourian) was a Constantinople-born Armenian poet who in his short life (1851–1872) left a rich legacy of romantic poetry and drama.

⁵⁹ Ibid., "Delirian," pp. 42–54.

⁶⁰ Shirinian uses italics to indicate the writings of Delirian the Scribe as witness within the text. The year 1990 marks the beginning of the Azerbaijani attacks on the Armenians of Artsakh (Karabagh). When

Delirian "wants to write a poem for his father's love/a poem to take his mother back to her miraculous orchard/Dips again his pen/invents his life/A R M E N I A." But he wakes up in his own home in Saint-Luc near Saint-Jean, across the Richelieu River from Iberville, covered in snow on an ice-cold morning. Still,

Inside
Delirian searches for his parents' home
tangible, urgent and absent
.....
Delirian dreams Armenia, l'Arménie, on the Richelieu
writing
in this bitter year (54)

In this extended poetic exploration—a kind of "therapy session" (*travail analytique*), as Janine Altounian might put it—the poet is perhaps subconsciously seeking a therapeutic effect.

Yeghern (the Catastrophe) produced enormous suffering and it visits the poet Vehanoush Tekian in her poetry and in her nightmares:

The face of Suffering grimaced and demanded its birth and death from me. It fused its death in me.... Sometimes, it descended like a whip upon the space of my memories. It has no right to live there; it knows that it does not, because I did not give birth to it, did not disparage or ruin it. I wasn't there listening to the dreadful current of the Euphrates.... That is the way it is. I cannot explain anything without *Yeghern*. There is no desire to accept anything when *Yeghern*,

there were massacres of Armenians living in Azerbaijani towns who dared to aspire to freedom from the tyrannical yoke of Azeri rule, Russia secretly and sometimes openly helped Azeris in their bloody campaign.

like a miserable wanderer, does not disappear from all my corridors.⁶¹

Testimonies of second-generation survivors have taught us that it is possible to relive in delirium, or in this case, in nightmares, the past that belongs not to you but to your parents, to your nation. Horrible scenes of the Genocide visit you at night when your mind's defenses are down and you are there. You are a victim. In "Transmission of Holocaust Trauma" (3), the psychologist Natan Kellermann reports the case of a man, not a Holocaust survivor but the *child* of a Holocaust survivor, who experienced a recurring nightmare in which, like his mother, he was trapped in the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. Kellermann explains this phenomenon, as I discussed earlier, as an instance of the transmission of trauma.

Janine Altounian uses Freud's "Constructions in Analysis" (1937) to explain the occurrence of episodes of delirium which are not rare among descendants of survivors of a great catastrophe. When horrible scenes which the survivor experienced in the distant past revisit the heir in the form of delirium—despite the fact that those scenes have no connection with the heir's life *per se*—she believes it happens because the heir is "haunted by the past which he cannot appropriate for lack of knowing where to put it, for lack of being able to historicize it in relation to the time and space of his own existence."⁶² Altounian's psychoanalytical approach

to her father's memoir and to the effects on her own psyche of the traumatic events recorded in his memoir—working out the transmission of the trauma—functioned as step-by-step therapy (*travail thérapeutique*) for her, as Freud prescribed.

In "The Shadows of Our Ancestors," Hakob Karapents describes being transported to Urfa via the same type of psychic association when he attended the annual conference of the Urban Renewal Federation of America (URFA) in Hartford, Connecticut.⁶³ Earlier that morning, he had paid a visit to the Glass House in nearby Sherman where Arshile Gorky (Vosdanig Adoian) created some of his masterpieces, lived the last days of his tormented life, and committed suicide. The new owner had completely renovated the house but Gorky's presence was undeniable. Indeed, the owner confided that he heard voices at night. Karapents infers that Gorky must have been discussing his work with Toros Roslin and Sarkis Pitsak.⁶⁴

Under the influence of these icons of the past and convinced that the spirits of our ancestors follow us everywhere, Karapents (as Jack Karapetian, the American reporter) then proceeded to the urban renewal conference where everyone was wearing a name tag with the acronym URFA. Next, instead of the opening address by the president of URFA, he hears Neshan Peshiktashlian recounting the valorous defense of Urfa against the Turkish army in 1915 and paying tribute to the men and women who fought to the last

⁶¹ Vehanoush Tekian, "Mokhiré tsai" [Cinder tree], a work in three parts, in *Hragir* [Writing of fire], ed. Abgar Apinian (Yerevan: "Nor Dar" Press, 2000), pp. 141–98. Quotation from part 3–A, pp. 171–2.

⁶² Altounian, "Parcours d'un écrit de survivant," pp. 129–30.

⁶³ Hakob Karapents, "Mer nakhnik'neri stvernerē" [The shadows of our ancestors], in *Ankatar* [Incomplete], pp. 33–49.

⁶⁴ Toros Roslin and Sarkis Pitsak were renowned painters and illuminators of Armenian manuscripts, active in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, respectively.

breath before they surrendered to the Turkish sword.⁶⁵ Dumbfounded, Karapents realized once again that "the shadow of my ancestors was hanging onto all the years of my life's journey, as an instinct for perpetuation and the call of blood, as an anchor of existence" (40). Then, in a stark digression from his contemplation of the spiritual impact of the recent past on present reality, the author switches to a story of Vahagn and Astghik, the pagan Armenian gods of war and courage and love and beauty. Reincarnated in sight of his actual location in Manhattan, they yet retain their mythic semblance as they make love and then sink back into the past while still casting their shadows over every Armenian he meets. He concludes that,

[O]ur nation is eternal because it carries the tradition of the ancestors who come to us as messages in myriad voices. We do not forget the past, knowing that our today and tomorrow are built upon it.... I do not mean a petrified worship of the past, but we should know that nations live the lives of their great men. If we forget Abovian,⁶⁶ we will have forgotten ourselves. (49)

The second generation's strong association with the past which I have discussed in this section is unrelated to whether or not the parents shared their experience during the Genocide

⁶⁵ Neshan Peshiktashlian (Beshiktashlian) was an Armenian poet, writer, and satirist (b. 1892, Constantinople, d. 1972, Paris).

⁶⁶ The renowned nineteenth-century writer Khachatur Abovian advocated and used the Armenian vernacular in lieu of Grabar, the classical form of the language which had become unintelligible. He wrote the first Armenian novel in the vernacular of his time and for the first time chose as his subject Persia's tyrannical rule over Eastern Armenia.

or kept it secret. The family atmosphere also reflected in child-rearing practices differed from that in the mainstream societies of the New World. And that family atmosphere left its imprint on the children's behavior and on their relationship to the outside world.

Alienation, marginality, over-dependence

When second-generation survivors raised in the strict environment of their parents' home began to come of age and enter mainstream society, they were confronted with their own alienation and marginality. Their parents had met the demanding challenge of adjusting to a totally new environment by creating Armenian ghettos and locking themselves in. Sticking together and seeking solace in each other's company was their principal tool of survival and self-perpetuation. There, in the safety and security of their closed society, they could practice their culture, avoid confrontation with the prejudice and suspicion of mainstream society, and preserve their identity.

They raised their children in the close atmosphere of the extended family and within the trusted Armenian community, inculcating a strong sense of Armenianness with admonishments like, "You are Armenian and don't you forget it," or "My family perished in the desert and you have to compensate for their loss by staying close to your roots." The technique they employed was to accentuate cultural, religious, and ethnic differences in favor of what is Armenian. Some families had the luxury of sending their children to Armenian schools, especially in Middle Eastern countries, which helped maintain strong ties to their roots. In Europe and America,

Armenian schools were a much later development, and in most cases they were established on church property under the auspices of the community's civic and religious leadership. Children growing up in this ghettoized atmosphere were not exposed to the outside world until their teen years when they were given some freedom to visit classmates, which gave them the opportunity to observe the differences. In most cases, however, children attended local public schools at an earlier age and were immediately immersed in mainstream culture or, in some cases, in multiculturalism.

For many second-generation Armenian survivors, their first exposure was equivalent to culture shock, a violent clash between the old Armenian ways and the more relaxed mores and manners of mainstream society. It required rethinking their Armenian education and strict nationalism and possibly a necessary adjustment of attitude which they handled in different ways. More often than not, entrance into mainstream society from a strict Armenian home caused problematic societal behaviors such as alienation and feelings of marginality.

Mary Terzian, author of *The Immigrants' Daughter*, experienced culture shock after she graduated from the Armenian Community School in Cairo and her father agreed (after a great deal of domestic turmoil) to send her to the Immaculate Conception School which was run by Irish nuns.⁶⁷ She observes that,

⁶⁷ It should be noted here that the Armenian community in Egypt, resident mostly in Cairo and Alexandria, had an extensive history of prosperous existence in these cities, with long-established schools, churches, and press and other cultural and political organizations and institutions. Armenians maintained social and business interactions with

To be absorbed into the foreign culture means enduring transformation that is partly suicide, partly betrayal, and partly reincarnation. Which part of the identity will be kept, which sector will be reshaped, and which segment will be abandoned are subject to debate. (182)

In *Orphan in the Sands*, Virginia Haroutunian tells of her shock when she discovered that her family's lifestyle—their daily rituals and cultural practices—was different from that of everyone else in her class. After observing the difference between the strict oversight of her Armenian parents and the freedom that was given to her American friends, she protested to her mother but Victoria wouldn't budge. She was firmly convinced that the Armenian way of raising children (or the Old Country way) was better than permitting such behavior as going out with friends and even dating which she considered "improper and immoral." "Only street girls sit in a car alone with a boy," she chided her daughter (74). Virginia felt "a growing sense of isolation and depression" and an intense desire to become a true American, to cast out everything foreign—from Armenian values to daily rituals—and blend into the society she was living in (56). But she could not. She was not like her school friends. She was shy and timid.

Egyptian society at large. Refugees of the 1915 deportations and massacres who joined this established social structure were inclined to stay within the boundaries of their own community and had difficulty opening up to Egyptian society. This was also the case in other Middle Eastern countries with established Armenian communities. Many survivors who took refuge in those countries could not, would not master the local language and for the most part remained confined in their dealings and relationships within the boundaries of the Armenian community.

Harmful feelings of marginality, isolation, and alienation generate an array of consequences. In Virginia's case, she was driven to overeating: Armenian bread, halva, these and other rich Armenian foods served as substitutes that gave her some gratification. But now she was overweight and unattractive to the boys in her class. When she graduated from high school, she spent Prom Night alone in her room, crying.⁶⁸ Without a date, she couldn't attend the lavish party that every high school senior so eagerly anticipates (60-61).

In a short story titled "December 31,"⁶⁹ Vahé Oshagan depicts the case of a son's total estrangement in reaction to the perceived excessive demands of the family atmosphere. Vartges is the son of Barsegh Chelebian, a famous intellectual and the editor of *Hay khosnak* newspaper (the symbolic title means "the Armenian speaker"). "Vartges spoke Armenian fluently (շուրի պէս հայերէն կը խօսէր)," until one day he came home from school and declared that he had forgotten Armenian altogether. After he married an *odar*, he went away and never looked back, leaving his father helpless and alone, with no one to care for him in his old age.

Armenian social history and anecdotal evidence from second-generation survivors show that, like their parents, they too experienced prejudice and discrimination and sometimes insurmountable difficulty in adjusting, yet their challenges

⁶⁸ The prom (short for promenade), a popular tradition in the USA and gaining currency in Canada and the UK, is a semi-formal dance or gathering attended by graduating high school students at the end of their last term. They typically attend the event in couples. In many instances, the party turns into an unrestrained good time, and for some couples, a decisive moment in their future.

⁶⁹ Vahé Oshagan, *Dektember 31*, in *T'akardin shurj*, pp. 283-2.

were different in nature from the challenges faced by first-generation survivors. The children of refugee families were more exposed to the mainstream lifestyle, culture, and education as a matter of course, and thus they adapted to them more easily. But in many cases, these children were caught between two worlds, foreign to both and marginalized by both. And in many cases, this resulted in frustration, resignation, self-effacement, even hatred of one's people.

Virginia Haroutunian (*Orphan in the Sands*) was embarrassed by her parents' unpolished behavior. Whenever they spoke Armenian in public, it invited curious looks, which was really embarrassing the day they helped her move into her dormitory at the University of Michigan (64). But curiously, the 50 miles between home and school failed to reduce her dependence on her mother. It was a strange symbiosis. Virginia hated Victoria but followed her lead in every decision and couldn't live without her. She couldn't keep a boyfriend because she refused physical contact, but deep down, she thought Victoria would be proud of her for rejecting intimacy. When she was offered a job that would take her to California and give her a chance to be independent, she even turned that down when Victoria disapproved of the move (78-9).

Growing up in the 1930s in Racine, Wisconsin, David Kherdian personally experienced discrimination and prejudice on the part of the locals against the children of refugee families. His mother's belief and that of other Armenian parents in the superiority of the Armenian character and cultural heritage, as well as the youth group activities sponsored by the Armenian Church, only generated mixed

feelings of infantile pride and the awareness of a mysterious attachment he wanted to escape:

evening lessons in our language,
as well as plays, recitations,
and skits in the downstairs hall.
.....
and the gathering with
children all of my blood
Kept me moored to the sorrow,
the pain of the past;
our present situation
that I wished to escape from
as our parents had not from theirs:
our victimized past that all of us shared.
I was troubled, uneasy, proud, ashamed....⁷⁰

The cultural polarization, as Kherdian attests, was confusing and destructive for the first generation of children born in America, or for that matter, in Europe or in any other discriminatory environment. They were "forced either into a posture of bragging, lying, or withdrawal," in any case, "abnormal" behavior. "None of us were normal."⁷¹ David's choice was to withdraw, to escape from it all: "Rejection was my salvation for a time."⁷² Where was the breaking point in these children's lives, if there was a breaking point? When did they find a happy medium where they could feel comfortable and experience the opportunities of the New World without shedding their ethnic pride and their inherited culture? For their parents, these children were too Americanized. Outside

⁷⁰ David Kherdian, "From *My Racine*," in *Forgotten Bread*, pp. 333-4.

⁷¹ Ibid., "Our Block," p. 328-30.

⁷² Ibid., "From *My Racine*," p. 334.

of their ghetto, they were too Armenian. Kherdian's return occurred years after his father's death. That was when he came back

on my own
to absorb what I had refused
But consciously
and to shed as consciously
what impeded the needs
the requirements
the daily bread
of my immortal soul.⁷³

The last lines of this evocative poem explain Kherdian's choice of the title for the anthology of "first-generation Armenian American writers" that he edited. "Forgotten bread" is just that essential, life-giving daily bread of the soul to which he and many in his generation returned after a period of rejection, alienation, and withdrawal from everything Armenian.

For Helene Pilibosian (*My Literary Profile*), the polarity between the outside world and her Armenian home in the Boston area was a source of constant tension during her childhood and adolescence, resulting in fits of resentment and rebellion at home and alienation and marginality outside. "Home was always very much Armenian, and school was very much American" (37). Pilibosian bears witness to the segregated Armenian life, "gathered into a close-knit community like other immigrant groups by mutual understanding and by customs and attitudes that differed from those of better-established Americans" (39). Among

⁷³ Ibid.

these first-generation survivors, there was also the need to communicate with others who had suffered the loss of family and relatives during the Genocide, to communicate with relatives in the same predicament, a predicament they cherished as a "valuable commodity they possessed." Consequently they felt themselves foreign and alienated from the larger local society. Their children picked up this feeling at home and from remarks by their teachers or other children (45). Armenians were looked down upon in school and in the workplace, especially when they spoke Armenian (40). The result was a sense of humiliation, "the common Armenian inferiority complex" (39) that spread across the second-generation survivors and generated different interpretations and reactions.

Helene observes, for example, that "ethnic children will sometimes reject the food that reminds them of the ethnicity they feel makes them inferior to others in the country whose groups are more dominant in the culture" (36). They rebel and refuse to learn the Armenian language, as Helene did. Many rebelled yet still remained stranded between the demanding atmosphere at home and the margins of mainstream society, incapable of mixing with the popular kids, which their parents thought was crazy. "I was thus a square according to my training, wasn't popular, didn't know how to be popular..." (52). Helene admits that in her youth she had "an inferiority complex about being an Armenian, that is, the child of immigrants whose language and ways were ethnic." But she got over her inferiority complex, in part because Americans came to accept the concept of ethnic and cultural diversity and not to despise foreigners (214-15).

This generation was marginalized and looked down upon by mainstream society because of their language and ethnic background. Ironically, they got neither sympathy nor support from their parents who could not understand the modern ways of their offspring. Pilibosian did not share her poems with her parents because they would never have understood them. "For them it was part of another world they didn't feel part of because for the most part they were physical immigrants struggling to get by and mentally having a hard time adjusting" (293). "So there was always this wall between us, this lack of comprehension each of the other and of being able to communicate with each other except on a surface level" (68-9).

The ghettoization of Armenian survivors of the Genocide did not occur only in Europe or America, as one might imagine it did. Even in Middle Eastern countries, these refugees preferred to live close together in impenetrable communities. Perhaps a major factor here was the difference of religion: they were Christian Armenians in a sea of Muslims. In *The Immigrants' Daughter*, Mary Terzian describes the Armenian community in wartime and post-WWII Cairo, where the culture, life-style, and Islamic traditions were not drastically different from those of the Ottoman Empire. She writes that even though "Egyptians look[ed] favorably upon foreign settlers," the refugees among "the estimated 40,000 strong Armenian community living in Cairo" still preferred to live close to each other and clung to their "homeland mentality, refusing to accept change." They believed that change would work against their very being, their Armenianness, and diminish their sense of belonging to their

lost homeland. "We are Armenians and nothing will ever change that," her parents kept repeating. They instilled in their children the importance of keeping their faith and their language, as Armenians had done for centuries, and Mary grew up "insulated from the world" (11).

But all that couldn't last forever. When Mary graduated from primary school, she was ready to begin a new phase of life, but her father's iron-clad rules mercilessly smashed her dreams.

I reach the threshold of my teens without displaying any signs of normalcy defined by the image that Father imported from his native provincial town in Historic Armenia, now Eastern Turkey. That image has been frozen in his memory for forty years and at this time I have to live up to it as a young girl in Cairo—a bustling, Westernized, modern city. The generation gap, in our case, is an abyss. Is it any wonder that whenever we meet, we collide? (119)

The generation gap, the collision of the old and the new, the younger generation's resistance to the old ways had dire consequences, including alienation in many cases. In spite of the conservative comportment Mary adopted for herself, she was not prepared to compromise with her father and stepmother and fit herself into the traditional mold as they wanted her to do. She cringed every time her father started off with, "back in our time," or whenever he repeated his perennial question, "What do girls need education for?... Once a woman earns money, you can't control her" (119–20). Mary grew more and more determined to go her own way as her studies and her intense reading habit met with remarks like "Those books are raping your mind!" Her father didn't

understand that without a caring mother, books were her "guiding light.... They provide excitement, exhilaration, dreams and a bridge to the outside world" (121). Her growing aspiration for the dignity and equality of her gender intensified her estrangement from her father and her stepmother.

Nor was Mary's older brother immune from the effects of the generation gap, their father's insistence on the old ways, and the strict family atmosphere. He was a bird ready to fly the nest and the 1946–1948 campaign to repatriate Armenians from all over the world to Soviet Armenia was the best opportunity. He found a solution, though in the long run it apparently proved not to be ideal.

Mary had attended a community-supported Armenian primary school in Cairo where the Armenian spirit was instilled in the students, and as she grew up, she came to understand why

graduation from Armenian school, even from kindergarten, is so meaningful in our immigrant community. We represent the sprouts of a massacred generation. Every commencement is regeneration from the ashes and a triumph over the perpetrators who wanted to erase our nation from the face of the earth. (61)

Given her upbringing, it is no surprise that even as an adult entering the job market, Mary Terzian had not mastered Arabic, the language of her birthplace and of her parents' host country. Despite this inadequacy, she has impressive sociological insight. Her account of growing up in Cairo demonstrates an awareness of the relationship between her own personal experience and the wider society. Her

description of the advent of World War II, the air raids in Cairo, the changes in the lives of her extended family, in her neighborhood, and in the city as a whole exemplifies her perceptive awareness.

Also impressive is Mary's take on the political turmoil in Egypt. She remembers the date when everything started. It was January 26, 1952. There were demonstrators in the street shouting anti-British slogans and Cairo was on fire.⁷⁴ Terzian's vivid description of that time evokes the dangerous proximity of disaster threatening the lives of every Egyptian, but why is it that Armenians felt the threat more intensely? The memory of the deportations and the years of horror came alive not only in those who had experienced them but also in those who did not have that firsthand experience. The Catastrophe was deep-seated in their psyches too. Terzian remembers the calamity her parents suffered. "Their stories now loom large, as we feel the impact of reality with our own eyes.... 'What shall become of us now?'" (237).

The segregated Armenian communities in Lebanon, whether in Beirut or Anjar or other smaller concentrations, structured around their own schools, churches, cultural and athletic organizations, social clubs, and businesses in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s provided a safe, secure, and totally Armenian environment for Herant Katchadourian and his generation to grow up independently of mainstream Lebanese culture and education. It was only in the late 1960s that Arabic as the state language was mandated and enforced as the

medium of instruction throughout the entire school system. It was a bit different for the Armenian Protestant community, as Herant describes it in *The Way It Turned Out*. Graduating from the Armenian parochial school system and entering the American University of Beirut in 1950, his involvement in Protestant youth groups "gradually weaned me away from these more nationalistic interests." He preferred "to be judged as an individual rather than as a member of one or another ethnic or national group," another characteristic of Protestant upbringing. But was that plausible? By his own contention, it "meant being a perpetual foreigner, and out of place" (54-5).

The feeling of marginality sank in more deeply when Herant came to the United States in 1958. Being out of place became an inevitable part of his immigrant experience. However, unlike the first-generation survivors who had immigrated to America, he did not have an "Old Country" to relate to or yearn for. He was a foreigner everywhere, neither alienated nor oppressed, but different (69). In *The Way It Turned Out*, he ponders his identity as an American with Armenian roots and likens his predicament to that of

Americans whose ethnic identity is less diluted and is a crucial part of their historical experience, often by way of discrimination and persecution. Being an Armenian in the waning years of Ottoman Turkey was not a cultural nicety but a serious matter. In 1915 it would have amounted to a death sentence. (53)

In quest for his identity, Herant Katchadourian returns to his mother's memoir from which he drew the courage to write his own memoir and begin the difficult journey of self-assessment and recognition. As he recapitulates his mother's romance

⁷⁴ The political upheaval and the wave of unrest lasted a few months and ended with the abdication of King Farouk, his departure on July 26, 1952, and the establishment of a military regime in Egypt.

with Ramzi, the young Persian, without commentary of his own, he comes to an extraordinary realization. He always knew that he had nothing in common with his father, that they were different in every way, although they shared feelings of mutual love and respect. Pondering Ramzi's character, outlook, and behavior, he now sees how much he resembles him. "Had my mother raised me as a substitute for Ramzi?" He can't help thinking that Ramzi's death affected not only his mother's life but his own life too (64-5).

Gerard Chaliand, the French-Armenian historian, writer, and poet, was born in 1934. The son of a survivor of the Genocide, he grew up with the stories of his grandmother who was also a survivor. Perhaps it was the intense inculcation of this history of blood and tears that made him want to forget that he was heir to a genocide as his "immediate past" and to free himself from "the influence of the tribe and the circle of old women telling their bloody beads." Chaliand's estrangement lasted a quarter of a century, a period during which he broke all links with his origins "in order to try and live out human adventures." During that period, he built a career as a highly respected expert on armed conflict and strategic international relations, only to come back to a realization of the undeniable effects of the Genocide.⁷⁵

In some families of Genocide survivors, it is not so much the strict upbringing or the intense inculcation of Armenianness, but the parent's overprotectiveness that

⁷⁵ Gerard Chaliand, "Memory of My Memory," in *Armenian Review* 40/1-157 (Spring 1987): 1-12, trans. Gareth McCavanaugh. I have discussed Chaliand's perception of his inherited past in greater detail in *And Those Who Continued Living in Turkey after 1915*, pp. 165-8.

becomes a source of resentment or excessive dependence on the part of the survivor-child. Virginia Haroutunian's life is a case in point, as she herself recounts in *Orphan in the Sands*. She grew up insecure and excessively dependent on others for their approval of everything she did. She was never able to make decisions about her life, her career, or her relationships. The source of this insecurity was, of course, her extreme dependence on her parents, but strangely enough, she could not live apart from them even when her psychologist-therapist advised her to do so in order to gain independence and think of her future. The shadows of *Hayreeg* and *Mayreeg* followed her everywhere, and their advice, or better said, their warnings sounded loud and clear even when they were not present.

Alice Tashjian, the author of *Silences: My Mother's Will to Survive*, grew up in a more relaxed atmosphere and was less subject to overpowering parental control, but neither was she immune from restriction. Her mother had apparently suffered at the hands of Muslim men. Although she never talked about it explicitly, subtle clues in her life story indicate that she was sexually abused while living in a Turkish house. She wanted to protect her daughter from men lest she too become a victim like herself. "As a child," Alice writes, "I found this difficult to understand. All the time I was growing up, mother advised me to protect myself from being alone with men. She was so emphatic, I was many times left in tears" (88n24). But now, as a grown woman writing her mother's story, Alice finally understands the reason for her mother's overprotectiveness.

Diana Der Hovanessian tries to explain this post-Genocide diasporan Armenian reality:

why Armenian children
are raised with so much
wonder, as if they
might disappear
at any moment

Were parents afraid of losing their children in a mishap? Did they fear the recurrence of a disaster, once again in their lifetime? Their past life was different, unlike the mostly normal lives of their neighbors. Their attitude and outlook had to be different too. Der Hovanessian asks,

why everything
is slightly different
in an Armenian home

But she knows the answer. She knows the psychology of a nation subjected to an inexplicable calamity.

Children of massacre,
children of destruction,
children of dispersion,
oh, my diaspora.⁷⁶

Mary Terzian, in *The Immigrants' Daughter*, has a simple explanation for her father's overreaction to her walking to school through the busy streets of Cairo when political unrest has just broken out. "Of course, Father is a genocide survivor, one who has seen rape, murder, and death as regular casualties of political strife. I am an immortal teenager" (184). That was the big difference between her generation, born in

the free world, and her parents' generation with the tragic experience they endured. She has a self-confidence that prevented excessive dependence and helped develop free thinking and easier adjustment to new environments.

The personal narratives examined in this section (and the one short story) are perfect examples of the transmission of the parents' traumatic experience to their offspring. They also speak to the "conscious and direct effects of parents on their children," as Natan Kellermann puts it in "Transmission of Holocaust Trauma." He refutes the social learning theory that would cast genocide survivors as "inadequate parents." He continues, "Their multiple losses were assumed to create childrearing problems around both attachment and detachment" (10). He concludes that these phenomena are merely manifestations of the transmission of trauma and have nothing to do with inadequacy in childrearing.

Chasing the silences and mysterious gaps

The second-generation survivor-writer who wanted to tell the world about his or her family ordeal was not always so fortunate as to have the full cooperation of a survivor parent to provide the raw material. Even if these writers did have the opportunity to hear and record their parents' life stories, the narratives were often full of mysterious gaps and unexplained interruptions.

In *Silences*, Alice Tashjian's mother, Frances Iskouhi, did not refuse to talk about her life during the Genocide. She usually told Alice her stories when mother and daughter were preparing dinner for the family. Alice knew that her mother told her stories to keep her working, but she didn't mind: "I

⁷⁶ Diana Der Hovanessian, "Diaspora," in *About Time*, p. 22.

thrilled at the drama of her early life as an Armenian young woman in Sivas." But her mother's narratives never flowed smoothly. There were always long pauses, and Alice notes that she "carefully evaluated how much she could bear to remember and how much she elected to preserve for those of us who followed" (1). There were also the euphemisms she used in order to tell her story to a young girl. For example, when she was recounting the gendarmes' nightly raids, she said, "Many young women, these awful men took to bed and did to them what men do in bed. You know" (42). Alice was only gradually let in on a full understanding of her mother's suffering and painful struggle to survive. As a child, all she knew about her mother's past was that she had had an adventurous life and that had made her seem different, "exciting and different from other mothers in our Protestant Anglo-American neighborhood" (1).

One day when Alice was a little older, she noticed pox-like scars on her mother's hands and asked what they were. If they were smallpox scars, why were they only on her hands? "She was silent for several minutes," perhaps considering whether Alice was old enough to take it. Then she related an incident that had occurred when she was in her late teens (4). Reading Iskouhi's life story, we know that this incident belongs to the period when she had lost her family and was wandering alone in unfamiliar places. It was during that period that a Turkish woman took the hungry wanderer in, on condition she teach the woman's fifteen-year-old daughter the English language which was now becoming popular with Turkish families. She made Iskouhi recite a Muslim prayer and gave her a Turkish name. Iskouhi didn't mind as long as

she had a safe place to sleep and food to eat. But things did not go well with the Turkish teenager. "Not only was she defiant and uncooperative in learning the language, she took demonic delight in putting out her cigarettes on my, the *gavour's* (non-believer's), hands" (6). This was Alice's first introduction to her mother's dark and gloomy trek in the land of death.

Iskouhi had lost her mother and two sisters during the deportation and continued on alone, with "no clothes, no food, no water, no sisters, no mother... no God" (44). And then, "A man came and asked me, 'Would you like to go with me?' I decided to go with that man" (45). He took her to his cottage and she lived there for several months. There is no discussion of her life during that period. Her daughter, or the future grandchildren for whom she told these stories, did not need to know more. She always managed to skip over that part of her story. The unmentionable life with the Turk was a secret she rigorously kept to herself. But at the same time, it was a source of her lasting shame and apprehension, shaping a distorted idea of the man-woman relationship.

There were certainly gaps in Alice's mother's story. Alice needed to chase those silences and fill in the mysterious gaps if she wanted to tell her mother's story for the world to know: "Her stories were selected remembrances of events she chose to tell" (7-8). Passing remarks such as "After unspeakable tortures..." without any further elaboration, made Alice stop and think (40). What was the meaning of these mysterious silences? Was her mother afraid of upsetting the tranquility of the family life she had so resolutely built? Who would be hurt more, those who heard what she tried so hard to forget, or she herself?

In an attempt to fill in the gaps and untie the knots, Alice conducted interviews with other women survivors who had had similar experiences after her mother passed away (86n20). She specifically mentions an interview with Haiganoush Tatarian Klidjian, her mother's best friend and companion during a later period of the deportation. In graphic terms, Haiganoush described the torturous experiences that Frances Iskouhi had left out, repeatedly asking Alice, "Why she did not tell you?" (86n25).

Now Alice more clearly understood the rationale behind her mother's selectivity and restraint. Not only had she protected her daughter from the effects of such horrendous details, but she had also chosen not to remember and relive those painful moments. Alice reports that, "Many times after one of our mother-daughter talks, she awoke in the night drenched in perspiration from bad dreams..." (8). Whenever Alice insisted on hearing the details, her mother said, "It is over. I am in America. I am free now until I die. Let me forget" (8).

Frances intentionally skipped over the sexual assaults she had endured. The pattern of her story suggests the reality which she never related frankly. This was common among women survivors. Very few had the courage and the audacity to talk about their rape or their forced conjugal life with a Muslim man, rescuer or abductor.

Margaret Ajemian Ahnert's mother, Ester, was one of those brave women who exposed every detail to her daughter and persuaded her to write her story down for the world to see the magnitude of the atrocities committed against Armenian women and young girls. We witness her audacity in

Margaret's *Knock at the Door*. Fighting the ravages caused by her horrible memories, Ester courageously broached the story of Yousouf Bey, the retired military officer who adopted her and then raped her (103). The horrible irony is that Yousouf's wife Hanum, who had promised to take care of Ester as the daughter she had never had and always wanted, "took me as a whore for her husband" (111-17). Ester did not conceal her three years of conjugal life with the Turk who had saved her from being killed. He took her as a wife but after he found out she was not a virgin, he beat her regularly (138). She endured the beatings and the cursing and the insults to her religion and her ancestors with the hope and the determination to flee to freedom one day. And when she finally did escape and returned to her hometown, she was chastised and insulted by those who had avoided deportation by converting to Islam and who wanted to forget the dark years. "*Mortseer* [*Morts'ir!* Forget!] became the word they all used" (173). Ester was scorned because she "fell in 'black dye' and will never be pure again" (167). "Fallen in black dye" was an Armenian euphemism for someone who had slept with the enemy.

It was easy to be judgmental; they had not seen what survivors like Ester had seen. Postwar Armenian society in Turkey was fearful of continuing government persecution, and in order to safeguard the secret of their survival, they never spoke of the past and avoided people like Ester who reminded them of the dark years. Openness and healing were the way of a few courageous men and women like Ester.

It was a different silence that Krikor (Grigor) Beledian chased. He argued that the first-generation survivor-writers

who penned their autobiographies—such as Mushegh Ishkhan and Andranik Tsarukian—wrote about their orphanhood,

but the life of the [concentration] camps, the tent-cities of Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt, is in none of them.... The remnants of those tent-cities still existed when I was a child; they gradually disappeared. They should have served as the reality for the writers before us.

(Parenthetically, it is only natural for the younger generation to reject the preceding generation; theorists of psychology since Freud have explained the phenomenon. Beledian experienced it as a schoolboy when he was writing poetry. He recalled his teacher, Mushegh Ishkhan, criticizing his style and remarked, "At an age when we want to establish ourselves, inevitably we come face to face with the elders. Nevertheless, misunderstanding often leads to re-forming.")⁷⁷

There were indeed survivors from Mush, Erzurum, and Cilicia, as well as from Giurun (Gürün), Beledian's father's hometown, all crammed together in Hayashen, a poorer quarter of Beirut where Krikor spent his childhood. He knew them, and he remembered their lifestyle and traditions, and through them he strove to close that gap in the survivor literature, "to preserve the vestiges of the irreversible loss."⁷⁸ Even at the start of his career as a poet and literary critic, he was acutely aware of that calling, but it took him many long

⁷⁷ From an autobiographical sketch Beledian submitted for inclusion in the program for the launch of his book, *Harvatsē* (The shot), hosted by the Hamazkayin organization in Los Angeles, June 4, 1999.

⁷⁸ Krikor, interview with Varouzh Sourenian, Yerevan, 2006, published in *Handes grakanut'ian ev arvesti* 16 (Summer 2007): 6–21. Quotation from p. 14.

years of intensive research in the papers of the period of the *Aghet* (Catastrophe) before he finally brought his project to fruition. And that meant transcending the formal requirements of poetry and bursting into creative prose. Was it not the torrent of talent and creativity as well as the inadequacy of his usual instrument that drove Ludwig van Beethoven to resort to human voices to build the climax of his Ninth Symphony and of his life's work?

Krikor Beledian was born in 1945 in the mostly Armenian-populated Hayashen quarter in Beirut. He graduated from the Neshan Palanjian Jemaran (Armenian high school) in 1964 and earned his M.A. in philosophy at the Sorbonne in Paris. He returned to Beirut and took various teaching positions. As a bold and innovative step in search of a new direction for post-Genocide Armenian literature, he, together with Krikor Chahinian (Grigor Shahinian) and Harutiun Kurkchian, launched *Ahegan*, a journal that was published from 1966 to 1970. Beledian eventually settled in Paris where he received a doctoral degree in philosophy in 1975 and began teaching Armenian language and literature at the National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations (INALCO). He earned his second doctorate in comparative literature from the Sorbonne in 1995.

Now Beledian was ready to bring his project to fruition. He portrayed the Genocide and its destructive consequences in *Anunē lezvis tak* (The name under my tongue, 2003), within a complex structure, moving back and forth in time, connecting the past (the period of the Genocide) with the present (the testimonies of survivors in Beirut) and with the narrator's present time in the 1960s, erasing the memory gap and

painting the reality as it was and as it is.⁷⁹ He followed his original plan unchanged in a series of "novels," from *Harvatsē* (The shot, 1998) to *Erkuk'* (Two, 2006). The past lives in the present, and if the proper plan is laid and the gaps are filled in now, the present will be remembered too. The major characters in his novels are survivors; they live simple lives

⁷⁹ See Talar Chahinian, "Western Armenian in Peril: UNESCO's Recognition and the Question of Contemporary Literature in the Exilic Language," *Ashurez*, August 4, 2010. Here I quote the section pertaining to Beledian's novel for the importance of Chahinian's observations:

In his 2003 novel *Anunē lezuis dag* [The name on the tip of my tongue]... Beledian addresses what it means for a post-traumatic culture in dispersion to produce the novel, by addressing the problem of representing the 1915 genocide through a web of narrative threads. In addition to navigating an array of circular and fragmented narrative layers, the novel oscillates between multiple points of view and between the dominant Western Armenian literary form and passages in Classical and Eastern Armenian, the Mush dialect, and colloquial Turkish-Armenian. Through its scenes that constantly switch time and locale—from lecture halls in France of the 1960s, to the Armenian neighborhoods of Beirut in the 1950s, to the Mush region of historic Armenia in 1915—the novel presents a critique of history, meta-narratives, and mimetic representation, both generally and with particular regard to the Armenian Catastrophe.

Ultimately, the novel performs the failure of Language in the attempt at mimetic representation of a catastrophe, for it understands catastrophe as an event that defies meaning and one that, therefore, cannot be represented through a linguistic system of signs aimed at creating and perpetuating it. Though it highlights the impossibility of representing the 1915 Catastrophe as an event, the novel succeeds, however, in representing the experience of the Catastrophe by placing the loss of "national" language (Western Armenian) on display. In essence, the novel claims that what is catastrophic about 1915 is precisely the fact that it cannot be represented through Language (in general) while being equated to loss of national language (in particular).

full of love and hatred, struggle and pain, and the story of the massacres and deportations lives through them.

Beledian is not a fan of autobiographies, or better said, he disapproves of the influence of an author's biography on the critical analysis of his work. "But we have to know it," as he said in one of his lectures. Not valuing autobiography highly, he has not written one. His novels are not autobiographical, although he is present with his protagonists as a child playing in the street or listening to the elders' tales of the past. In one of his prose pieces, however, he evokes his grandmother whom he never knew who, perhaps starving, sick, and miserable, made it to the orphanage, left her two daughters there, and then died. Beledian's mother was one of those orphan girls.⁸⁰

The "event" remained a mysterious shadow, an object of unsatisfied curiosity for Mary Terzian, *The Immigrants' Daughter*. Reference to the horrible past at a picnic or a family gathering was somehow inevitable, as when the elders traded remarks about one of Mary's uncles: "'[He] drank himself to death; as if he felt guilty for being alive...' 'I can't blame the man. He witnessed the murder of his whole family right under his eyes...' 'That would have driven me insane...'" (15). On another occasion, "a scarred lady" told the story of how she

⁸⁰ Beledian, "Dzit'eniin iravichaknerē" [The states of the olive tree], in *Ēr* [There was] (Erevan: Committee of Relations with the Diaspora, 1992), pp. 40–52. In another autobiographical sketch that he reluctantly sent to Minas Tölölyan for inclusion in his massive anthology, Beledian notes that his parents were fresh from orphanages in Aleppo when they made their home in Hayashen, then a new quarter of Beirut where the mostly poor and humble survivors lived. See *Dar mē grakanut'iun* [A century of literature], ed. Tölölyan, vol. 2 (1920–1980) (New York: Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, 1982), p. 561.

escaped death: "I was thrown into a pit, on a pile of children. I was near the top. They poured gasoline on us and somebody lit a match. The cries pierced my ears. I would have burned up if a Kurdish man hadn't pulled me out..." At that point, Mary's mother interrupted and ordered her daughter to leave the room (24). Another time, she tore the newspaper out of Mary's hands and slapped her when she failed to obey her order to stop reading a detailed article on the various tortures people were subjected to during the deportations and the special treatment meted out to young women (68).

After Mary's mother died, she felt a sense of remorse that she would never know the story of how she had suffered and survived (69), but she pursued the gaps, and the revelation came some years later when she was rooming at the YWCA. Her roommate, an older woman and a genocide victim, told her about the horrors she had gone through. "We used to put ashes on our cheeks in order to look ugly... otherwise the soldiers would come after us. So many of the girls were taken by force..." (256). So that was why Mary's mother did not want her to know the rest of the story. She did not want her to know what had happened to the girls. Was she one of them?

In a family system with this model of communication—or rather, tacit communication—the transmission of trauma undoubtedly occurs but the gaps and lapses in the stories are enigmatic and confusing, to say the least. According to Natan Kellermann in "Transmission of Holocaust Trauma," that may be why children have difficulty "when trying to connect their vague sensations of fear, sadness and vulnerability with actual memories of the experience of growing up with Holocaust survivor parents" (12). These are the psychological effects.

Important for this section, however, is the second generation's relentless drive to find out what they missed when they might have learned but were not sufficiently interested to know. Pursuit of the truth in detail concerning the facts of their family's experience as well as the collective experience is another indication of the unabating pain suffered by the second generation.

We are children of Deir el-Zor

The pain of a wound that refuses to heal persists in the second-generation survivors and the psychological effects spread out horizontally. In one way or another, the entire nation feels the effects of victimization, regardless of individual experience. The nation finds a variety of reflections, such as a displaced sense of belonging....

Alicia Ghiragossian's poem, "An Inconvenient Genocide," clearly shows the effects of the transmitted memory on her perception of life, her aspirations, and her sense of belonging. Born in Argentina, she has lived in many places, but "in spite/of all the lives I have lived/I am not myself." In "Fatherland," she seeks to find herself and her identity in the land of her forefathers:

I would like to touch
that land
to feel my past
in its fragrance
and reclaim my essence.

In "To Be an Armenian," she confesses to her splintered spatio-temporal sense of belonging:

We exist here and now
but just in halves
as we also belong there
where old voices are
still haunting us.⁸¹

An Armenian is a child of Deir el-Zor irrespective of any family connection to those who perished. "I am, whether I like it or not, a descendant of a massacred people," writes Gerard Chaliand, grappling with the memory of his dead. His childhood recollections were shaped by his grandmother's harrowing tales and he saw the world through her eyes: "The old woman in black of my childhood reminisced: these unburied dead were her dead forever."⁸²

For Diana Der Hovanessian, all Armenians are survivors of the Genocide. It does not matter whether or not one lost

⁸¹ Ghiragossian, "To Be an Armenian," in *Stormy Seas We Brave*, comp. Moussa, p. 17. Alicia died of cancer in May 2014. In a poem she wrote on her deathbed, she bids farewell to life but optimistically looks to the eternal life that her poetry promises:

I am trying to say good-bye
but this is not a farewell.
I am detached from my body
and yet exist
close to those
who open their arms for me.
I am saying good-bye
and creating a togetherness
that transcends time.
I am saying good-bye
and hello...
forever.

⁸² Chaliand, "Memory of My Memory," pp. 1, 5.

family members in the death march, "We are children of DerZor."

Even though your mother was a baby
in Worcester, and safe
and your father a young soldier
in Murad's mountains
and you a generation from being born,
.....
even without a single
relative who lived to march,
lived past the march.
We are children of DerZor.⁸³

Although she was born a generation removed from the Genocide and thousands of miles from the killing fields, if you ask her when and where she was born, she will take you there to her roots, to her origin, to where she was conceived to become an eternal exile, a survivor of a colossal catastrophe:

.... I was conceived in 1915
when the blood of my other grandparents
soaked through the earth of Kharpert
and seeped, seeped until the thirties
when it reached Worcester, Massachusetts.⁸⁴

Lorne Shirinian is a traveler from the time of the Phrygians and the Thracians to the time when "Armina [was] chiseled in stone at Behistun" and on to the times of Khorenatsi, the

⁸³ Der Hovannesian, "Why Sand Scorches Armenians," part 2 of "Tryptich," in *About Time*, p. 14.

⁸⁴ Der Hovannesian, "On Being Asked to Supply a Date of Birth for a Literary Encyclopedia," in *Forgotten Bread*, ed. Kherdian, p. 294. This anthology also contains a comprehensive list of Der Hovanessian's publications, pp. 258-9.

Armenian kings, and on and on. His life story extends back to the origins of the Armenian nation, his life story is the history of the Armenian nation. In "Earthquake," he traces the bumpy road traveled for thousands of years. He is there and "*will continue to write and sing/my poems will be a shield/I will carry in my migrations.*"⁸⁵ He is there in Van and Baghesh, where the bodies are burning, where families are driven away and killed,

*columns of smoke across our land
only a few remain
the rest driven out
or dead
never to return (69)*

He continues to record the turbulent history of the nation. He predicts more hardship and turbulence from which he is certain Armenia will rise and survive and he will be there to contribute to that survival by writing about her,

*Years from now
when I will
long since have gone
remember the poet
who, as our country was yet again
wasted,
kept her alive in this manuscript*

Armenia (70)

During the devastating earthquake of December 7, 1988, he is simultaneously there in Armenia when the quake hits, and

⁸⁵ Shirinian, "Earthquake," in *Earthquake: Poems*, pp. 56-73. As in "Delirian," the author's use of italics signifies the recordings of the scribe (the poet) as a witness within the text. Quotations from pp. 64, 67.

here in the carefree Diaspora where "exile is so unreal" and "our words have lost their native language," watching his father try to remember his family, "nightmare tremors/in his damaged memory." Life goes on and the nation endures, but always in fear, always waiting. The final lines of "Earthquake" read:

*we buried the dead
our fears
lie forever in our hearts*

*under the sun and the moon
on this trembling land
we wait (73)*

Azad Matian (b. 1942), an Iranian-Armenian poet, has no direct family connection with the Genocide. He was born in Tehran of parents who were migrants from villages in the Chahar Mahal region near Esfahan, and raised in Khuzestan Province (where Iran's petroleum fields are concentrated). He studied Armenian literature at the State University of Esfahan as well as in Paris. He is a long-time Professor of Armenian studies at the State University of Esfahan. His poetry and prose works as well as his Persian translations have been published in America, Armenia and Iran. Despite having no family connection with the Genocide, he nonetheless feels the pain. Inspired by the voice of a young woman singing the traditional Armenian migrant song, "*Krunk*," during a vigil at the Genocide monument, he wrote the poem, "April 24, 1996 (to Garine, for singing the 'Crane')," expressing his bewilderment with unanswered questions and fading

memories as he struggles to emerge from his hopelessness and believe in a better future:

Where are we
and bound for where?

.....

Who are we
and heading for what?

Hating hating this endless pain
and one another

.....

Oh sing on
that I be cleansed of the bile
and believe again
in the eternal life of my stricken race...⁸⁶

Hakob Karapents grew up in Tabriz, Iran, without knowing that his mother, Anahit, was a survivor of Turkish atrocities. She never told him about her horrifying ordeal in Urmia. That small town in Iranian Azerbaijan was the scene of massacres and atrocities by the Turkish army when it entered after the Russian army retreated in 1918. Anahit never had the opportunity to tell her son her life story. Hakob was only four when his parents were divorced. According to Persian-Armenian custom, he was left to live with his father in Tabriz, but he always dreamed about his mother, whom he never got to know, but who was "always present in the most luminous altar of my subconscious."⁸⁷ After her death, which was years

⁸⁶ Azad Matian, "April 24, 1996 (to Garine [Kariné] for singing the 'Crane' [Krun])," trans. Vahé Oshagan, *RAFT: A Journal of Armenian Poetry and Criticism* 10 (1996): 55-7.

⁸⁷ Hakob Karapents, "Mors anavart oragirē" [My mother's unfinished diary], in *Ankatar* [Incomplete], pp. 61-77. Quotation from p. 61.

after he had settled in the United States, he came into possession of her diary, and it was through the 215 pages of this manuscript that he became aware of the unspeakable suffering his mother had endured: she witnessed the execution of her husband, then her children were kidnapped, and she was forcibly taken into a Kurdish harem. All this happened before Anahit met her second husband who became Hakob's father. "However, before I was born and after my birth I heard the agonizing cries of my entire nation..." (71). After reading his mother's diary, Hakob felt as if he had come into physical contact with the calamity, an experience he would live and relive for the rest of his life.

I began this section by saying that an Armenian is a child of Deir el-Zor irrespective of any family connection to those who perished. What I mean is that there is a horizontal spread of the perception regardless of family connection. Does that hold true for the Armenian communities in Iran where I grew up? Not exactly! Not before the fiftieth anniversary of the Armenian Genocide which opened an era of awareness, education, and involvement still prevalent in contemporary Iranian Armenian society. Of course, there were annual commemorative events organized by committed intellectuals, nationalists belonging to the Dashnakts'ut'iun (ARF), and they were all about mourning the victims of the 1915 Catastrophe (Սգահանդես նուիրուած Մեծ Եղեռնի զոհերին): The community at large was hardly on the same wave-length. Participation in those events was sparse and sometimes done as a duty.

A vivid example of this is described by Zoya Pirzad, born in Abadan in 1952, an Armenian novelist who writes in

Persian and has won praise for her novels from the Iranian authorities. In *Cheraghara man khamush mikonam* (I'll turn out the lights),⁸⁸ she dedicates a chapter to one such commemoration, a day of mourning on April 24, 1965, in Abadan. The audience is disengaged, as if they have gathered there in the assembly hall of the Armenian school to socialize. "We would hear the same words every year, the same speech, the same statistics, the same slogans, and that's all," Claris, the protagonist, thinks to herself (128). When an old woman, a survivor of the massacres in Van, takes the podium and tells her heartrending story of Turkish atrocities, emotions rise and everyone reaches for their handkerchief to wipe away their tears. Claris thinks about her futile efforts to make her husband Artush attend with her. She wishes he could have heard the old woman's story, but he was adamant. Artush did not believe in commemorating the victims of 1915. In fact, his political convictions dictated his perception of the Armenian Catastrophe. He was a member of the leftist *Jebhe-ye Khalgh* (Popular Front), and like many members, he was very much under the influence of the Soviets and communist ideology and was not particularly interested in Armenian history and the Catastrophe as its turning point. In the minds of Artush and his ilk, Armenian victims of Turkish atrocities had no priority over suffering humankind anywhere else in the world (137).

⁸⁸ Zoya Pirzad, *Cheraghara man khamush mikonam* [I'll turn out the lights] (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 1383/2005), 17th printing, first published in 1380/2002. Pirzad's novels have been translated into many languages. *Cheraghara man khamush mikonam* was translated into English as *Things We Left Unsaid* (2012).

One can safely surmise that this attitude is non-existent among Iranian Armenians nowadays; the erstwhile influence of Soviet ideology has died out and awareness of the great injustice is widespread. That awareness was heightened and spread even wider as diasporan Armenian communities as well as Armenians in the Republic of Armenia prepared to mark the centennial of the Armenian Genocide in 2015. It is shattering to think that one hundred years have passed and there has still been no redress for the injustice. One and a half million men, women, and children were victims of the Turkish atrocities for nothing, and their memory is being tarnished, violated by the denialists and indifferent bystanders. The Genocide and the current politics of denial of the rights of the victims and their descendants move closer to the center of the parameters of Armenian self-identification.

In quest of self-identity

1915 functions as a symbol through which Armenians have knowledge of themselves and see themselves. Having survived genocide, not only do they have to believe in themselves, but they have to convince others of their existence. Armenian diaspora literature is an expression of this necessity.⁸⁹

Lorne Shirinian is a poet, writer, and scholar in the grip of inherited memories that have become his own past, imposing on his life, his outlook, and his identity as a Canadian citizen. Lorne's father, Mampre Shirinian, was in the second group of

⁸⁹ Lorne Shirinian, *Armenian-North American Literature: A Critical Introduction; Genocide, Diaspora, and Symbols* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), p. 60.

children brought to Canada in 1924 from an orphanage in Corfu, Greece, in accordance with the Canadian government's agreement to a petition from the Armenian Relief Society. The two groups of orphans, about one hundred in all, were housed on a farm in Georgetown, Ontario. Later known as the "Georgetown Boys," they were mainly trained in farming and were mostly dispersed to work on farms throughout Ontario. Shirinian's mother, Mariam, also an orphan, was brought to Canada with a group of girls from an orphanage in Lebanon in 1927 and housed in a Georgetown home. In line with the policy of acculturation and Anglicization forced on them, an effort was made to change their Armenian names, but this more than anything else met with resistance. The name "Paul Oliver" was just not acceptable to Mampre Shirinian.⁹⁰ After all, their names were all these wretched orphans had brought with them to perpetuate the memory of their lost ones.

Lorne Shirinian's family kept their Armenian last name despite the hard time local French Canadians had pronouncing it. He records this in an interesting poem titled "Gélinas." After the poet's birth in hospital, the nurse cannot pronounce his name and grumbles about it: "*Mon Dieu, chui pas chanceuse ce matin.*" That causes Shirinian to meditate on how foreigners, in his case Armenians, are perceived in "Canada Français." It is not unlikely that deep in their hearts they think, "this land is my land/this land's not your land," and that they know nothing about "massacred Armenia."⁹¹ Indeed, as I quoted Shirinian at the beginning of this section,

⁹⁰ Lorne Shirinian, Introduction, *Armenian-North American Poets: An Anthology* (St. Jean, Quebec: Manna, [1974]), p. 1.

⁹¹ Lorne Shirinian, "Gélinas," in *Earthquake*, pp. 27-8.

"Having survived genocide, not only do [Armenians] have to believe in themselves, but they have to convince others of their existence."

The first-generation diasporan Armenian survivors' literature echoes the survivors' self-perception/identity as victimized exiles. Theirs was basically a literature of nostalgia and haunting memories of Turkish atrocities. Armenian tradition and the hope of returning to the homeland were exalted as an ideology leading to the formation of a new diasporan Armenian identity. That trend may be considered a resort to the past, a step backward that hindered the quest for a new direction in the development of diasporan Armenian literature, but it was the only way they knew to keep the Armenian spirit alive, to ensure the continuum of Armenian literature in the Armenian language, and to fight the gradual decline of Armenian identity—as they would conceptualize it. But the torrent of modernization in world culture was overwhelming. Even though the second generation continued to respond to the Armenian Genocide—of course, with a new set of literary tools, norms, and ideas—the concept of tradition, which was the first generation's bulwark of identity, underwent change. To paraphrase Dexter Fisher in *Minority Language and Literature*,⁹² the process of constructing group identity is dynamic. The confrontation of national identity with the exigencies of the acquired sense of belonging and citizenship constantly imposes and forges ethnic duality. Writers in the minority group assimilate certain values, tenets,

⁹² Dexter Fisher, Introduction, *Minority Language and Literature: Retrospective and Perspective* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1977).

and assumptions of the dominant culture, but the medium—the linguistic tradition—and the milieu—the cultural tradition—of their writings sharply depart from the mainstream. In the case of the majority of Armenian American writers, the linguistic tradition was compromised and the mainstream language was adopted.

In an important contribution to the study and analysis of Armenian American literature titled *Writing Memory*, Lorne Shirinian talks about Armenian self-perception and the difference in the way the two generations experienced and coped with it. His parents, and the Genocide survivor/refugee/immigrant generation in general, “lived their Armenian lives at home and with Armenian friends....”⁹³ They somehow adapted to life away from their homeland with an awareness of being carriers of memories of the Old World, memories that had to be kept alive and passed on to the next generation. The stories they told when they got together with other survivors served young Lorne as history lessons on the Armenian Genocide. On the other hand, being “the product of two heritages,” he writes, “I had drifted into some nether zone that appeared to exist between two cultures, not belonging to one or the other.”⁹⁴ He is certainly correct in attesting that this

⁹³ Lorne Shirinian, *Writing Memory: The Search for Home in Armenian Diaspora Literature as Cultural Practice* (Kingston, Ontario: Blue Heron Press, 2000), p. i.

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. i-ii. Further on in his analysis, Shirinian identifies a difference in perception between Canadian and US literature, maintaining that Canada, being a country with a large population of first-generation immigrants, cannot but reflect themes of “immigration, adaptation, acculturation, and even assimilation and loss” in its mainstream literature, themes that are not exclusive to the Armenian experience but are shared by immigrants from the Caribbean, South

feeling is shared by many second-generation Armenians in Canada and the USA.

The question of identity, of finding a balance between the American present and the imposing Armenian past, has been a central preoccupation of second-generation Armenian Genocide survivor-writers from the outset. Nona Balakian characterized William Saroyan’s literature as a combination of “the English tongue, the American soil and the Armenian spirit,”⁹⁵ and this is true for pretty much the majority of American Armenian writers when the content of their work is related to their Armenian roots.⁹⁶

The quest for self-identity takes imaginative literature along different paths, yet the Genocide and reconstruction of the memory of the Genocide remain the core leitmotif. This generalization, however, can only prove partially true, and of course, only in the case of diasporan Armenians. Being and feeling oneself to be an Armenian, carrying an Armenian heritage, in other words, having an Armenian identity cannot have a uniform definition when it is judged alongside the sense of belonging to the country of one’s citizenship. That definition is closer to its traditional understanding in Middle Eastern countries and with regard to the major components shaping the Armenian identity. The prevalence of these

Asia, and Italy. Canadian literature thus more easily and naturally embraces Armenian American literature (pp. 71-2).

⁹⁵ Nona Balakian, “Writers on the American Scene,” *Ararat* 18/1 (1977), as quoted and discussed in Shirinian, *Writing Memory*, pp. 30-32.

⁹⁶ According to Lorne Shirinian, “Armenian-North American literature is the authentic expression of the process of transculturation of this diaspora community.” In the past, he says, it was seen as “*assimilated and not really Armenian or marginal, not really American*” (author’s italics), that is, ethnic-American literature at best. See *Writing Memory*, pp. 64-5.

components is somehow convoluted and compromised in the West, i.e. in Europe and America.

Then there is the most recent turning point in Armenian history, the reestablishment of the free and independent Republic of Armenia in 1991 in the process of the collapse of the Soviet Union. The reality of the existence and accessibility of an Armenia – albeit only in the eastern corner of the historic Armenian homeland and therefore excluding the land to which a great majority of diasporan Armenians attached some sense of belonging – has introduced a significant shift in that understanding. Therefore, in order to hew closer to the meaning of Armenian identity and the quest for that identity in the Diaspora, it is important to take this into consideration as well. It may sound implausible, but visits to Turkey and the search for maternal or paternal towns, villages, even homes, what I characterized earlier in this study as pilgrimages, have generated a materialization or concretization of the inherited but imaginary sense of belonging. Arpine Konyalian Grenier took such a trip to her father's hometown of Konya in 2009.

"A Place in the Sun, in Turkey, *Malgre Sangre*" speaks of that emerging familiarity.⁹⁷ In Turkey, Konyalian Grenier expected to experience "the culture of my ancestry as well as the culture I had run away from." She wanted to experience

⁹⁷ Arpine Konyalian Grenier, "A Place in the Sun, in Turkey, *Malgre Sangre*," *Otoliths* 15 (November 1, 2009), <http://the-otolith.blogspot.com/2009/08/arpine-konyalian-grenier-place-in-sun.html>. At the beginning of this piece, en route to Istanbul, Konyalian Grenier alludes to the main characters in the film, *A Place in the Sun*, who had other options but failed to take them. As to the last part of the title, *malgré* means "despite" in French and *sangre* means "blood" in Spanish. According to Wikipedia, *Sangre* is a fictional planet ruled by cannibals.

"the four noble feelings: glad, sad, bad, mad," freely and without restraint. Even the embroidered bedspread in her Istanbul hotel room reminds her of her grandmother's handiwork. During this trip for the purpose of attending the Hrant Dink Memorial Workshop at Sabanci University, she is gradually exposed to the likeness and the difference, and she is ready "to learn to love that," perhaps to the point of giving up the category of nationalities and making humanity her nation. She feels the need to connect for the sake of "reflection" and "harmony" but she is baffled by the question, "is what one does with the past, the future?" At the end of her sojourn, still searching for an answer, she answers that question with another: "What do I do with remains?"

Her sojourn in Konya is pleasant. She navigates in the Turkish language as if it were an inherited but temporarily forgotten treasure. Strolling in the streets and enjoying the sights, she has the feeling of coming back to familiar but long forgotten places. She returns transformed. Another cultural connectivity, another component is added to her cultural identity, resulting in the conclusion, "I am culturally unlocatable." She joins her voice with that of the Turkish poet, Taranci: "I want a country ... let there be an end to brothers' quarrels ... I want a country ... let living be like loving from the heart." She returns home to the United States, to her "place in the sun."

Ben kendimi gelistim [I have improved myself] in Turkey. I developed, moving from unknowingly being Armenian Turkishly to knowingly becoming American, Armenianly.

Her quest for self-identity is materialized in general terms, but she has more battles to wage and labyrinths to thread in the process of deconstructing the concept of identity and articulating her own in this globalized world.

Arpine Konyalian Grenier was born in Beirut of "orphaned parents." In a prose piece in the form of an email exchange prefatory to her poem, "I Am Searching for Death," she describes the material circumstances of her parents' heritage, or disinheritance:

In Ak-Serai and Konya the land on Dad's side was secured by the Turks for sure—in Kessab Syria the land on Mom's side granted to the Turks—by the French so as to win them over against the WW2 Germans—later in Beirut Dad's business seized during the Arab Israeli War—then he to America—but not long enough to collect for location.⁹⁸

In their consuming efforts, especially in the Western world, to get ahead in mainstream society and get away from the Armenian ghetto—the safe haven, separated from the alien environment—the second generation gradually drifted away from a rigid concept of Armenianness. That in itself was a negation of the first generation's response to or interpretation of the Genocide that suggested ghettoization as a bulwark against assimilation. The degree and the depth of this distancing point directly to the dual-identity conflict the second generation experienced and the consequent need to find an alternative response or interpretation of the Genocide.

⁹⁸ Arpine Konyalian Grenier, "From Silk, Paper, Gunpowder/Comfort is strength in Latin," and "I Am Searching for Death," *Shampoo* 30 (July 2007), <http://www.shampoopoetry.com/ShampooThirty/grenier.html>.

Peter Najarian's *Voyages* (1971) is the site of a painful conflict and attempted reconciliation between the past and the present. "The Armenian Genocide as a collective symbol permeates the entire novel," though there are few references to it.⁹⁹ It is the ever-present past that constantly pressures the present, defeating the efforts of the characters to rise above their unhappiness, find their identity, and adjust to their adopted country. The novel clearly shows the doom of the second generation. Aram Tomasian's search for meaning and value leads him toward loneliness and alienation from society. Then, there is the first-generation survivors' zealous efforts to transmit the memory, as part of the Armenian heritage, to their children and their children's children and generations beyond. Aram's uncle, Vahan Vahanian, a survivor, asks him to translate his memoirs into English so that his grandchildren can read and learn about the Armenian past.

Najarian's *Daughters of Memory* (1986) is again a search for identity and a quest to revive and perpetuate the memory of the Armenian Genocide. Conversations and reminiscences among a group of old women who experienced the Genocide in their youth provide the background and trace the history of the Genocide. "The plot is simple," as the narrator/author maintains: "an old hairy-nosed and horny artist is reviewing his life's work and he confronts the spirit of history, of our species who kill each other and of his grandmother who was slaughtered in the desert."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Lorne Shirinian, *Armenian-North American Literature: A Critical Introduction; Genocide, Diaspora, and Symbols* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), p. 141.

¹⁰⁰ Peter Najarian, *Daughters of Memory* (Berkeley, CA: City Miner Books, 1986), p. 3. For a more detailed analysis of Najarian's *Voyages* and

Three story lines develop simultaneously. The first is the narrator's own story as an artist who does odd jobs to make ends meet and lives a bachelor's life in a small apartment in Berkeley, California. He visits his elderly mother, a retired factory worker who lives alone in Fresno, and prods her to try to remember what her mother looked like. His mother was a young girl in Turkey when she was driven into the desert with her mother, but she lost her mother and cannot remember her face. She cannot even remember whether she was slaughtered or died of the hardship of the road, or whether or not she was buried. The narrator writes, paints, thinks, imagines, constantly preoccupied with the unattainable goal of portraying his grandmother. Najarian's black and white drawings throughout the book, mostly of old women and men, and of female nudes as well, set the mood. Why this tortuous quest all his life? "He struggles to imagine his grandmother's face as if it were the image of a home he and his mother lost in their different ways. He tries to find her inside himself but his imagination fails, his memories interfere and they become like veils he can't clear away" (3). What is clear, however, is that, for the narrator of this complex work of prose, his grandmother's face is the signifier of the Armenian Genocide or the horrors of history which he tries to confront, and through all that, find his own identity.

Then there is the circle of his mother's friends, old ladies, all survivors of the Genocide, who experienced the horrors, the murder of their kin, the deportation, the rape, the Turkish

Daughters of Memory, see Shirinian, *Armenian-North American Literature*, pp. 123-60, and idem, *Writing Memory*, pp. 141-68. For a comprehensive list of Najarian's publications, see *Forgotten Bread*, ed. Kherdian, p. 462.

harems, the orphanages. Somehow they survived and came to the United States, most of them as mail-order brides. They get together every so often and gossip about everyone they know, often expressing disapproval of their grandchildren's modern lifestyle. They talk about the trend toward assimilation, their grandchildren marrying *odars* and drifting away from the Armenian community. So what is left? Is language important? What keeps their history alive? Their parents died because they refused to convert to Islam, and now.... Whatever the topic of conversation may be, there is always a flashback to the desert experience. For these women, dying in one's own bed is a coveted blessing. Speaking of the death of an acquaintance, they all chime in, "She died good. She died in her own house.... After what she was through in the desert she deserved some luck" (65-6).

The Genocide stories unfold like gossip, straightforward, unembellished. There is the story of the boy whose mother left him behind and was then murdered by the gendarmes. Kurds took the boy in and raised him. He became a successful businessman in America. Then there is the story of the woman who was brought to America to marry a certain Armenian, but then her bastard son of a Turk showed up, looking for his mother who ran away and left him behind. They talk about the young girl who witnessed her father's nails being torn out and then his body cut in half because he refused to become a Muslim. They recall their young mothers on the deportation route, but they cannot remember their faces, no matter how hard they try. And they wonder: How did their mothers die after they left their little girls behind? Of starvation? Disease? The narrative reveals their varied views on life, on their past.

These are the gatekeepers of the memory of Genocide. They express hatred for the Muslims who now live in their childhood homes, but at the same time, they feel compassion because those people live in abject poverty and they don't even know what happened in the past.

Through their small talk, many stories of love, hatred, torture, murder, orphanages, and arranged marriages come to light. Each story weaves its way into the great tapestry of gloom and horror representing the Armenian Genocide. But Najarian's quest to trace his grandmother's face remains unachievable, just as the story of the Armenian Genocide is unfinished, never complete. His mother could not remember her mother's face, but she did remember her paternal home. "When you get to Adana, my son," she said, "look for the river and the bridge. Our acre was on the other side of the river and we crossed the bridge to get there" (141). That was before he took his self-exploration trip to Turkey.

But there was no sign of the acre where Peter stood looking from the other side of the new bridge. Only a new little suburb had mushroomed there. There was nobody in sight, except for a little boy fishing from the bridge. Najarian's imagination takes flight again. "Who was that little boy? Was his great-grandfather a rapist, did his great-grandmother swing a hatchet?" Or maybe, "He was the ghost of uncle Arshag. He was the boy in love with light, his pencil and his love of drawing now a fishing pole..." (141). Najarian was a "tourist," not a pilgrim following the path of his ancestors,

conversing with the ghosts of victims whose stories of doom he knew by heart.¹⁰¹

Diana Der Hovanessian does not create characters or lyric heroes that represent the diasporan Armenian struggle in search of an identity, one that is reconciled to the transmitted ancestral identity, one that can secure a safe, comfortable place in the mainstream society of the adopted country. Diana herself is a character caught in that struggle. Her poem titled "Songs about Land" begins with the words of Mushegh Ishkhan:¹⁰² "The *Hayrenik* is every exile's first love and the last yearning." She then traces how that love was transmitted to the second generation, how the love of a homeland she had never seen nested in her heart:

It was not my first love but
the love of those I loved first.

¹⁰¹ Peter Najarian's most recent publication treating the mother-and-son theme, and again through that theme the story of the Armenian Genocide, appeared in 2010, four years after his mother's death. The title of the book, *The Artist and His Mother*, refers to a painting of the same title by Arshile Gorky. The dust jacket is illustrated with a painting by the author, inspired by an old photograph of himself as a young boy with his mother. Both paintings are monuments to mourning the loss of a mother. This book is obviously a tribute to his mother, her life, her resilience as a survivor of a great calamity, and her centrality as a source of inspiration for his art and a strong foundation for his Armenian identity. The book also contains family photographs, color paintings, and black and white sketches of Najarian himself and of his mother at various stages of her life.

¹⁰² I have discussed the artistic responses to the Armenian Genocide of Mushegh Ishkhan in *The Armenian Genocide in Literature*. He was a renowned poet and writer, a survivor of the Armenian Genocide who lived and worked as an educator in Beirut. His literary legacy is a testimony to how totally his life was impacted by the Calamity he experienced as a child.

They sang, sang, sang
 of you, your mountains
 crowded in light.
 In hushed whispers they
 talked of your lands
 dripped in blood.

For first-generation survivors like Diana's father and her maternal grandparents, this was the "Country of Dreams, /country of dashed hopes,/country of endless/desiring, my first love."¹⁰³

Under the spell of a past that was so alive in her family, she finds herself constantly searching for reconciliation between the "Two Voices" that are constantly speaking to her, speaking to each other, each trying to gain preference over the other. If language is an essential component of one's identity, she has lost that component. She "was born bilingual but..." And she goes on to describe how the Armenian language was compartmentalized, restricted to subjects related home, sweet memories of childhood, gradually "halved and bartered," to become her "lost treasure" and "the dream that comes to haunt/my English-language dream." The Armenian language for Diana is "a gift/we are letting drift away."¹⁰⁴

Sometimes she tries to ignore the duality of her identity, the two voices in conflict, and think of herself as a woman brought up in New England with all the attributes of an educated American lady. And this despite her grandparents' ever present stories of blood and tears, always a part of her subconscious, sometimes even making her feel like an orphan

¹⁰³ Diana Der Hovanessian, "Songs about Land," in *RAFT: A Journal of Armenian Poetry and Criticism* 12 (1998-99): 7.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., "Translating," in *RAFT* 7 (1993): 11-12.

girl in an Armenian village. Does she think of herself as an Armenian? Or an American? Or hyphenated American? Responding to a query from D. M. Thomas, she writes,

No. Most of the time, even as you,
 I forget labels.

Unless you cut me.

Then I look at the blood.
 It speaks in Armenian.¹⁰⁵

Sometimes the clash between the two voices is unbearable, a source of pain and guilt, the pressure of the past that will not let her live her present. Who is she? Where does she belong to? She is profoundly conscious of this element in her identity and at the same time aware of the present environment, no matter how much of the past is also present:

I found the bloodied arm on the ground
 before me. "You didn't need it" said the voice.
 I saw a sea of dismembered limbs tossed,
 Strewn on the horizon and beyond.
 "You didn't really need these bones."
 They covered land that stretched, pressed past.
 "You didn't need these provinces, did you?"
 What would you do with all these stones?"
 A mountain of broken bodies rose.
 "You didn't need Mt. Ararat, did you?"
 I tried to speak. No tongue. My breath froze.
 "You didn't need that language, did you?"
 I woke, washed, and looked in the glass.
 Only another American there, dressed in fine clothes.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., "Two Voices," in *About Time*, pp. 50-51.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., "In My Dream," in *RAFT* 3 (1989): 8.

David Kherdian has an idiosyncratic concept of Armenian identity. His childhood in Racine was completely immersed in all things Armenian, like that of many Armenian children who lived in ghettos and whose fathers worked blue-collar jobs in local factories. He had Armenian playmates with whom he sometimes spoke in Armenian, "when we wanted to keep something from our non-Armenian playmates," the *odars* whom they called "Americans." And "when the Americans were angry with us... they called us Harmones, or Dirty Armenians." David could not understand that. He finally concluded it was because he and his friends were dark-complected. But he couldn't change anything. "I had no choice in the end but to begin to live with these feelings of inferiority that were being imposed on me, and there were times when I was tempted to believe the slander."¹⁰⁷ He resented those feelings and tried hard to distance himself from everything Armenian and to be part of the mainstream American crowd in Racine. Yet at the same time he envied Abby, another Armenian boy who lived in his neighborhood. Abby used to stand on the front lawn of his family's home and roar "at the top of his lungs." David did not know what it meant to Abby, but for him, it was a gesture of emancipation. "Here was someone," he thought, "reveling in his own humanity,"

... vulnerable, unsecured,
but fearless and undaunted. He was
for me the first Armenian to punctuate
the American landscape with a signature

¹⁰⁷ Kherdian, "Our Block," in *Forgotten Bread*, pp. 328-30.

that was his alone. Someday, one way
or another, I would add my name to that.¹⁰⁸

And he did make a name for himself in American literature, bringing in an Armenian component while creating universal literature, revealing humanity, as William Saroyan had done before him.¹⁰⁹ Kherdian found meaning and legitimacy in his search for self-identity.

Growing up in a strictly Armenian family environment, Helene Pilibosian lived with two separate identities, a sort of split indoor and outdoor personality. In "Less than a

¹⁰⁸ Kherdian, "From *My Racine*," in *ibid.*, pp. 336-7.

¹⁰⁹ I have deliberately kept references to William Saroyan (1908-1981) and his work at a minimum in the present study since I felt that I did not have anything more to add to the comprehensive studies by scholars such as Leo Hamalian (1987), Nona Balakian (1998), Dickran Kouymjian (2009), and many others. Kouymjian, a friend and confidant of Saroyan's in his later years, introduced courses and lectured on the author's work at California State University, Fresno, diligently archived his manuscripts, and compiled and published some of his unpublished material. Lorne Shirinian considers Saroyan "the prototypical Armenian diaspora writer" because of his "quest for home that is also the central quest and theme of all Armenian-American literature" (*Writing Memory*, p. 76; see his entire chapter on Saroyan, pp. 68-101). "Saroyan documented very well in both his fiction and in his memoirs the difficulties Armenians had in adapting to their new environment in America" (p. 78). As a testament to Saroyan's conviction that Armenians will overcome and survive, Shirinian cites a famous and often quoted line: "I should like to see any power of the world destroy this race..." (p. 86). However, he also shows that Saroyan was preoccupied with Armenians outside of Armenia and with the difficulty of burying the old and allowing the new to grow. Even in his last years, Saroyan wrote plays on these themes, always raising the essential question of "how to maintain the nation with its language and traditions in the diaspora" (p. 88). For a list of Saroyan's publications, see *Forgotten Bread*, ed. Kherdian, pp. 463-5.

Pinpoint," one of the first poems in her first collection of poetry, she explains the two:

Our American Vision was
a baseball street with teams
that outran the occasional cars,
so spare that their
existence was not a fear.

Inside the walls of home
was Armenian, was another me,
elemental and untested.¹¹⁰

As she delves deeper into Armenian history and the impact of her parents' experience on her own personality and identity, her concept of identity becomes more complex, hardly definable or explicable. In "Ideas on the Peg," she tries to define her identity in relation to Armenian history, tradition, and culture, the horrors of the "Turkish sword," the influence of her gender, and the American factor:

My castle of being is here,
American by repair,
Armenian by necessity
or by life's glare,
a hoary history,
blessing of Boston for me
and a final ring for women.¹¹¹

The pain and frustration resulting from the struggle to adjust to one's dual identity and the search for an ideal image

¹¹⁰ Helene Pilibosian, "Less than a Pinpoint," in *Carvings from an Heirloom: Oral History Poems* (Watertown, MA: Ohan Press, 1983), p. 40.

¹¹¹ Helene Pilibosian, "Ideas on the Peg," in *History's Twists: The Armenians* (Watertown, MA: Ohan Press, 2007), pp. 49-50.

of the diasporan Armenian echo throughout almost the whole of Hakob Karapents' literary output, which is mostly short stories, his preferred genre. He is an undeniably skillful observer who penetrates the souls of those around him and creates characters with complex inner worlds. He regards himself as a diasporan Armenian writer in the deepest sense of the term, one who tries to create art and harmony out of "the commotion of big cities, broken-up Armenians in the diaspora, the Armenian and the American, the human being and the ever-present nightmare of a nuclear disaster." Karapents is a prolific writer in Armenian, even though "skeptics have long sounded the alarm of the extinction of my kind."¹¹²

"We are still inflicted by the forays of history. If we get well someday, and that will perhaps take centuries, then the thousand and one distant calls will subside, and we will be able to enjoy life like a human being."¹¹³ These words are spoken by Vahé Vahanian to Ingrid, his Swedish-German-American girlfriend. Vahé, the protagonist of Hakob Karapents' longish short story, "*Mi mard ev erku shirim*" (A man and two tombs), is an Armenian student at Columbia University in the 1960s. He rejects Ingrid's love and devotion because he lives a dual existence, symbolically unable to reconcile his idealization of President Kennedy and his

¹¹² Hakob Karapents, "*Groghe ink'n ir het*" [The writer with himself], in *Erku Ashkharh, grakan p'ordzagrut'iunner* [Two worlds: Literary essays] (Watertown, MA: Blue Crane Books, 1992), pp. 57-9. Written in Connecticut in 1987.

¹¹³ Hakob Karapents, "*Mi mard ev erku shirim*" [A man and two tombs], in *Antsanot' hoginer* [Unfamiliar souls], a collection of stories (Beirut: Atlas Press, 1970), pp. 333-80. Quotation from pp. 376-7. Written in Washington, DC, in 1966.

universal humanitarian ideas with his admiration of the Armenian poet, Eghishé Charents, whose life and artistic creations he believes to be the embodiment of Armenian yearnings and aspirations. Vahé is desperately and hopelessly in search of a way for universal human ideas and aspirations to coexist with Armenian aspirations, hopes, yearnings, and dreams. In other words, he seeks reconciliation and peaceful coexistence between his two identities. Perhaps then he will be able to enjoy the unconditional love Ingrid offers.

Did Karapents' quest for his own and his characters' self-identity come to fruition? Through the numerous characters he created he seems to have arrived at a synthesis. He comes close to synthesis in the characterization of Adam Nourian in his novel titled *Adami girk'ě* (Adam's book).¹¹⁴ Karapents himself corroborates this notion in "*Groghě ev ir champan*" (The writer and his path), an essay in which he reflects on his own literary legacy, describing it as a lifelong quest to create the attributes of individual and collective human beings with, of course, an emphasis on the image of the diasporan Armenian. In "*Groghě ev ir champan*," he depicts Adam Nourian "as a kind of anti-hero, one of us, the combination of all of us," who personifies diasporan Armenians in their present crisis, that is, in the process of assimilation. Compared to the same archetype in American literature—the human being in crisis—the character of Nourian "stands out by having priorities and hatred, the duality of being Armenian and American at the

¹¹⁴ Hakob Karapents, *Adami girk'ě* (New York: Vosketar, 1983).

same time, the feeling of being a foreigner and a feeling for the homeland...."¹¹⁵

Indeed, Karapents opens up his inner self in this essay: "I am a product of the diaspora rather than a Persian or American Armenian. I know no other world but the diaspora. Despite its contradictions, I feel at home on its paths." In the same passage, he admits that although he has adopted the American motto, *e pluribus unum*, and he feels like one out of many, sometimes he feels himself "as a being that leads a double life, meandering in the unending tunnel of duality" (76).

The struggle for supremacy between the two—Armenian and American—identities or senses of belonging echoes more clearly in another story by Karapents titled "*P'ayté nzhuygě*" (The wooden horse).¹¹⁶ Hrand Sissian, a San Francisco-born Armenian who goes by the name Grant, yearns for the land he has never seen, the sacred mountain he can only visualize in his imagination. He is an atypical diasporan Armenian because, thanks to his father, a former teacher in Yerevan, he has a very good command of the Armenian language and a special bond with his father's homeland. Perhaps it was that type of upbringing that led him into the snare of perennial conflict between his two identities which has plagued him all his life. When Grant, the American-born journalist, comes out the winner and a happy life is in sight, Hrand, the restless Armenian youth, enters the picture and ruins everything. In

¹¹⁵ Hakob Karapents, "*Groghě ev ir champan*" [The writer and his path], in *Erku ashkharh, grakan p'ordzagrut'iunner* [Two worlds: Literary essays], p. 80.

¹¹⁶ Hakob Karapents, "*P'ayté nzhuygě*" [The wooden horse], in *Antsanot' hoginer* [Unfamiliar souls], pp. 9–62. Written in Washington, DC, in 1965.

those painful moments, all the sad stories about Armenia and the suffering people of Armenia that his father told him come alive and ominous questions hang in the air: Where do I belong? Which is my homeland? How can I have two?

By coincidence, Hrand meets Sona Miranian, the only Armenian member of the Soviet delegation visiting the New York World's Fair in 1964.¹¹⁷ Sona is an unadulterated symbol of that dreamland, Armenia. She brings "the scent of the soil of the faraway homeland, the raging roar of cascading waters, and the charming colors of wild flowers" (14). The consuming struggle between Hrand's two identities rises to the fore:

Two individualities, one the American Grant, the other the Armenian Hrand. They wrestle with each other, they knock each other down and try to crush each other. And oftentimes, when the American is the apparent winner, the Armenian shows up again from God knows where and tries to prevail.

I have suffered. I have suffered since childhood when I played in the streets of San Francisco with kids my age and they did not understand my language and called me an "argumentative Syrian." I suffered in school when no one had ever heard of the name Armenia. I have suffered and I suffer now when the old and the new Sonas come and excite my sense of belonging to this great Republic. (20)

The Soviet Armenian and the diasporan Armenian mindsets clash in Hrand-Grant. Neither one understands the other's predicament, views, or ideals and no synthesis is achieved.

In quest of self-identity, Diana Der Hovanessian traveled to Soviet Armenia, where she expected to find the lost

¹¹⁷ It should be noted that it was rare for an Armenian from Soviet Armenia to visit the United States during that period.

component of her ethnic identity in the remnants of the land of her ancestors. But the outcome was a painful realization that she was a stranger in Soviet Armenia:

I am the stranger
in my father's land,
the traveler to the country
I can neither leave
nor stay,
a foreigner in the place,
where milleniums ago
my kind was bred.

.....
I am the tourist
from far away
where I left the tables of plenty
thirsty and unfed.¹¹⁸

For second-generation survivors born in the West, for those who grew up yearning for the homeland just as their parents did, who felt like a stranger and a newcomer just like their parents who had never been able to fully enjoy the rewards of the New World, it is excruciating to come to the realization that what they had spiritually embraced does not belong to them and never has. In some cases, second-generation writers tormented by their dual identity confronted their Armenian past head-on and tried to come to terms with it, something the first generation vehemently avoided. The outcome was not always comforting.

Michael J. Arlen had a "fairly definite" American identity by the time he turned forty in 1970. He had an American wife, American children, and an American career, as he says in

¹¹⁸ Der Hovanessian, "Diaspora II," in *About Time*, p. 70.

Passage to Ararat.¹¹⁹ He had been able to harness that shadow of Armenianness that had followed him in his youth, triggered by questions and comments people made. He had repudiated his father's Armenian heritage. His father, the successful English novelist and playwright Michael Arlen (born Dikran Kouyoumjian), had tried to hide his racial origin all his life.

Michael J. Arlen's comfortable immersion in American life gradually ended when he began to make friends with some members of the Armenian community in New York. They treated him like an indubitable Armenian and spoke to him about the Genocide, their parents' ordeal in the desert, the atrocities the Turks had committed against their families, and the fear and hatred they still carried in their hearts toward those who had murdered their fathers. They were surprised that Michael knew nothing about any of this. He also met Armenians his age who were completely acculturated and regarded all men as brothers, including the Turks (22-9).

Little by little, the desire to learn about Armenians crept in, and Michael's wife supported and encouraged him. His quest took him to Fresno where the first Armenian immigrants had settled and been discriminated against and looked down upon, but now, of course, the restrictions had been lifted and Armenians, along with their organizations and institutions, were thriving in Fresno. There he met William Saroyan who told Michael that his father was "a fine man." Asked whether he thought of him as an Armenian, Saroyan replied, "Of course.... An Armenian can never not be an Armenian," although Michael's father "went about it differently" (49).

¹¹⁹ Michael J. Arlen, *Passage to Ararat* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1975), p. 13.

David Stephen Calonne, Arlen's biographer in *Forgotten Bread* says the author's work "sheds a complex light on the Armenian American experience and on the ambivalence and ambiguity of the relation to the Father/Homeland."¹²⁰ He cites a poignant observation by Leon Zaven Surmelian that explains a lot about the attitude of the offspring of mixed marriages vis-à-vis the Armenian component of their identity and the homeland called Armenia:

The inner tensions, most likely, are greater in the half-Armenian, who is more of a marginal person, belonging to a kind of third dimension in his makeup, neither wholly this nor wholly that, but richer and sturdier for that reason, despite the agonies in the early phases of this split. These tensions are valuable for the artist. I hope they never fully relax in Arlen. He should nurse them as a poet.¹²¹

It was Saroyan who advised Michael to go to Armenia ("or what remains of it") if he really wanted to know about Armenians. The question lingered in Michael's mind: How come Saroyan wrote about Armenians all the time while his own father never had? Saroyan had no answer except to say that "we all go on different journeys" (50-52).¹²²

¹²⁰ David Stephen Calonne, biographical sketch of Michael J. Arlen in *Forgotten Bread*, ed. Kherdian, p. 303.

¹²¹ Leon Surmelian, "A Record of the Armenian Trauma" (review of Arlen, *Passage to Ararat*), in *Ararat* 16/4 (Autumn 1975): 34-5. Quotation from p. 35.

¹²² See Arlen, *Passage to Ararat*, pp. 41-54, for details of his visit to Fresno and his conversations with William Saroyan. It should be noted that it is not strictly true that Arlen's father never wrote about Armenians. According to Leo Hamalian, Arlen senior did write about the Turkish atrocities against Armenians, but only in his less widely read short stories and articles. Hamalian quotes what is "perhaps his strongest

It is apparent throughout Michael J. Arlen's narrative in *Passage to Ararat* that his American wife played a role in bringing him closer to his roots, reassuring him that it was okay to have Armenian ancestry, that he should at least give himself the chance to inquire about his heritage, to learn about the people who were his forefathers' kin. His trip to Soviet Armenia was the next step. Still reluctant, still ambivalent about his desire to get closer to Armenia and Armenians, especially during the first days of their stay in Yerevan, Michael spent a significant amount of time in their hotel room reading the books on Armenian history he had brought along, which was a sort of refuge, an excuse not to visit places and mingle with the people whom he simply hated, as he admitted (101-2). He was pestered by persistent questions about what he was doing in Armenia and what he expected to find there (95). He was even reluctant to place a flower in memory of the victims of Genocide at the Monument where he stood detached, unmoved, and aloof beside his wife and Sarkis, the English-language teacher who was their self-assigned guide (72).

His readings, Sarkis' life story, and the stories of some of Sarkis' repatriated friends gradually softened Michael's rigid stance. He gained knowledge about the Armenian language and Armenian history from ancient times down to the era of

statement" on the 1915 Genocide, "I Knew Dr. Goebbels," in which Arlen cursed Hitler's propaganda chief and poured out his rage against the man: "To hell with suffering patiently.... To hell with resignation." In *The Tatler* (January 17, 1940), as quoted at greater length in Hamalian, "The Armenian Genocide and the Literary Imagination," in *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2004), p. 155.

Turkish domination and the massacres. He shares that knowledge with his readers, together with his own interpretations of facts and events, in passages interwoven with the travelogue of his sojourn in Armenia. The Turkish-Armenian relationship now took center-stage. Still uneasy with the Armenians' perception of the Turks and with their constant whining about their victimhood, he wanted to learn more about the source of the evil, but that upset Sarkis. "All that Anglo-Saxon coolness and detachment," Sarkis remarks. "Not like a proper son!" He accuses Michael of wanting to "tear down" his father. "Your father was an Armenian," he says. "You must respect him!" (136). That conversation unsettled Michael and he began to think more deeply about his detachment. After all, who was he, "a comfortable American," to question the "wounded quality of the Armenian response to the trauma of the Turkish massacres"? Could that be what had driven his father to write about "everything except his Armenian background" (185-6)? As Michael neared the end of his stay in Armenia and heard more stories of pain and suffering, the pieces of the puzzle began to come together:

Turks... had been stuck in the Armenian belly like a lump of hot coal; and sometimes an anger ingrown and self-deceiving, as I supposed was felt by men such as my father, for whom the slaying of their forebears... represented such pain and mortification that they could never turn their faces to it. (241)

Now Michael was able to see the Armenian-Turkish relationship as a story of "unresolved hostility" on the part of the Turks, "a prolonged national psychic depression" on the

part of the Armenians, and a "misconceived brotherhood" of Turks and Armenians (244). Now everything and every acquaintance in Armenia acquired meaning for him. On the last day of his visit, he stood before the eternal flame a second time, shedding tears of self-realization, and felt his late father's hand in his. He knew that somehow he had brought his father here: "How long and circuitous the voyage has been that brought all of us here—Armenians forever nearly sailing off the edge of the earth" (254–6). Michael J. Arlen had found his identity, his Armenian identity.

On their way home to New York, Michael and his wife stopped off in Istanbul for a few days of sightseeing and encounters with Turks, or rather, encounters with the absolute denial of any wrongdoing against Armenians, and still worse, denial of the existence of Armenians and their contributions either in the past or in the present. He witnessed expressions of intolerance and even hatred toward the small Armenian community of Istanbul. He could see clearly why Armenians feel hatred and fear of the unabashed murderers of their forefathers, why they feel that pain in the gut whenever they talk about them (272–89). In Michael J. Arlen's case, Soviet Armenia played the role of embracing her prodigal son and bringing him back to the nation's bosom.

The lure of an imagined homeland likewise drew Lorne Shirinian to Soviet Armenia, where he hoped to find answers or at least a healing attachment for his tormented, fragmented soul. He must have traveled to Yerevan in 1977 or not long before, since it was in 1977 that he published his poems capturing the journey. Significantly, he titled this collection *Poems of Dispersion and Other Rites of Movement*, and the

painting reproduced on the cover is the work of an artist living in Yerevan.

A feeling of strangeness creeps up on him as soon as he arrives. He wants to love and feel loved. "If my first caresses are clumsy/please forgive me." He pleads with Armenia not to treat him like a stranger:

If you do not recognize me
 please do not turn away
 I know I seem strange to you
 moving in a different rhythm
 It has been too long
 but now I have come to you
 bound out of sequence
 forgotten parts of an old story
 in an abandoned manuscript¹²³

There follow a few more poems about his journey, "Sayat Nova & Abovian Streets," "Garni," "The Old Ones," and "Crazy Souren & Khatch Missak," before he turns to "Dream Villages," which can have a double meaning:

Dream villages
 like deep roots
 lost in our land
 you are with us
 in the secret naming
 of things
 unfinished line of our poem (21)

These dream villages may refer to the villages left behind in Western Armenia by the parents of the second generation.

¹²³ Shirinian, "Arrival," in *Poems of Dispersion*, p. 16. Shirinian typically does not use punctuation in his poetry or capitalize the first letter of a line unless he intends a full stop at the end of the preceding line.

And with their memory now passed on, they live in the dreams of the second generation, lending their names to newborns, grocery stores, coffee houses, and restaurants. A more likely conjecture may be that Shirinian refers to places, villages, urban neighborhoods in Soviet Armenia built by the 1915 refugees and named after the hometowns and villages from which they were driven out. The last line of "The Old Ones" tends to support this. Here Shirinian describes the old men in a park in Yerevan, watching the young people pass by:

Yet in their eyes
there is no amazement
only the question
"Tell me sister, which is the way to Bingol?"¹²⁴

The Old Ones in Yerevan still look back in yearning to places in Western Armenia like Bingol. In all likelihood, so do Lorne Shirinian and many other second-generation survivors of the Genocide, despite having been born a world away from their parents' homeland. This is an interesting phenomenon that encapsulates the predicament of second-generation survivors and the variegated impulses manifested in their responses to that predicament as discussed in this chapter. It also brings this chapter to a close and leads us to consider another challenge the second generation has to confront, that is the challenge of relocation—here not so much compulsory, as in the aftermath of the Genocide, but more voluntary, as in the search for a safer haven—but nevertheless a challenge to

¹²⁴ Ibid., "The Old Ones," p. 19. The last line comes from an old Armenian song in which the singer, a weary պանդուխտ (exile), is searching for his lover who has gone to the summer homes of Bingol.

the structure and the identity of diasporan Armenian communities individually and collectively.

The Challenge of Displacement And the Threat of the White Massacre

Introduction

As a result of political upheaval in the Middle East after the Second World War, Armenian strongholds began to fall. First in Egypt in the late 1950s, then in Syria and Lebanon and later in Iran, revolutions, civil wars, and oppressive regimes created an atmosphere that was economically, politically, and culturally unsafe and unbearable for Armenian communities. Some of them centuries old, others more recently established, these hitherto thriving communities, with all the necessary infrastructure in place, began to dwindle. For the survivors /newcomers to those countries, it had taken decades to adapt and rebuild their lives upon the ashes of the Armenian holocaust. And now the host country was no longer so hospitable. Armenians took to the road again. As an old Armenian adage puts it, "they took the cane of exile in hand"

(պանդխտութեան ցուպը ձեռք առան), a painful experience repeated many times in Armenian history.¹ Destination: for most, the United States of America and Canada, and for lesser numbers, Europe and Australia. Were they refugees fleeing persecution, or exiles hoping to return, or simply immigrants to the Western world? More important for this study than the legal meaning of these terms that define the newcomer's status is the reason or the motive for leaving the former host country which in the period under discussion is also the birthplace of the second-generation survivor-writer. The immigrant generally comes in search of better, safer, more peaceful and prosperous living conditions. The exile generally has ideological and political motives (the loss of political freedom or the danger of persecution), over and above those of the immigrant. There is also the evolving psychology associated

¹ Significantly, Vrej-Armen Artinian takes this adage as the title of the first article he wrote after immigrating to Montreal, Canada. Originally published in *Hairenik*, collected in *Vosdain 4: Im oughebadoumuh* [Web 4: My travelogue/memoirs] (Montreal: Hamazkayin Canada, 2013), p. 130.

Long before the Great Deporation, the expulsion of Armenians from their homeland, the famous Armenian poet Ghazaros Aghayan (1840–1911) allegorically described the pain of being forced to rebuild one's home, time and time again. Here the culprit is the enemy's ill-will. The swallow rebuilding her nest signifies the many nests Armenians have built, only to leave everything and fly to a more hospitable place to build their nest anew.

Ծիծեռնակը բոյն էր շինում,
Ե՛ւ շինում էր, եւ՝ երգում,
Ամէն մի շիւղ կպցնելիս՝
Առաջուայ բոյնն էր յիշում:

A loose translation would be: The swallow was building a nest,/She sang while she built,/With every twig she added/she remembered the nest she had before.

with and conditioned by the process of adjustment that differentiates the exile from the immigrant. Furthermore, many second-generation exiles/immigrants did not sever their ties to the Old Country that was their birthplace and never abandoned the thought of going back once the tumult died down and conditions improved. In addition to their sentimental attachment to their birthplace, many still bore their inherited love of homeland/Armenia and continued their political and literary activism in support of the establishment of a free, independent, and united Armenia.² In all cases, their presumed status, whether immigrant, exile, or refugee, impacts the individual as well as the collective identity. It is difficult to parse that impact since it depends to a large extent on how individuals think of themselves. In a study on the self-perception of Cuban immigrants/exiles in the United States—a case that presents striking similarities to the Armenian situation—Juan Del Aguila of Emory University in Atlanta has this to say:

Historical cases do not necessarily provide a definitive clue as to where the answer lies precisely because the process through which immigrants or exiles acquire new identity is complex. For example, one can live in one's new country for decades, even become a citizen of that country and subjectively remain "an exile" for purposes of one's identity. Attitudes and personal beliefs regarding who we are do not necessarily change even if legal status does, and in all

² A free, independent, and united Armenia was the ultimate goal of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF, Dashnaks'ut'iun) which inculcated this idea in generations of diasporan Armenians after the loss of Armenian independence in 1920. It meant not only freeing the Armenian republic from the Soviet regime but restoring the lands of historic Armenia under Turkish occupation as well.

likelihood there are many exiles who not only reject the label of Cuban-American, but insist that their identity will forever be "Cuban."³

Similar nuances in self-perception are found in the works of second-generation Armenian immigrant/exile poets and writers. They were educated in Armenian centers in the Middle East and they continued to write in Armenian after migrating to the West at some point in their adult life. Born in Middle Eastern countries before the postwar political upheavals, they understandably developed a sense of belonging to their birthplace. Many were educated in the dominant language and spoke it as well as their mother tongue. In the process of adjustment to the Western world, bittersweet memories of those places coexisting with the inherited memory of the Armenian homeland generated a complex psychic reticulation against which the growing sense of belonging to the newly adopted country came to compete.

The resulting tension, though baffling and painful, was a rich source of inspiration for artistic expression. The fictional characters and situations these poets and writers created were the product of the Armenian intellectual struggle to navigate these stormy seas with their cross-currents of the past sense of identity and the exigencies of the new country forcing new directions. Vahé Oshagan, Hakob Karapents, Krikor Beledian, Vrej-Armen Artinian, Boghos Kupelian, Vahé Berberian, and Vehanoush Tekian, among others who write in Armenian, provide examples.

³ Juan M. Del Aguila, "Exiles or Immigrants? The Politics of National Identity," *Cuban Studies Association Occasional Paper Series* 3/2 (March 15, 1998), <http://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/csa/13>.

The hardship of dislocation and the inherited memory of family lost to Turkish atrocities have become part of the Armenian heritage transmitted to the second generation. How this generation responds to their Armenian heritage depends upon the quality of their connection to that heritage, whether they love and cherish or hate it, whether they live stranded within it or try to escape and free themselves from it. In all cases, the response is a matter of reaching a resolution, a catharsis.

Responding to the predicament

Relocation presented many problems at the individual and domestic/familial levels. The exigencies of the New World created a rift in the customary way of life in countries that were also familiar and beloved birthplaces. The language of artistic expression, family relationships, adjustment to the new environment, and witnessing the perils of assimilation, or the "white massacre," were among the problems the immigrant/exiled second generation faced.

Vahé Oshagan best portrays this psychological predicament in *Ahazang* (Alarm), a collection of free verse poetry to which brief reference was made earlier in this study. After living the life of a second-generation diasporan Armenian in Cairo, Beirut, and Paris, and being well versed in the Armenian language, Vahé Oshagan first set foot in the United States in the late 1970s. He came face to face with the overwhelming, crushing waves of the American lifestyle, worldview, and culture. He witnessed the impossible struggle of Armenian-American communities to stand proud and tall against all odds. In the work he produced in his chosen

language, Western Armenian, he tried to sound the alarm about the dire consequences of displacement.

"*Ahazang*" (Alarm), the title poem in this collection, embodies Oshagan's psychological turmoil in the process of coming to a new understanding of himself—a mental state that can be generalized to other new immigrants—not only in relation to history but also to the collective psyche of the New World. This disruption is reflected in the defiance of traditional norms and constraints in some of the literature they produced. Indeed, under the influence of the dominant European or American culture, artistic inhibitions were cast off and taboos broken. The constraints of a polite, straight-laced language befitting the literature of a saintly martyred nation have been lifted. Oshagan's *Alarm* also reflects uncertainty, fear, and audacity all at the same time, which the fusion of the old and the new characteristically creates. This self-portrait, or rather self-caricature, represents a tormented psyche and a sensitive soul. The lyric hero lives in the sad and lonely present, disturbed by the continuous sound of an alarm, menaced by the hostile streets and indifferent passers-by in Philadelphia. And the future holds no consolation.

Oshagan does not live in the past. Nonetheless, in another poem in this collection titled "*Andin*" (On the other side), he evokes the cruel hands of the New World feverishly demolishing and erasing all trace of the memories of the Old World. Stranded between the conflicting forces of the past and the present, he feels like an exiled orphan, clinging to a meager ray of hope in the future, struggling with his broken pen to draw the precept of line and meaning. Obviously,

Oshagan is trying to reinstate the order and clarity lost in post-Genocide diasporan life, in art and through art.

Writing in Armenian was a deliberate choice for Boghos Kupelian, despite the fact that his African sketches at least could have found a readership if they had been written in English or French. The exotic atmosphere and the eccentricity of life, customs, and mores in Africa where he resided for two decades fascinated and inspired him and he took his first steps in the realm of literary creation with exciting tales from that world. But even in these stories, the Armenian past, the Turkish massacres, his life growing up in extreme deprivation among the remnants of Cilician Armenia in Beirut, are present as indelible marks and points of reference and comparison. For example, describing African cannibals in one story, his thoughts fly back to the past and he compares them to Turkish hyenas: the Turkish murderers were man-eaters too, he says.

Kupelian's journey took him from Africa to the United States where he settled and established a home and family in his mature years. Thus he experienced the hardship of dislocation twice, first from Beirut and then from Africa to America.

He calls himself one of "the youngest victims of French Oriental policy." In twenty-three short stories in *Merci beaucoup aspetakan Fransa*, briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, he evokes the misery and deprivation in which a group of families displaced from Alexandretta lived in Beirut. They were thirty families, each one crammed into a small room in the former Kelegian Orphanage. That was the environment in which Kupelian grew up, overshadowed by the not too distant massacres and deportations. It was also the

environment in which the children of these Turkish-speaking Armenians received their first baptism in the Armenian language at the hands of devoted teachers whom Kupelian never forgot and to whom he was forever indebted. He says that his lack of knowledge of the mother tongue was a severe deficit which he remedied with intensive reading once he learned the basics.⁴ From then on, mastery of the Armenian language was his unquenchable desire, an idol to worship.

Humorous scenes in *Merci beaucoup* alternate with depressing scenes that convey the true picture of these remnants of large families thrown into the Arab world without any means survival. "My parents' generation knew the psychological state of the survivor well, having survived the Genocide. Since they had lost all their kin, they had to bury each other. There was no other way out."⁵ They did not permit a deceased fellow refugee to go to his grave alone. They followed his casket, muttering a curse for the Turk, for the Crime, and for its consequences. Young Boghos emerged from this joyless atmosphere with humor and optimism using his survival tools, the most efficient of which was "*Hors jut'akē*" (My father's violin). The family's only means of sustenance, this musical instrument that so powerfully impacted Kupelian's childhood became the symbol of survival and his unbreakable link to memories of his father and the tragic past.⁶

⁴ Boghos Kupelian, "*Mashtots'i k'urm Sami Garo*" [Sami Garo: Worshipper of Mashtots], in *Merci beaucoup aspetakan Fransa* [Thank you very much, knightly France] (Yerevan: "Nairi," 1998), pp. 150-55.

⁵ Ibid., "*Sinemamol Gevorgē*" [Movie-crazy George], pp. 57-65. Quotation from p. 64.

⁶ Ibid., "*Hors jutaktē*" [My father's violin], pp. 163-71.

Khosrov Asoyan, another immigrant from Beirut, writes poetry in Armenian. Many of his poems speak of the difficulties of adjusting to the New World. He is unable to build a peaceful life for himself in the "City of the Angels" by the Pacific Ocean "with alluring pharos that attract thousands." People come here and "get crushed under your raging waves." He goes on to picture the chaos in which individuals are dissolved and hopes destroyed.⁷ The essence of the series of poems collected in *Ver-a-dardz* (Re-turn) is his painful yearning and admiration for Bourj Hammoud, a suburb of Beirut where a large number of Armenians lived in a tightly knit community. Memories of his childhood and youth are alive. The ruinous civil war that tore the country apart and drove many Armenian families to the West is the evil upon which he spills his grievances. Curiously, it is not Beirut but his father's birthplace, which he calls by its ancient name, Mtsbin, to which he returns in his imagination to plead for inspiration and the strength "to return from exile" to "the land of cedars" (10-11).⁸

⁷ Khosrov Asoyan, from a series of poems under the general title, "*Yerku ankiun*" [Two corners], in *Ver-a-dardz* [Re-turn] (Van Nuys, CA: S.p., 1992), p. 24. Asoyan was born in Syria and raised in a suburb of Beirut. He has resided in the United States since 1980s.

⁸ Asoyan's father, a survivor of the Genocide, was born in Mardin, a city in the Dyarbekir region of Turkey built upon the ruins of the ancient Armenian city of Mtsbin (Nisibis, Nisibin). With a history that goes back centuries before Christ, Mtsbin was one of the capital cities of King Tigran the Great (1st century BC) when Armenia was one of the great powers of the region. Here Mtsbin not only refers to the birthplace of the poet's father but also serves as a symbol of Armenian power and Armenia's glorious past.

Strange as it may seem, yearning for the parents' birthplace in Western Armenia is not an unusual phenomenon. Asoyan longs for the ruins of Mtsbin upon which his father's hometown of Mardin was built. Helene Pilibosian describes Ichmeh as if she herself were born there. Vanouhi Avetisian (1924–2011) provides another example of this trend. Born to Vanetsi parents in Abadan, Iran, she worked as a teacher of Armenian subjects in Abadan and Tehran and in 1970 immigrated to the United States where she resumed her teaching career. She considered herself a Vanetsi, and in Los Angeles she yearned for Van, her parents' hometown on the shore of Lake Van, a place she had never seen: "From these far away seashores the Armenian World is captivating me/The Sea of Van with troubled waves is calling me." She goes on to pay tribute to the beauty of Van and its significance in Armenian history. She has every hope of returning someday to her ancestral land, "Armenia with your rippling Sevan and my Sea of Van."⁹

Relocation was especially difficult for elderly men and women, most of whom were survivors of the Genocide who willingly or reluctantly accompanied their children and grandchildren in their migration to the New World. These refugees to Middle Eastern countries had managed to adjust to the new environment of their host societies, make a living, and raise a family. They had built or enriched the existing infrastructure of the Armenian communities they joined, the schools, churches, cultural, athletic, and benevolent organizations that

⁹ Vanouhi Avetisian, "Vaspourakan im ashkharh" [Vaspourakan, my world], in *Varak* 58 (2011). *Varak* is the periodical of the Vaspouragan Society of California.

were partially or totally isolated from or independent of the infrastructure of the host country, but of course, that was under the auspices of accommodating or even beneficent governments. Now they had to dismantle what they had built and move again in order to be with their children, to whom they had given a good education or useful technical skills. They reached the New World, but in their advanced age they were unable to master the new language and embrace the culture. Condemned to inactivity, they were pitiful. We see their predicament too in the works of second-generation survivor-writers.

Khosrov Asoyan, for example, laments the passing of his father who lived through the massacres and deportations as a child and somehow made it to Lebanon. Los Angeles was his final home. There he dragged out his sorry existence yearning for Lebanon, his adopted homeland. His father's predicament spreads over many like him, and Asoyan rhetorically asks them, "Who brought you here?"

I bewail your journey
you, who were born
in the sunlit parade of the East

you, who sought the sun
the sun always
in the ruins of Mtsbin,
nourished by the splendor
and the mystique of
the land of cedars,
and mixed your dreams with the
golden autumn of your homeland
who

brought you here?¹⁰

Oftentimes, these elderly parents become a nuisance for the migrant's young family. Vahé Oshagan portrays this tragic circumstance in the fictional but very realistic characters he creates. The unfathomable inner world of the poetic personality and the complex artistic voice in "*Ahazang*" and "*Andin*" unravel into a more comprehensible structure of contrasting ideas and conflicting goals, situations, and directions in his prose. His short stories in particular portray men and women engulfed and consumed in the battle they face in the new environment.

Oshagan's "*Vipayin herosin tsnundn ev mahē*" (The birth and death of the lyric hero) is one such story in which the new lifestyle and customs overpower traditional obligations to elderly parents and produce sad consequences. In the cruel struggle to get ahead in the New World, children forget the love and care they owe their parents. Zapel, a wealthy widow who used to lead a comfortable life in Istanbul, has now become a nuisance to her two sons. What should Zhirayr (now Jerry) do? Follow tradition and have his mother live in his home, which would upset his American wife? Or trick his mother, take her to an old age home, drop her off, and never to look back? "Just put her in the car and take her there, Jerry," says his brother. "Sorry, but I'm really busy right now.... Do

¹⁰ Khosrov Asoyan, from the series of poems titled "*Yerku ankiun*" [Two corners], in *Ver-a-dardz* [Re-turn], p. 9.

whatever you want to do. We'll look at the cost later. Send me the bill."¹¹ And Jerry does just that.

Zapel can't believe it. There must be a misunderstanding. Zhirayr can't do this to her. She has been so nice to her sons. She even bought each one a big house with the money her husband left to her. She refuses to stay in the old age home and listen to an old woman telling her how she too was left there by her son but has gotten used to the place and is happy now. Zapel stands outside in the rain, waiting for Zhirayr to come back and take her home. She must find him. She goes looking for him. Compunctious but disappointed, Jerry finds her lost, wandering near the old age home, and drives her home without a word. So the scheme cooked up by her sons fails. She is back in exile in the two-room apartment on the third floor of her son's mansion.

Vahé Haig entertains a similar theme in "*Verē Astvats ka Karapet*" (There is God up there, Karapet), where every tenant in the Philips Old-age Home has a sad story to tell.¹² Their children have abandoned them and they seldom come to visit. "What kind of a country is this? Sons betray parents, husbands and wives destroy their home and separate from each other just for financial reasons. Sons denounce their parents, and people sell their God for money!" Markar Aghbar (*aghbar* meaning "brother" in Western Armenian) enviously recalls

¹¹ Vahé Oshagan, "*Vipayin herosin tsnundn ev mahē*" [The birth and death of the lyric hero], in *T'akardin shurj* [Around the snare] (New York: Vosketar, 1988), pp. 17-35. Quotation from p. 17.

¹² Vahé Haig, "*Verē Astvats ka Karapet*" [There is God up there, Karapet], in *Sp'iurk'ahay patmvatsk'ē* [The diasporan-Armenian short story], comp. Gegham Sevan, ed. Vazgen Gabrielian (Yerevan: Yerevan University Press, 1984), vol. 1, pp. 283-95.

how children loved their parents in the old days: "The older they got the more respectful we were toward them. Here, they call you an old man and lock you in a stable" (289). And when the elders complain and beg their sons to visit them, and bring the grandchildren whom they miss immensely, they always get the same cold, indifferent reply: "We're very busy. We can't. Have patience. Everything will be okay" (291).

The decision to move elderly parents to nursing homes is not always easy or inconsequential, but the emotional effects usually impinge more heavily on the grandchildren of these old men and women who generally spoiled them and sheltered them from their parents' harsh discipline. John Vartoukian still remembers when as a child he accompanied his mother to visit his grandmother in the East Orange Nursing Home:

She sits forward, propped in a wheelchair.
Motionless. A petrified ruin
Except for one palsied hand
Trembling on the armature.
Patients surround her in the Day Room
Some with mad eyes
Or their heads askew
Like dolls with broken necks.¹³

It is macabre for a young boy to see his grandmother in this morose atmosphere, nearing her end, imploring her family in tears and in silence to visit more often.

¹³ John Vartoukian (b. 1934, New York), "At the East Orange Nursing Home," in *Armenian-North American Poets: An Anthology*, ed. Lorne Shirinian (St. Jean, Quebec: Manna, [1974]), pp. 63-4.

As time goes by, elderly parents, whether in nursing homes or in the loving care of their children, eventually pass on. Young immigrant families are well adjusted. They are raising children born in the Western world. Do they remain committed to their ethnic origin and heritage, or do they feel better off drifting away, losing themselves in the mainstream with only a weak tie to the Armenian community, or with no tie at all? The literature of the time will provide the answer.

Confronting indifference and aloofness

It pained Vahé Oshagan to witness the indifference of many immigrants to their ethnic origin and heritage. Ethnic roots were losing their importance as Armenian religious and ethnic traditions became perfunctory practices. The total loss of Armenian identity was imminent. Given his realistic assessment of the situation, Oshagan put up a fight using shock tactics to awaken sentiments sunk in oblivion and bring them to conscious awareness, to make them meaningful and important, to make them rear up against the natural trend of Americanization and assimilation.

He did this in the most extreme terms in "Otsum" (Consecration).¹⁴ Three young people, two men and a woman, orchestrate an act of sacrilege in Sourp Sargis Armenian Church (a fictitious name) in Philadelphia, where a dozen or so middle-aged men and women attend services on Sundays if they have nothing better to do. Oshagan describes each member of the congregation, the totally uncommitted lives

¹⁴ Oshagan, "Otsum" [Consecration], in *T'akardin shurj* [Around the snare], pp. 139-42.

they lead outside of church, their miseries, their longings, their struggles for material gain, and their children's mixed marriages that ultimately lead to alienation and the breakdown of the Armenian family structure.

The Shohlemian brothers are rich. They have a successful business. Both are married to *odars*. Their children have nothing Armenian but their last names. The two brothers go to church every Sunday. "Carrying their rich man's belly, they stand there in the middle of the church, feeling nothing, hearing nothing, and throw in some small change when the donation plate goes around" (45). Then they return home to their real lives as Americans with the satisfaction of having performed their national duty.

The Shohlemians are no different from other church-goers "who went during their idle hours, not out of any religious fervor." As Der-Avetis, the pastor of fifteen years, once remarked to his wife, "What is faith to these wretched people? (ատ զավալըներուն ի՞նչ հաւատք ի՞նչ բան.) It's the village instinct, woman, the voice of the homeland" that drags them to church (40). Der-Avetis performs the mass every Sunday no matter how many people show up. But he is a unique character, a fighter rather than a religious man. The reason he has taken up this vocation is because it is the only way he can serve the indifferent and disunited Armenian community.

The three young people planning to invade the church are members of an extremist group called the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA). Sargis/Jacques, the diehard leader, has come from Beirut to carry out the mission. Sona is a local woman, a devotee of ASALA. Bruce is

a blond half-Armenian who speaks not a word of the language but has somehow been inspired by the Armenian Question.

Jacques has studied the plain, unadorned church which, he maintains, "was built on deceit and boredom. The same people gathered there every Sunday and sat in the same places. The pain of having betrayed their homeland, their fathers, their children, and their God pierces their hearts, but they always think of something else" (53). Can this church become the home of "a god, an imaginary god, detached from the everyday sorrows, pains, and hopes of this world, a sort of concept and idealization of god, as abstract as the love and yearning one feels for the homeland, with nothing to do with these masses and prayers?" (48). Oshagan does not believe it can. He rejects these easy solutions. The real solution lies in peoples' perception. "I have no faith in the Armenians in America," says Jacques. "These people have no problems. They are content, satisfied people. The entire country has no crisis, let alone the Armenians here" (62).

Oshagan explores various defenses against indifference and aloofness as Jacques thinks out loud, planning the action. His solution is to destroy the old institutions. If necessary, even the church should be destroyed in order to shatter the legend, quash the myth, turn these people's lives upside down and build anew. The concepts of nation, tradition, religion, the very concept of Armenianness, in other words, has retreated into the subconscious. It has to be challenged and brought forward, raised to conscious awareness. "If Armenians love their church and religion, if they believe the words of the priest.... They should fight. They should at least get mad and

defend the sanctity of the church. They should do something, these goddamned people!"

A terrible sacrilege is being planned. But why? For what purpose? "The coward will run away. Those who can endure will remain, those who are truly useful to the nation. To hell with the rest (մնացեալը զիպիլի թեւեթէն).... The church must burn down, and that should be the celebration of the 'birth' of the diaspora," Jacques fulminates (53-7).

Armenians are frozen. They have turned into fossils and stones living in the false paradise of their religion. First, let's destroy the church and the mystique of religion. After that, we can liberate the concept of Armenianness from the state of immobility and passivity and bring it to life, something that can be transmitted from generation to generation (74).... We must destroy the symbols, put the priest to the test, strip him of his façade—his attire, his decorations, even his beard—and see the power of faith. (127)

With these extreme measures, Jacques believes he can destroy not only the empty myth, but the centuries-old tyranny, the fear of the Turks, the terror of the massacres. He convinces Sona and Bruce of the merit of their mission which aims to rebuild the nation that has become passive and unchanging, to give it new life so that it can carry on from generation to generation.

The three enter the church on a Sunday, dressed in black. Carrying a transistor radio blasting loud music, they approach the altar where Der-Avetis is performing the mass. Sona and Bruce jump up on a pew and start kissing. The congregation is in an uproar but the priest is unshaken. He continues the liturgy. Jacques is infuriated. He starts harassing Der-Avetis.

With the tip of his knife, he cuts away the priest's garments one by one and finally strips him naked. The shame and embarrassment are unbearable, but Der-Avetis is a fighter too. He is determined not to give in, for the sake of the church, for the sake of the congregation (112-16). Some of the congregants rush outside, others are nailed to their seats, still others shout at the mysterious youth and urge each other to do something, but no one dares to interrupt the sacrilegious drama being played out at the altar.

Now, a pair of scissors in hand, Jacques is on the verge of cutting off the naked priest's long beard, stripping him of every religious symbol and the dignity and esteem conferred by his vocation. Suddenly, a loud "No!" rings out. Bruce leaps forward. This is beyond everything he agreed to. A fight breaks out between the two boys. Bruce falls down, bleeding from the head. Der-Avetis is weeping. His eyes take on a special luster that inspires Bruce with a heavenly light. "Come, my boy," says the priest. He kisses the boy's bleeding forehead and puts a piece of consecrated bread in his mouth (121).

After that disastrous Sunday, years go by. All three members of the ASALA cell have served their time in prison. When they get back together again, nothing has changed for Jacques. He is still a follower of the same ideology: to shock the nation out of its centuries-old torpor, to force diasporan Armenians to own up to their predicament and fight for the perpetuation of a living nation. He is planning new actions....

For Der-Avetis, however, nothing was ever the same after that Sunday. In that moment of ultimate suffering, he experienced the essence of his nation's torturous past. He

came to the realization of what Armenianness means. He came closer to his own god (134). He believes the shadow of those three youths dressed in black will follow him and assure the journey of his half-Armenian grandson Mher from generation to generation.

Did Oshagan succeed with this grand scheme? He believed Armenians had problems, first, with themselves, and then with the world. The real problem was neither *Hay Tad*¹⁵ nor ASALA, nor all the various Armenian political parties, neither the assassinated Turkish consul nor the captive Armenian lands, not even the lack of national unity (131). The Genocide had caused the dispersion of the survivors. The political upheaval in the Middle East that followed the Second World War had triggered another mass migration to the West, throwing the generation born to the survivors into the whirlpool of cultural assimilation and loss of Armenian identity. Now the white massacre, as treacherous as the bloodshed of 1915, was threatening Armenians in the Western world.

The short stories collected in *T'akardin shurj* (Around the snare), including "Otsun" (Consecration) and several stories mentioned earlier, were written in early 1980s in the heyday of the Armenian armed struggle (or Armenian terrorism, as non-Armenians commonly referred to it), and the prevailing

¹⁵ *Hay Tad* (translated as "the Armenian Question" or "the Armenian Cause") broadly refers to activities, whether armed or peaceful, in pursuit of redress for the injustice committed against the Armenian nation. Redress would comprise international recognition of the Armenian Genocide, financial reparations, and the restoration of Turkish-occupied Armenian lands. In this context, however, *Hay Tad* refers to a specific ARF-affiliated organization pursuing those activities.

mindset at the time, especially among the revolutionary intelligentsia (among whom Vahé Oshagan was a leading light), resonates in the author's work. In any case, his goal was to save the new generation and push them into the struggle to preserve the national identity, and symbolically that meant consecrating the new church with the blood of the young and building a new stepping stone for the Armenian spirit to soar in the Diaspora. The figure of the new diasporan Armenian arises from his stories with a new sense of Armenianness. And through his protagonists, Bruce, Mher,¹⁶ and others who may only be half-Armenian and who speak no Armenian at all, the Armenian race will take the mysterious and dangerous journey into the future. In a brief thematic analysis of Oshagan's literary legacy, I made the following statement and I repeat it here:

Oshagan's literature delineates a constant effort to move from the predicament of the victim's psychology... toward existence as a complete and free human being. He tries to reach a new synthesis, a new image of the Diasporan Armenian with a new identity, cognizant of the past, dedicated to the present, and able to reinterpret the concept of Armenianness for the future [that is, one who can carry the strength of the nation and withstand obstructions].¹⁷

¹⁶ Mher is Der-Avetis' young grandson, born of an American father. The name Oshagan chose for this new-born child, symbolizing the future generation of diasporan Armenians, refers to Pokr Mher, the last mythical hero of *David of Sasun*, the Armenian national epic. Legend has it that Mher and his mythic horse are confined inside a great rock and will only emerge when justice prevails on earth.

¹⁷ Rubina Perroomian, *And Those Who Continued Living in Turkey after 1915: The Metamorphosis of the Post-Genocide Armenian Identity as Reflected in Artistic Literature* (Yerevan: Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, 2008, 2012), p. 172. See also idem, "The Transformation of Armenianness

Hakob Karapents takes a different path in dealing with the threat of the white massacre, i.e. the second generation's indifference to their ethnic heritage. He conceptualizes the modern diasporan Armenian in a different way. In "*Jefersen, A.M.N.*," discussed in chapter 1 of this study, he describes the second generation born to the survivors of the Armenian Genocide in the imaginary American city of Jefferson, where they are better off than their parents morally and financially, well adjusted, midway between patriotic Armenians and full-fledged Americans, ready and able to take responsible positions in the local government. Here it is the third-generation survivors who grow up with no affinity to their ethnic roots. The gap is alarming. The only institution that still has some weight in the life of this generation is the Church. However, without the input of other ethnic institutions—cultural organizations and political parties—the Church alone cannot uphold ethnic pride and ensure the preservation of ethnic identity. The Armenian community of Jefferson is showing signs of weariness. New blood is needed. So far, the subject of Karapents' deliberation has been the second generation born to survivors settled in the Western world. Now he continues with the new influx.

The new waves of immigration after World War II bring in the necessary zeal. But the new immigrants, according to Karapents, also bring their Middle Eastern mindset, a haughty disdain and intolerance for American-Armenians who have

in the Formation of Armenian-American Identity," in *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 6 (1992-93): 119-45, for further discussion of Oshagan's pursuit.

lost their language. The chasm opens wider. Time passes and the newcomers also give birth to a more acclimated generation. These new American-born Armenians look no different and think no different from the youth in the rest of Jefferson. They are elected to public office. They work for the betterment of humanity. They know they are Armenians. They are aware of their origin and heritage but they are not fanatical about it. They have made peace with the world and with themselves, "and because this new generation does not nurture an empty ethnic pride, the older generation distrusts its Armenianness and considers it assimilated and lost." This dialectical pattern is seen across Karapents' works and encapsulates diasporan life. The end result is a synthesis that exemplifies the prototype of the modern diasporan Armenian with a new concept of identity and a continuous struggle to maintain it.

The preservation of Armenian identity

The struggle to preserve the Armenian identity in the Western world was an uphill battle against assimilation. It required strong determination and relentless devotion on the part of the second-generation survivors of the Armenian Genocide, those who were immigrants to the New World but educated in the Middle East and inculcated with an unshakable Armenian identity. Vahé Oshagan expresses the fear that,

this time the threat of extinction looms very close, more menacing than before. There is fear... that the culture is being eroded and that national identity is being blurred. Yet the endless struggle for survival goes on with desperate

determination, from Tehran to Beirut, to Paris, to Montreal, to Rio de Janeiro....

He lists three sources of pressure that impinge upon the Armenian poet, even before that of forging an identity as an artist in the world. First are the political and moral imperatives that have guided Armenian culture for centuries. Then there is the psychology of the exile. This predicament, Oshagan admits, is shared by other stateless peoples, but Armenians face the added danger of assimilation. And finally, he writes, "the trauma of the massacres" makes it impossible for the new generation "to relate with either its pre-genocide past or with the world of today."¹⁸

Hilda Kalfayan-Panossian also observes the dark colors of the present. This Armenian poet, critic, and educator was born in Istanbul in 1942. She received her college degree in Istanbul and her Ph.D. from the Sorbonne in Paris. She is the author of volumes of poetry as well as an important study of the modern Armenian poetry of Istanbul, *Polsahay nor banastegh-tsut'iunē* (The new Istanbul Armenian poetry). She is also the author of textbooks and workbooks for students of the Armenian language, such as her *Manuel d'arménien occidental pour les non-arménophones*. She lives in France and is in daily contact with young Armenian children. She fights the impossible battle of teaching them their mother tongue. Writing in the 1990s, she laments the loss of the Armenian language in the Diaspora and treats the Diaspora as the site of

¹⁸ Vahé Oshagan, "Background to Modern Armenian Diaspora Poetry," in the inaugural issue of *RAFT: A Journal of Armenian Poetry and Criticism* 1 (1987): 43-4.

the "destruction and disintegration" of every rule and regulation of the past and everything that was held sacred, "decomposition and dissolution/of the I/and language." This is the outcome of the Genocide that obliterated all rules and regulations and expunged order and value from the lives of Armenians thrown into the Diaspora and trapped in a prolonged agony. She treats the Diaspora as an aching wound:

Spiurk is my pain
like an agony that never ends
unable to speak
and yet full of hope....¹⁹

She yearns to see the future beyond all this, to see a generation that can overcome the effects of the traumatic past. In contrast to her hope in the future, however, in another poem she embodies the new generation born in the Diaspora as being absolutely indifferent and aloof, devoid of the feelings of being, living, and aspiring like an Armenian:

From my centuries-old yearnings and desires
I gave birth to a son

I named him stranger
For, what yearning is, he does not know.

From the wounds and blood of my ancestors
I gave birth to a son

I named him pain
For, who the ancestors are, he does not know.

From the breath of my homeland
I gave birth to a son

¹⁹ Hilda Kalfayan-Panossian, "The Wake," trans. Vahé Oshagan, *RAFT* 9 (1995): 15-16.

I named him ill-fated
For, what homeland is, he does not know.

From the Mesrobian letters and marvelous songs
I gave birth to a son

I named him orphan
For, what Armenian letters are, he does not know.

Ah, I gave birth to a son
Who, what belief, what struggle,
What perpetuation is, he does not know.²⁰

A long time ago, Hagop Oshagan wrote that "Diaspora is the Catastrophe prolonged."

Thirty years after immigrating to Montreal, Vrej-Armen Artinian writes about the uphill battle to preserve Armenian identity in the Western world in pieces collected in *Vosdain 4: Im oughebadoumuh* (Web 4: My travelogue/memoirs). In a nostalgic tone, he recalls his childhood and adolescent years in Cairo, the care, devotion, and unpretentiousness of his teachers, the strong, tightly knit, and well-functioning community infrastructure that was already there before the Genocide and that grew even stronger afterwards. This was a function-nality that was impossible to replicate in the Western world. The teachers, educators, and community leaders in Cairo, mostly survivors of the Genocide, had made it their mission to ensure the perpetuation of the nation. Perhaps this was rooted in a subconscious sense of vengeance against the perpetrators of the Great Crime. Vrej-Armen dedicates pages

²⁰ Hilda Kalfayan-Panossian, "Sp'iuṛk'" [Diaspora], in *Dar mē grakanut'iun* [A century of literature], ed. Minas Tölölyan, vol. 2 (1920–1980) (New York: Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, 1982), p. 546.

of *Vosdain 4* to those selfless servants of the Armenian people who impacted his life and shaped the political ideology he espouses, who were instrumental in inculcating his strong allegiance to the Armenian Cause. Gabriel Lazian, Vahan Navasardian, Beniamin Tashian, Beglar Navasardian and others are all gone now and the Old World ideas and strategies are gone with them. Now the second generation is at the forefront in dealing with the wave of assimilation engulfing Armenians in the West.

Vrej-Armen continues to write in Armenian, regardless of the limited readership he may have, because he too wants his voice to be heard in Armenian. In Cairo, his birthplace, he was a well-respected member of the Armenian community with roots going back to Hadjin, Sivas, and Constantinople. In 1966, at the age of 26, he was a successful architect and a community activist when he left "the Old World" with his new bride and his grandfather who was a survivor of the 1894–1896 massacres. They were joining his parents and his brother who had already settled in Montreal. The family was escaping the political turmoil and irrational persecution in Egypt. The locals, of course, welcomed the exodus of these Armenians whom they had always regarded as foreigners. After they left, everything that belonged to them would be theirs.²¹

But prospects were poor in Montreal. The family settled in a mostly Armenian-populated area of the city, actually an Armenian ghetto. These refugees needed each other's help and sympathy, especially in the first few years in an unfamiliar

²¹ Artinian, *Vosdain 4* [Web 4], p. 20.

environment. And they longed for their old home. "How can you forget the old nest?" (26)

Vrej-Armen speaks of the problems faced by the newly established Armenian communities in Canada. He believes the reason why today's youth do not stay with Armenian youth organizations but drift away from everything Armenian is not that there is anything wrong with those organizations but that they do not respond to the social, economic, intellectual, and psychological needs of the youth (201).²² Twenty years earlier, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, a youthful Vrej-Armen, then still in Cairo, had posed these rhetorical questions: Why should we learn the Armenian language? What is the use? We do not need it in the society in which we live or in our profession and career. After all, why should we want to live as an Armenian? And his answer to these questions was firm and determined: Because it is our right. Because half a century ago, an injustice was committed against us and that injustice has not been redressed (218). Notice the equivalence: Vrej-Armen suggests that learning the Armenian language is a condition of living as an Armenian. In other words, he regards the Armenian language as an indispensable component of Armenianness or the Armenian identity.

In a diary entry dated January 31, 1967, however, young Vrej-Armen conceded that one had to endure pain and sacrifice in order to remain Armenian. That entailed letting go of the comfortable life of the present for the real comfort of

²² Ibid., from an article written in 1987.

tomorrow, which he believed would come if the entire nation were mobilized (287).

Incidentally, Vrej-Armen Artinian, like Vahé Oshagan, ties his hopes to the return of Mher, the last Armenian epic hero, who refuses to return to the world as long as there is evil and injustice (308). The problem is that Mher has condemned himself to inaction. He will not fight for justice to prevail in the world but will wait until it does.

Vrej-Armen's entire literary output is a struggle against the assimilation of younger-generation Armenians in the Western world, a generation that, unlike the generation born and raised in the Middle East, lacked the opportunity of formal education in the mother tongue or even the opportunity to learn Armenian. Once again, he deems the Armenian language a precondition for remaining Armenian. And he weaves his thoughts into webs—*Web 1*, *Web 2*, *Web 3*, and *Web 4*, the last of these being subtitled *Im oughebadoumuh* (My travelogue/memoirs).²³

Vrej-Armen Artinian discusses the problems of the Armenian Diaspora, the impact of the dominant culture, the lack of an Armenian educational network, the imminent

²³ Artinian explains his choice of the word *Vosdain* or *Web* as the overarching title of his works in the following terms. Like the threads in a spider's web, his writings connect him to the ones he has loved, to those he has cared for, to those whose acquaintance he made and those who became friends, those whom he influenced and was influenced by. When he began his *Web* series in 1978, he says, there was no Internet or World Wide Web, just the web the spider wove, with every thread ultimately connecting to the center. Vrej-Armen himself is at the center, he is the owner of the web, just as everyone is the center and owner of his own web. But he asks an interesting question: Are we the proprietor—the spider—or the prey? See *ibid.*, pp. 69–70.

danger of losing the language, and the threat of assimilation in an imaginary dialogue with Khachatur Abovian in *Vosdain 1* (Web 1). His choice of interlocutor is not accidental or unintentional. Abovian (1809–1848) was one of the first writers in the vernacular language who ventured to address the Armenian plight under repressive Persian rule in his historical novel, *Verk' Hayastani, voghb hayrenaseri* (Wounds of Armenia: Lamentation of a patriot), written in 1841.

Abovian was aware of the fact that Grabar (Classical Armenian), the formal language of education and instruction, was no longer accessible to the majority of Armenians. He used the crude and unpolished Eastern Armenian vernacular to reach the masses, to alert and warn them, to make them aware of the unfairness of Persian rule over Eastern Armenia and of the prevailing hardship, discrimination, and persecution. In his dialogue with Abovian, Vrej-Armen draws a comparison between the situation in Abovian's time and the diasporan plight today. Abovian had spearheaded the struggle against backwardness and ignorance, social and political injustice, and foreign repression. Vrej-Armen tends to show that Armenians were better off in Abovian's day because they had their roots in their own soil, whereas today they are dispersed throughout the world and many have found the ideal personal comfort, peace, and satisfaction. Echoing Oshagan's thoughts in "Otsun," he says, "An Armenian living in such comfort will never think of our Cause [the Armenian Cause]." But then, considering the adage that everyone in America is an immigrant or the descendant of one, Vrej-Armen says,

An Armenian living in America owns the soil, the river, the mountain, the street, the city... as much as any other with another origin. We convince ourselves, and others too make us believe, that we are citizens of this country as much as the others, and that we enjoy the same rights, the same privileges. We like to believe there is no need to pursue the Armenian Question. Nonetheless, the conditions that made us come and settle here hang over the future and shape the outlook of all of us. The truth is that very few chose to come here of their own free will. We fled persecution. We are exiled people.²⁴

Vrej-Armen continues to focus on the problem of language. The question remains the same as it was in Abovian's day. Which language to choose to communicate with the masses in order to transmit the Armenian spirit and elevate ethnic consciousness? Armenian? But as Tovmas, an active member of the Armenian community in Haverhill, Massachusetts, despairingly says in one of Vrej-Armen's exposés, "Teaching Armenian to these English-speaking Armenian kids is [like] heroically waging the battle of Sardarabad here."²⁵ Vrej-Armen heard this at an Armenian school in North Andover, Massachusetts, where he had been invited to a community shish-kabob gathering.

²⁴ Artinian, "Aboviani het" [With Abovian], in *Vosdain 1* [Web 1] (Montreal: Mesrob Mashdots Foundation Press, 1987), pp. 35–45. Quotation from pp. 40–41. Written in 1979.

²⁵ Artinian, "Haghordut'ian pes" [Like communion], in *Vosdain 2* [Web 2] (Toronto: Hamazkayin Press, 1988), pp. 47–54. Quotation from p. 50. Written in 1979. The battle referred to here is the critical defense of Sardarabad in 1918, when Armenians were able to push back the Turkish Army at the outskirts of Yerevan threatening to capture the last remaining Armenian territory.

But after all, is speaking Armenian the only factor that will ensure the stability of the Armenian identity? No! It cannot work alone. In an essay titled "Armenia Lives," Vrej-Armen mentions Anna who speaks fluent Armenian, thanks to the efforts of her grandparents and the Armenian school from which she has just graduated. Yet her grandmother complains, "My granddaughter is not Armenian.... Not one national preoccupation, not a single association with Armenian life."²⁶ And this is a girl who has grown up in an Armenian environment as an Armenian-speaking American.

Vrej-Armen joins other concerned and committed Armenians to sound the alarm. His *Vosdain* volumes are punctuated with discouraging stories. Armenian communities like those in Haverhill and North Andover, where the older generation is dying off, are on the verge of total assimilation. The new generation pays its dues to its ethnic heritage, if at all, by gathering once or twice a year for a shish-kabob dinner in the church hall.

Nonetheless, Vrej-Armen is not pessimistic. He is convinced that "Armenia Lives," the message of a huge graffiti splash put up by Armenian boys on a wall along the highway to Hartford. Armenia lives even within those who carry only a hazy memory of their roots. And whenever they hear Armenian spoken, they rush to introduce themselves: "Ես հայ, ես հայ" (I Armenian, I Armenian) (65).

Vehanoush Tekian expressed her commitment to the struggle for the perpetuation of Armenians in the Diaspora when she was still a promising young poet in Beirut. She

²⁶ Artinian, "Armenia Lives," in *ibid.*, pp. 55-66. Quotation from p. 59. Written in 1983.

spoke as if in the collective voice of her generation. In her first collection of poems, *Kapuyt April* (Blue April [as opposed to Red April], 1969), she presented an early image of the new diasporan Armenian generation. These poems speak of her struggle to transcend the psychology of a massacred nation, symbolized in two words, *Որբանոցային հոգեբանություն* (orphanage psychology), which she saw proliferating in papers of the period. She resolved to stand upright, despite her grandfather's sad stories of the Armenian past. In her case, as one example among others, the influence of the politicization that took place after 1965 is quite apparent: awareness of the Armenian past was transformed into the resolve to fight for national goals.

I am the generation,
Who still unfamiliar with Armenian ancient history,
Listened to the bitter tale of the diaspora
On her grandfather's knee.

.....
I am the youth with a robust bliss,
Who loved the sound of Mesrob's letters,
Remained always committed to her Great Ideal
With an invincible will.²⁷

²⁷ Vehanoush Tekian, excerpt from "Ev im dimankarē" [And my portrait], in *Dar mē grakanut'iun*, ed. Tölölyan, vol. 2, p. 581. See pp. 578-86 for further discussion of her poetry. Tekian wrote "Ev im dimankarē" in 1968 when she was twenty years old. For the poem in full, see Tekian, *Hragir* [Writing of fire], ed. Abgar Apinian (Yerevan: "Nor Dar" Press, 2000), pp. 3-7. This volume is a collection of Tekian's best work, including the whole of *Kapuyt April*.

Thus she expressed her determination to stick to the Armenian language and she continued to write in Armenian even after she settled in the United States in 1978.

As I leaf through the 400 pages of Vehanoush Tekian's selected poems in *Hragir* (Writing of fire), I feel flood-stricken, overwhelmed with the boundless flow of emotions in abstraction. The memory of the Genocide, pounding in each poem, lifts its deadly head and makes the present irrelevant. If you are not ready to face it and deal with it, it is unbearable. Whether writing in Beirut, New York, or New Jersey, with an ever perfecting command of the Armenian language, she produces personal stories stained by gruesome images of the past, a past that is not hers, the past she tries in vain to disown. Sometimes she takes a break and gets to her personal plight, her dreams crushed, her divorce, her admonishments to her son and daughter not to drift away from the Armenian way, to hold on tight to the Armenian language, which she considers the pillar of Armenian identity, and to transmit it to their own children. Then again, she returns to the old persistent wound that refuses to heal.

Noubar Akishian (Agishian) sounds the alarm too in the voice of old Kesaratsi (from Caesarea, today's Kayseri) Michael in Fresno, foreboding the danger of assimilation that threatens American-born Armenians. Speaking to Aram, the protagonist of "*Avervats p'oghots'ner*" (The ruined streets), Kesaratsi Michael says,

We'll be lost. We'll be lost, all of us, if we don't deal with our situation seriously. Look around you. Instead of building bulwarks and thinking of the future generation in a united way, we waste the little energy we have in quarreling among

ourselves. Our generation will not lose its ethnic identity.... But after we are gone, the Armenian language will be forgotten and Armenian newspapers will be abandoned. The generation born and raised in this country will not care about the fate of our nation.... It's time to act. If we can build churches one after another and community centers next to them, we can also think of ways to preserve our language.²⁸

For Akishian, preservation of the language is the key to the perpetuation of the nation, and language is an imperative component of Armenian identity. This second-generation writer, born in Iskenderun in 1934, immigrated to the United States in 1957 and earned a Master's degree in science. Outside of his day job in the corporate world, he contributed articles to Armenian papers in the USA. He was a keen observer and deeply concerned about the younger generation of Armenians losing their struggle for survival and the fading sense of Armenianness. He died in 1994.

The Armenian literati relentlessly and frantically sound the alarm that losing the language is the first stage in the assimilation of the rising generation, yet they offer no solution. The process of assimilation continues in America, and this gradual demise reverberated in Akishian's literature for a quarter of a century. One subtle change in the course of that process paradoxically facilitates even more rapid assimilation. Americans have grown more tolerant of foreigners and they at least try to understand their predicament. They seldom oppose mixed marriages. They even understand and forgive

²⁸ Noubar Akishian, "*Avervats p'oghots'ner*" [The ruined streets], in *Mardē hoghin vra* [The man on the soil] (Yerevan: Sovetakan Grogh Press, 1987), pp. 137-56. Quotation from p. 151. Written in 1980. *Mardē hoghin vra* is a collection of eight short stories and one novel.

the anger and resentment of Armenians of the old generation when an *odar* is brought into the family.

In "The Ruined Streets," Marc, the *odar p'esa* (foreign son-in-law), receives words of encouragement from Aram: "Don't worry, Marc. They'll probably get used to it. You're not the first *odar* in an Armenian family.... Don't forget that you're dealing with first-generation immigrants for whom Armenianness still ranks above everything else. They've shed blood to preserve their identity." Marc replies,

I understand. We probably would have done the same. A few decades ago, conservative, uneducated Americans would have reacted to mixed marriages in the same way. But that was more out of ignorance than for historical reasons or to preserve a national identity.... Yet America is a melting pot. You can't stop the wheels of history. (140)

Akishian's preoccupation with the struggle for identity, the problem of assimilation, and the future of Armenians in America reverberates throughout his novel, *Gaght'akannerē* (The refugees).²⁹ In fact, the entire novel is a kind of vehicle, and at times an underpowered one, to carry his lofty ideas. The text is so liberally stuffed with speeches and rhetorical statements that there is little room for the plot to evolve and the characters to develop naturally. The action is staged on the streets of Hollywood, California, in Armenian restaurants and grocery stores where old and new immigrants from Soviet Armenia, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and elsewhere come together to share their often sad experiences and vent their

²⁹ Noubar Akishian, *Gaght'akannerē* [The refugees], a novel, in *Mardē hoghin vra* [The man on the soil], pp. 185-388. Written in 1982.

grievances. We witness the gradual fading of ethnic pride and dignity, traits traditionally considered essential elements of the Armenian character.

Neshan, a teacher of thirty years from Lebanon, eventually becomes accustomed to the idea of accepting welfare from the government. His financial need, his son's refusal to support his parents, and his inability to find work in the new country break his pride. Various characters parade through the novel, each one ostracized by the mainstream, each fighting the battle for survival alone. Akishian paints them in dark colors and does not forget to interject his repetitive conclusion every now and then: "դժբախտ ժողովուրդ մըն է մերը" (Ours is an unfortunate nation).

Garbis, another immigrant from Lebanon, was once an optimistic young man. He saw America as the land of opportunity and was determined to get ahead without sacrificing his and his children's ethnic identity. He often encouraged his friend Neshan not to lose hope. But he too is crushed under the wheels of life in the fast lane. He loses his job, his wife, and his family. For a while, he drags out a meaningless life, hungry and homeless on the streets of Hollywood, until one day he gives up completely and commits suicide.

And then there is the Avetissian couple from Soviet Armenia. Both are professionals yet they are unable to practice their professions in the United States. They are forced to take small jobs here and there to earn a meager living. No doubt they represent many Soviet Armenian families, the early immigrants of the 1970s and 80s who found themselves in the same predicament. Although they try hard to hold on to their

pride in the Armenian language and culture they brought with them from Armenia, sooner or later they too are engulfed in the battle and finished as Armenians.

Antoine, another character in *The Refugees*, refuses to publish his work anymore because the Armenian community does not appreciate his talent. He bitterly admits that his efforts have been fruitless: Armenians do not buy his books, they are not interested in Armenian literature, they do not treat him the way other nations treat their heroes. Akishian populates his novel with characters caught in futile struggles. "When we were in Beirut," Neshan says at one point, "we considered Armenians in America to be assimilated and lost. Today, whether we like it or not, we're caught in the same trap. We should be ashamed of our weaknesses" (244).

"Having been born with the fear of uncertainty in the diaspora, our dreams and imagination live thirsting for beautiful horizons. Our heart and soul are aflame with the fire of belonging to a piece of land," Neshan ruminates (246). But from whence will the solution come? Akishian believes the Armenian literati can take up the task of the ancient prophets or modern political leaders and herald the solution. But in the end, he admits his inability or lack of know-how or even the strength to shoulder the task. He can only point out the problem and dramatize it (314).

Gaght'akannerë (The refugees) is the vehicle with which Akishian hopes to demonstrate at least the depth and the seriousness of the dilemma. However, the author's frequent interventions and flights of rhetoric hinder the development of his characters and the dramatization of the dilemma in their lives. Akishian is aware of these shortcomings and justifies

them in a pages-long discourse delivered by Antoine to a gathering of friends which sounds more like a public lecture. Speaking of the deplorable situation of diasporan Armenian communities, Antoine observes that despite their wholehearted dedication and goodwill, the first generation was unable to ensure the perpetuation of the Armenian language and identity in the second generation and fell into internal skirmishing. The second generation was assimilated and the Armenian language was lost. He goes on to say that culture and literature cannot flourish in a situation where the struggle to survive as an ethnic entity consumes energy and drains the community of its livelihood and intellectual manpower (304-10).

Obviously, Antoine functions as the author's mouthpiece, expressing his views and concerns, just as the character Souren served the author Shahan Shahnur in his celebrated novel *Nahanjē arants' ergi* (Retreat without song, 1933). Still further along in *Gaght'akannerë*, in another long-winded speech to another gathering of friends, Antoine rationalizes literary works that do not have Armenian themes and defends the right of an Armenian writer to take up subjects that are not necessarily Armenian but that entertain the dilemmas and problems of humanity as a whole. It is the Armenian spirit and the ethnic character of the writer, Akishian suggests, that will reverberate throughout the literature he produces and elevate it to the level of universal literature. Acculturation is an irresistible natural process. Antoine defines it as the gradual adoption of the primary characteristics of the new environment and the abandonment of that which constituted the core of our ethnic character (324-7).

In his relentless search for a solution, Akishian turns to Soviet Armenia and suggests repatriation, even though he is aware of its implausibility as a fundamental solution. Thus he constantly seeks strategies to win the battle for the survival and perpetuation of the nation. Nor does he shun old, worn out ideas that have not worked and that sound like propaganda in a newspaper article or the fiery speeches at Armenian events. He beats the old drum of unity among Armenians. If the various organizations and political parties cast aside their disagreements, stop their skirmishing, and unite, he suggests, their struggle will be more effective and they will attract the sympathy and cooperation of the new generation too (305). He believes that the new diasporan Armenian will be born from this unity, this new direction and worldview that the organizations, institutions, and political parties will adopt.

Vahram Mavian (b. 1926, Jerusalem, d. 1983, Lisbon) is another Armenian writer who received the ideal Armenian education in Jerusalem and Cyprus and dedicated his life to the education of the young and the inculcation of Armenianness in them. He was the son of Der (Ter) Hagop, the priest who took up arms and joined in the defense of Zeitun and Chork-Marzpan during the Genocide. Der Hagop died young, leaving his 13-year-old son to live a life of orphanhood and poverty. The pain and deprivation Mavian experienced in his youth are reflected in his first collection of poems, *Hamets'ogh veradardz* (Deferred return, 1956). An example is "Menk' tghaners Sp'iuṛk'i" (We the boys of the Diaspora) which embodies his yearning for a warm, comfortable home in his homeland which is far away and

unattainable. Mavian graduated from Melkonian High School in Cyprus and pursued his higher education in Belfast, Northern Ireland. He is the author of collections of short stories that consist mostly of his observations of Armenian life in various diasporan communities.

Later, in his capacity as director of Armenian programs for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon, he traveled all over the world, visiting Armenian communities. *Hayu bekorner* (Fragments of Armenians, 1965, 1987) echoes the dilemma of diasporan Armenians' gradual assimilation, loss of identity, and loss of language. In this volume, as well as in his next, *Amen tegh hay ka* (There are Armenians everywhere, 1977), Mavian laments the situation everywhere from the Middle East to Europe and America. With true-to-life characters he documents the decline of national characteristics and the fragmentation of Armenians.

Reflecting on the challenges of dislocation and the threat of assimilation that has been characterized as the white massacre, a leitmotif running throughout this chapter, I cannot help but see that the Armenian identity, or any other ethnic identity in a multicultural environment, is not immune to change. Ethnic identity is not fixed, it must be seen in dynamic terms. As Henry Louis Gates has observed, "identity politics" changes over time. Identity in Armenian communities in the Western world in the first stages of its formation after the Armenian Genocide was in its purest phase, insistent on its rigid perpetuation through persistence and the accentuation of differences. Despite the resistance of first-generation settlers, however, that particular identity was adapted and ultimately compromised by the reality of assimilation.

In the process of this adaptation and acculturation, the influence of the dominant culture plays an essential role, no matter how strong the resistance to it. Armenian-American literature produced in English is, of course, more apt to undergo all the permutations of this influence. The medium, the language of expression automatically and unconsciously imposes its own structure, which translates into a particular outlook that Armenians call լեզուամտածողություն. It is also clear that ethnic tradition, another important component of ethnic identity, is never fixed or closed. That too is subject to change according to the changing worldview and milieu.

Arpine Konyalian Grenier, the Armenian American poet who described herself as "Armenianly American," grapples with the concept of Armenian identity and rejects all of the conventional, and especially the nationalistic, traditional elements in the construct.³⁰ Language in her writing acquires "commodification" and can be fluid if not liquid. She writes in English which is not her mother tongue. "My mother tongue has lost me," she asserts, in a reversal of subject and object that puts the blame on the Armenian language for losing her. In a piece of prose-poetry titled "Heritage Like Money Then,"³¹ she

³⁰ Her complex work is a mélange of free verse and prose, shot through with unusual references from a variety of disciplines—science, botany, linguistics, anatomy, pathology, philosophy, genetics, music, psychology, et cetera—an overflowing of word clusters whose subtly shaded or contrasting meanings create an abstraction of the intended meaning or image or reference. Syntax is freely violated. Different languages—Armenian, Turkish, Arabic, and French—intermingle with English which is the primary medium of her expression and an important element in her cultural identity.

³¹ Arpine Konyalian Grenier, "Heritage Like Money Then: Exaptation at the Margins, Risk to Reward Where the Word Meets Itself," *diode* 3/2

admits to having left Beirut "because I wanted to get away from not being heard, and from the bourgeoisie." She criticizes the "ethnically cemented organizations that cannot historically and presently define a future in which we exist... not through futile outbursts but passionate about curating ourselves vis-à-vis the rest of the world...." She sees Armenians "with no connection, no departure, no renewal, no vision but that of stagnation and preservation. Preservation of what, pray!" She takes up the task of undoing the old construct of the Armenian identity and creating the new: "Is the Genocide our *unheimlich* we are accustomed to, or has it somehow activated the possibility of a new identity that represses the old to express the new?"³² Genocide becomes a point of departure, a root cause that forces change.

Konyalian Grenier is also concerned with the role of culture in the construction of Armenian identity and rejects the idea of what is believed to be diasporan Armenian culture which Armenians uphold as a pillar of their identity, for in the multicultural diasporan milieu, it is impossible to know what is exclusively Armenian. Upholding that pillar of identity, she believes, can negate the dynamics of culture, can only impede its progress and development, and will condemn diasporan

(Winter 2010) (in which "exaptation = expanded adaptation"). http://www.diodepoetry.com/v3n2/content/grenier_ak.html.

³² *Unheimlich* (German) literally means the opposite of *heimlich* (i.e. unfamiliar, unhomely), but is generally translated as "uncanny" in the Freudian sense associated with "the return of the repressed" ("*Das Unheimliche*," 1919); that is, the impression produced by the perception of something old and familiar that has been estranged in the process of repression. Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" in variant translations by Alix Strachey at <http://users.clas.ufl.edu/burt/uncanny.pdf>, and at <http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/freud1.pdf>.

Armenians to ghettoization or at least to exclusion from the evolution of human society.³³

The Armenian language occupies a primary place in the conceptualization of identificatory modalities by the majority of the writers discussed in this section. The concept of postmodern ethnicity, however, defines the place of the mother tongue differently in a setting where the subject is exposed to multiple languages. Livia Käthe Wittmann's study, "Language and Postmodern Ethnic Identities," reveals a parallel to the Armenian case.³⁴ She tends to show the relevance of each language that a bilingual or trilingual person owns in the context of postmodern ethnicity. Her research involves individuals who lose their mother tongue while acquiring another language or languages that become(s) their primary language of communication. The "mother tongue," in Wittmann's understanding, is the first language a person acquires as a child, which may not necessarily be the language of that person's mother. She offers the example of Jews brought up in Poland or elsewhere in Eastern Europe without knowledge of Hebrew or Yiddish. In the same article, she sets out Joshua Fishman's definition of postmodern ethnicity as a

³³ Konyalian Grenier's "Heritage Like Money Then" is published with other works in a collection titled *The Concession Stand: Exaptation at the Margins* (N.p.: Otoliths, 2011). For a review of this collection, see Talar Chahinian, "Confronting the Limits of Culture and Identity in Arpine Konyalian Grenier's *The Concession Stand: Exaptation at the Margins*," in *Asbarez*, May 31, 2012, <http://asbarez.com/103376/confrontong-the-limits-of-culture-and-identity-in-arpine-konyalian-grenier%2%80%99s-the-concession-stand-exaptation-at-the-margins/>.

³⁴ Livia Käthe Wittmann (University of Canterbury, Christchurch, NZ), "Language and Postmodern Ethnic Identities," in *Ethnic Studies Review* 23 (2000): 33-61.

"stance of simultaneously transcending ethnicity as a complete, self-contained system, but retaining it as a selectively preferred, evolving, participatory system" (39).³⁵ Based on years of research in the sociology of language, and with her focus on the Yiddish language in Jewish life and its retreat in relation to other languages the Yiddish speaker acquires, Wittmann draws the conclusion from Fishman's definition of postmodern ethnicity that it "leads to a kind of self-correction from within and without, which extreme nationalism and racism do not permit" (61). Here she refers to the process of change that takes place through interaction with an ethnoculturally and linguistically different majority. The change may be drastic, requiring the individual to let go of areas of attachment which may alter his or her sense of belonging and self-cognition vis-à-vis the society at large.

The battle is not lost, however. The Armenian language and culture should not be reduced to ethnocultural symbols. They are part of the Armenian national identity. I argue that Armenian nationalism is not rigid to the point of racism. Change is welcome and even desirable, since ethnicity is permeable, as Fishman maintains, and it is important to retain "the recognition of putative biological origins," as he puts it. We can call it Armenian heritage or historical roots.

Interestingly, a traditional, non-Westernized given name can play a role in the individual's attachment to his heritage and his family history, especially in the generation born to survivors of the Armenian Genocide. These survivors tended

³⁵ Joshua Fishman (1926-2015) was a celebrated linguist with a Ph.D. in social psychology and the author of numerous articles and monographs on multilingualism, bilingual education, and language and ethnicity.

to name their children after family members they lost to Turkish atrocities. A person's name thus becomes a constant reminder of what was lost, what is gone. It becomes a fragmented memory, a niche within identificatory modalities.

For all intents and purposes, however, assimilation and the loss of identity constitute a threat facing second-generation survivors who live in the West. Some, like Noubar Akishian, advocated repatriation to Armenia. They believed that it was only in Armenia, or in Soviet Armenia, depending upon the year in question, that Armenians could preserve their culture and their identity.

Armenia, an all-Armenian homeland

Was Soviet Armenia the homeland of all Armenians? This question imposed itself during the period when Armenia was under Soviet rule, but ironically and paradoxically, it remained an open question after the Republic of Armenia regained its independence. For decades after the sovietization of the republic, an impregnable barrier stood between Soviet Armenia and the Diaspora.³⁶ I have discussed the impact of this reality after sovietization, especially on diasporan

³⁶ After a short-lived period of independence (May 28, 1918–December 2, 1920), Armenia was Sovietized to become one of fifteen republics in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). From the beginning, there was an effort to block contact with the West. After World War II, the borders were completely closed due to serious differences and problems with the West, and the metaphorical Iron Curtain separated the Soviet Union from the outside world. Thus cut off from diasporan Armenian communities, Soviet Armenia carried on under rules dictated from Moscow which regulated all aspects of life.

Armenian intellectual life from the 1920s to the 1940s, in an earlier work.³⁷

For intellectuals sympathetic to the Soviet regime, Soviet Armenia was a beacon of hope, a salvation for Armenians in danger of assimilation in the outside world. And naturally, those were the intellectuals who were invited to visit Soviet Armenia, present their work, and take part in celebrations. Others who rejected the regime as anti-nationalist, especially those who were members of Dashnakts'ut'iun (Armenian Revolutionary Federation, ARF) or merely sympathizers, were regarded as enemies of Soviet Armenia: their cultural and literary activities and productions were banned in the country and they were barred from visiting.

Beglar Navasardian, an intellectual, a man of letters par excellence, believed that the Soviet Armenian government's call for the diasporan intelligentsia to settle in the country and help build its intellectual infrastructure was wholehearted and sincere. He thought the regime would be lenient and overlook his anti-Soviet activities and his strong affiliation with the ARF. He decided to burn his bridges and renounce his affiliations—as required by the Soviet regime—and move to Soviet Armenia. The experience of Zapel Yesayan had been

³⁷ See Rubina Perroomian, *The Armenian Genocide in Literature: Perceptions of Those Who Lived through the Years of Calamity* (Yerevan: Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, 2012, 2014), specifically the section titled "Against assimilation: The beginning of a continuous struggle in the new Diaspora" (pp. 30–53) and the chapter titled "The orphan generation" (pp. 77–226), especially the section therein titled "Yearning for the lost homeland" (pp. 137–55).

forgotten.³⁸ Navasardian swallowed the bait and took the fatal step. Resigning from the ARF, the party he had served all his life, and giving up his position as editor-in-chief of *Housaper*, the ARF organ in Cairo, he took asylum in the Soviet Embassy. Significantly, the date was May 28, 1966, the anniversary of Armenia's proclamation of independence in 1918. It is not known how he was transported to Yerevan, but in the last days of September 1966, a short obituary in *Hayreniki dzayn*, the Soviet Armenian weekly, announced that Beglar Navasardian had jumped to his death from the window of his room in the Hotel Armenia.³⁹

The policy of dividing the diasporan Armenian communities into two factions, falsely labeled the "patriotic" (հայրենաստեղծ) and the "anti-Armenia" (հակա-Հայաստան), continued well into the 1970s and 80s. The policy

³⁸ Zapel Yesayan (1878–1943?), an accomplished Western Armenian writer and activist, lived in Paris after having escaped arrest and death during the Genocide. She espoused the political ideology prevailing in Soviet Armenia and came to believe that the Soviet regime was the only solution for the future of Armenia and the Armenian people. She accepted an invitation from the Soviet Armenian government to settle in the country and was offered a teaching position at the State University of Yerevan. That was in 1934. During the Great Purge of 1937, she was accused of "nationalism," arrested, and exiled to an unknown place, probably in Siberia. There is speculation that Yesayan died or was murdered in exile sometime in 1942 or 1943. For a detailed analysis of this great writer's perception of Armenian-Turkish relations and the Turkish massacres of Armenians, see the chapter devoted to her in Rubina Perroomian, *Literary Responses to Catastrophe: A Comparison of the Armenian and the Jewish Experience* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993), pp. 89–116.

³⁹ For more details on Beglar Navasardian (1918–1966), his views, and his fatal step, see Artinian, *Vosdain 4: Im oughebadoumuh* [Web 4: My travelogue/memoirs], pp. 195–8.

indeed worked to generate frustration and despair in many who yearned for Armenia, but without Moscow's dictatorship. In an editorial in *Hairenik* quarterly published in 1970, Minas Tölölyan spoke about the crisis endangering the perpetuation of the Armenian people in the Diaspora and, along with other reasons he cited for the crisis, he underlined the Soviet policy as the main reason. He blamed

that new understanding of "patriotism" which secured support for the Soviet regime at the price of the disintegration of the Diaspora.... the breaking of historical understandings, the distortion of national accomplishments, the denial of the dedication and services rendered to the Armenian communities outside Soviet Armenia by political parties and organizations.⁴⁰

He also blamed that policy for the sterility of the Diaspora.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, and even before that in the more relaxed atmosphere of Gorbachev's *perestroika*, Armenia-Diaspora relations entered a new phase in which there was more tolerance for the opposing ideologies of diasporan Armenians. The reciprocal visits of intellectuals were intended to begin the process of repairing the long-

⁴⁰ See Minas Tölölyan, "Tagnapě vor Sp'iuik'inn ē" [The crisis that is of the diaspora], *Hairenik Quarterly* 3/9 (1970): 3. This periodical, published monthly since 1922 in Watertown, Massachusetts, and the intellectuals gathered around it, served as a beacon of hope and a pillar of perseverance for Armenians dispersed around the world. For a discussion of the role of *Hairenik* in Armenian diasporan life and the formation of post-Genocide diasporan Armenian art and literature, see Rubina Perroomian, "Hairenik: A Periodical in the Heart of New England," in *The Armenians of New England*, ed. Marc A. Mamigonian (Belmont, MA: Armenian Heritage Press, 2004), pp. 116–36.

collapsed bridge between the two parts of the Armenian nation.

What is significant within the context of the new relationship was the painful realization on both sides that what either side knew about the other was based on false assumptions and unfounded expectations. On the one hand, there was the 70-year-long Soviet regime imposing its economic, political, social, and cultural ideologies, its lifestyle and worldview upon Soviet Armenians. On the other hand, there were the diasporan Armenian communities with the socio-cultural influences of their host countries and a fundamentally different view of history and national identity—in which the Genocide and its aftereffects played a decisive role. Decades of separation had created an ever-widening chasm between the two.

Toward the end of the Soviet era, because of Gorbachev's lenient policies and the great need for relief workers in earthquake-stricken Armenia, border controls were relaxed and exchange visits and collaboration between Soviet Armenia and the Diaspora had begun. Dashnaks'ut'iun put out the call, "*Depi Yerkir*" (Toward the Homeland), and enthusiastic youths from diasporan communities instantly volunteered their time and effort.

Khosrov Asoyan, a poet and activist, was one of the first to hear the call which he repeats as the first lines of an untitled poem:

Depi Yerkir
Depi Yerkir
Depi

*Yerkir*⁴¹

In this poem, Asoyan juxtaposes the homeland, Armenia, and the Diaspora in its history, with the people and their mindsets. And significantly, he expresses his pain and disillusionment at having witnessed how the Diaspora, "the indisputable heir and owner of the 'Remnants,'" "the multiplied truth/purified by the horrors of Der-Zor," was being rejected by the homeland (61-2).

The impact of the Genocide on the collective psyche of the second generation was obviously and understandably stronger in the Diaspora than in Soviet Armenia. And that, because of the difference in educational policies as well as the freedom of thought enjoyed by diasporan Armenians, in contrast to the molding and framing of thought according to the imposed ideology of communism and internationalism in Soviet Armenia.

It is a fact that the history of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Armenian struggle for political emancipation and the Genocide were deliberately neglected, or rather, forbidden topics in formal education in Soviet Armenia. Historical memory was transmitted only randomly within the confines of the home, in the stories that survivor parents and grandparents dared to share. Needless to say, the majority of the Soviet Armenian population consisted of refugees, survivors of the massacres and deportations of 1915 who had reached Eastern Armenia even before independent Armenia was declared in 1918. Given these circumstances, the historical

⁴¹ Asoyan, from a series of poems under the general title "*Depi Yerkir*" [Toward the homeland], in *Ver-a-dardz* [Re-turn]. Quotation from p. 60.

memory could certainly have persisted if the iron fist of the Soviet regime had not repressed it.⁴²

By contrast, the upbringing and education of the generation born to survivors of the Genocide in the Diaspora focused on the inculcation of yearning for the lost homeland and the infusion of a sense of belonging to that imagined homeland. The supporting ideology kept the idea of free and independent Armenia alive, to the extent of seeing the Diaspora as a temporary location only, a place of exile, or even a predicament. In "*Veradardz u vagr*" (Return and tiger), Hakob Karapents' protagonist, Vaché Yarjanian, says, "I have been an exile since the day of my birth," addressing his friend who happens to be a tiger (most likely representing the protagonist's will and personality). "I have felt like an exile even in my homeland."⁴³ Soviet Armenia was not working as an all-Armenian homeland.

In fact, after decades of being treated as an opponent of the Soviet regime and having his work and his presence banned from the country, Hakob Karapents was finally invited to visit

⁴² See Rubina Peroomian, "The Memory of Genocide in Soviet Armenian Literature," in *Banber Matenadarani*, 21 (2015): 233-248, for an introductory discussion about how by the Sovietization of Armeenia, historical memory, the memory of the Armenian past, especially that of the Genocide, was switched off. A nation without a past was easier to rule, assimilate, Russify. This special issue of *Banber Matenadarani* houses the papers presented at the 13th Conference of the AIEA (Association International des Etudes Arméniennes), held on October 9-11 in Yerevan.

⁴³ Hakob Karapents, "*Veradardz u vagr*" [Return and tiger], in *Mi mard u mi yerkir* [A man and a country], a collection of stories (Watertown, MA: Blue Crane Books, 1994), pp. 5-22. Quotation from p. 11. Written in Boston in 1991.

Gorbachev-era Armenia. It was a dream come true. However, his sojourn became a new source of torment, since he was unable to identify with the locals. In "*Haykakan shurjpar*" (Armenian rondo), he feels like a stranger to his environment, an outcast among brothers. During an outing with fellow writers, he is incapable of joining their hearty dance, the Armenian rondo, an expression of their spirituality and their need to become one with the earth itself.

Sargis took my arm and pushed me toward the dance circle. He became one of them. I remained a stranger, a visitor, while they were my brothers. The music was in the soil, in the snow, in their bodies. I was a traveler in a Brooks Brothers suit. I had lost that harmony with the blood and the soil, and with awkward movements I tried to regain the rhythm worn out on foreign streets.⁴⁴

In the same story, the reader is transported to another festive gathering, this time in America. The Armenian community of Massachusetts is celebrating Independence Day, May 28, at Camp Hayastan, "a piece of Armenia in America, where America is omnipresent in the way they dress, their softened gazes, their rounded elocutions, their free movements." And they dance with enthusiasm: "They dance the circle dances particular to Van, Taron, Sasun.... All the surge of the exiled fragments, the dance as a dance, as a cry of survival, as an urge for the perpetuation of the nation, so that they exist, we exist, so that there will be life and future" (22).

⁴⁴ Hakob Karapents, "*Haykakan shurjpar*" [Armenian rondo], in *Ankatar [Incomplete]* (New York: Vosketar, 1987) pp. 11-30. Quotation from p. 12. Written in Connecticut in 1986.

Haroutione Berberian traveled to Soviet Armenia to find the spirit of the homeland that his father sought and yearned for all his life.

And the red hot soil
at the edge or border of Cilicia
was the soil of the life-giving homeland.
In 1973 when I visited Armenia for the first time
I searched for that blood-colored soil everywhere
And couldn't find it.⁴⁵

Vehanoush Tekian had the opportunity to visit Armenia as a young woman, right after the Republic declared its independence. She was hoping to go there to live, not merely to visit. She wanted to embrace Armenia as the *Yerkir* (the homeland, by which she means Western Armenia) she yearned for. In the series of poems titled "*T'uyn anmahut'ian*" (The poison of immortality), she describes the hopes, aspirations, and enthusiasm with which she traveled to Armenia, and what she actually saw: "roughness, famine, and darkness/a flood of poverty,/the flaming big Dream/the thieves had stolen..."⁴⁶ Nevertheless, she has not given up, she still wants to move there for good. In the epilogue to the same poem, addressing her son, she writes,

We have to go to *Yerkir*, my son,
both in dream and in reality.

⁴⁵ Haroutione Berberian, "*Ts'avazertsum*" [Painkilling], in *Sahmanner* [Borders], a collection of poems (Yerevan: Lusakn Press, 2007), pp. 59–81. Quotation from p. 67.

⁴⁶ Vehanoush Tekian, "*Ch'orrord sharzhum, Tesilk*" [Fourth movement: Vision], from the poem, "*T'uyn anmahut'ian*" [Poison of immortality], in *Hragir* [Writing of fire], ed. Apinian, pp. 288–311. Quotation from p. 300.

Know yourself, so that
in our dark and painful history
you wear the belt of immortality. (311)

That was in the early 1990s, the first years of Armenian independence. Vehanoush Tekian still lives in the USA, but of course she maintains close literary and academic ties with Armenia. Settling in Armenia for good remains a distant dream.

In my previous book, *The Armenian Genocide in Literature*, I have fully discussed the role Soviet Armenia played in the life of the diasporan Armenian communities.⁴⁷ I traced the impact of the wave of repatriation organized by the Soviets in the late 1940s which worked, among other things, to weaken the diasporan communities and to increase the polarization between the various political factions based on their perception of the Soviet regime in Armenia and their relationship with the ruling regime. I discussed writers such as Vahé Haig, Mari Atmajian, Beniamin Nourigian, Simon Simonian, and others who strongly believed repatriation to Soviet Armenia to be the solution to the losing battle for national survival in the Diaspora.

This polarization persisted within the second generation as the diasporan communities sank deeper into the consuming waves of assimilation. Soviet Armenia continued to be viewed as the beacon of hope and the solution for the preservation of ethnic identity. This view was held especially by writers and intellectuals politically inclined toward the Soviet regime, writers who regarded Soviet Armenia as "the realization of the

⁴⁷ Perroomian, *The Armenian Genocide in Literature*, pp. 148–55.

dreams of the Armenian nation," in the words of Noubar Akishian.⁴⁸

In his desperate quest for a way to save the generation born in America, as noted earlier with respect to his novel, *Gaght'akannerē* (The refugees), Akishian contemplated repatriation to Soviet Armenia which he considered the homeland of all Armenians, the haven where Armenian culture and particularly literature could flourish. He praised Soviet Armenians for their diligent and relentless efforts and their tremendous achievements in turning that ruined, backward country into a modern republic (295). But curiously, he cautiously suggested the repatriation of former Soviet Armenians, but not all the other diasporan Armenians with roots in the Middle East or further back in Western Armenia. Apparently, Akishian did not see Soviet Armenia as having the potential to be the far-reaching answer to the identity crisis in the Diaspora.

Akishian's stand toward Soviet Armenia was shared by few other diasporan Armenian intellectuals. A character in one of Vahé Haig's stories declares, "Armenia is liberated: the dawn of revival is here. Give us twenty years and you will see how our land will flourish. Together with the great people of Russia and along their ideological path, we will enter an era of prosperity."⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Akishian, *Gaght'akannerē* [The refugees], in *Mardē hoghin vra* [The man on the soil], p. 315.

⁴⁹ Vahé Haig quoted in the Preface to *Sp'iurk'ahay patmvatsk'ē* [The diasporan Armenian short story], comp. Sevan, ed. Gabrielian, vol. 1, p. 26. The source of the quote is not mentioned. Actually, the main purpose of this volume was to demonstrate the overwhelming sympathy of

But Soviet Armenia was not ready, or rather, was not in full control of immigration from the Diaspora. There was a great deal of red tape to be cut through before permission was granted. The unfulfilled dream of repatriating to Soviet Armenia is the theme of Avetis Alikyan's "*Anunē Masis drink*" (We named him Masis).⁵⁰ In this short story, Atom and Zapel and their three children, together with Atom's parents, reach Marseilles in the hope of obtaining the proper paperwork to immigrate to Soviet Armenia. They have liquidated their house and possessions and left Istanbul. Turkey was not safe for Atom who harbored leftist ideas which was frowned upon and persecuted by the post-WWII Turkish government. Besides, as Zapel tries to explain to a French neighbor who asks why they left a comfortable life in Istanbul to come and live in such misery in France, "We had everything Jeanine, everything, but we were not happy there. We couldn't be.... Yes, we were born there, we grew up and made a family there.... But we were looked upon as foreigners. One can only be happy in one's homeland. Isn't that so?" (511).

Fitting into the pattern of elderly parents reluctantly following their children are Atom's parents, Vanetsi Manuk and Sorbetsi Hrip. They too have left their decent life in

diasporan writers toward Soviet Armenia, and the writers and their stories were chosen to serve that purpose.

⁵⁰ Avetis Alikyan, "*Anunē Masis drink*" [We named him Masis], in *Sp'iurk'ahay patmvatsk'ē* [The diasporan Armenian short story], comp. Sevan, ed. Gabrielian, pp. 503-24. No doubt this story was selected for inclusion in this volume because of its praise of Soviet Armenia. Born in Istanbul in 1910, Avetis Alikyan was a communist himself. He migrated to France and was an active member of the French Communist Party. He was awarded a medal of honor by the Soviet government for his activism. He died in Paris in 1984.

Istanbul and are helplessly dragged along, first to Marseilles, and then to a village near Paris to live in barely adequate conditions. But Atom remains resolute and hopeful, year after year, as the official at the Soviet immigration office in Paris brushes him off, time and again, saying your papers haven't arrived yet.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the return of Armenian independence in 1991 brought no fundamental resolution to the dilemma of assimilation in the Diaspora. In fact, the chasm between Armenia and the Diaspora only grew wider. Writing in 1995, four years after the declaration of independence, Vahé Oshagan expressed his perplexity: "The Armenian government continues to consider the diaspora as an historic aberration, a mass of people whose only *raison d'être* is to support and finance the fatherland."⁵¹ Nevertheless, he was hopeful, and characteristically, he expected writers to play a role in bridging the political divide and overmatching the "diatribe of the Old Guard" to start a constructive dialogue.

Whether a historical aberration or an appendage of the Armenian homeland, the Diaspora is a permanent fact. Given the present state of affairs in Armenia and the Armenia-Diaspora relationship, the Diaspora is here to stay. Diaspora Armenians, immigrants in the Western world, whether completely absorbed in it or still attached to their ethnic identity and language, are in a symbiotic relationship with the majority culture.

⁵¹ Vahé Oshagan, "Armenia and Diaspora: A Poetic Diatribe," in *RAFT* 9 (1995): 3-7. Quotation from p. 6.

Exiled twice, always a foreigner

"We are the extra-uterine children of Motherland, with different citizenships. Once transplanted always a foreigner," writes Mary Terzian in *The Immigrants' Daughter* (xv). And that was the state of mind of most emigrants from the troubled countries of the Middle East and Soviet Armenia. Earlier I discussed whether and how they remained faithful to their Armenian heritage. Here the issue is their relationship with the majority culture and their perception of their status within that culture. Did they feel themselves to be full-fledged citizens with all the rights and privileges of a citizen? Were they prepared to embrace the new culture and lifestyle and begin life anew? Or were they never able to adjust? Was their life simply miserable, with no better future in sight? Of course, what is significant is the fact that in most cases, especially among the first group of survivors of Turkish persecutions, a sense of incompleteness persisted, a sense of having been uprooted, driven out of their ancestral homes, and that certainly influenced their perception of their new legal status.

I have also discussed the predicament of elderly men and women who accompanied or followed the families of their sons or daughters. But how did the young and strong fare? They came with high hopes and aspirations, but not all succeeded. Oftentimes their hopes and aspirations were shattered in the collision with the demands of the New World. Curiously, it is this aspect of immigrant life in the West that Armenian writers have emphatically portrayed.

Hakob Karapents has developed numerous characters in that sad predicament. Artavazd Srmakeshkhian, in "*Vorevé*

teghits' minch'ev aystegh" (From anyplace to here),⁵² was born in Ejmiatsin during the period of the independent Republic (1918-1920) and grew up under the Soviet regime. Exiled to Siberia, he somehow escaped and, leaving his wife and children in Yerevan, he took refuge in the United States. "He was an Armenian like any other Armenian. He was young and old like any other Armenian, because he had suffered.... He lived his life just passingly, without will or effort, as is characteristic of a survivor of a catastrophe" (152-3). He was unable to enjoy his freedom. He was a tormented soul who dragged out his life. He kept hearing "the moaning of the land," he yearned for the land, his homeland, and his eyes expressed his sadness. "He carried the pain and the yearnings of his exiled (ստրպագիր) nation." His life was incomplete, he had no roots, he lacked a proper footing, something that only his people and his homeland could provide, something to nourish his soul and give him the confidence and the wings to fly in the vast universe of the imagination. He did not believe that Armenians could persevere. He thought they would soon assimilate and lose their Armenian identity in this alien land (156).

Sourenian, or "the gloomy Armenian" (մռայլ հայր), as others call him, is another one of Karapents' lonely and self-contained characters. He cannot relate to people around him. He never smiles at them, he has no loving words for them. His

⁵² Hakob Karapents, "*Vorevé teghits' minch'ev aystegh*" [From anyplace to here], in *Antsanot' hoginer* [Unfamiliar souls], a collection of stories (Beirut: Atlas Press, 1970), pp. 151-69. This is one of Karapents' first stories, written in New York in 1955. I have also discussed Karapents' characters in *And Those Who Continued Living in Turkey after 1915*.

life is empty. He is submerged in a swamp and cannot get out. He has lost the will to struggle and is "stranded helplessly in the dark webs of desperation." To him, life has no purpose without the "paternal heart" (հայրենի օճախ).⁵³ In this story, symbolically titled "*Antsanot' hoginer*" (Unfamiliar souls), Sourenian meets others who share the same predicament. Vladimir and Zhenia, a Russian couple, live in the past, yearning for Russia which they fled long ago. The three of them meet and talk but remain strangers to each other, each submerged in their own chagrin. Sourenian comes to realize, after all, that there are many people in this country, refugees from persecution in their homeland, who face the same dilemma.

Karapents lived most of his life in the United States. America became an inseparable component of the literature he created, physically, spiritually, and metaphysically. Nevertheless, America remained marginal, unable to commandeer his subject matter, while the homeland, the Armenia he had never seen, loomed large in his imagination and became the touchstone of his creative writing. The characters he created in his many stories demonstrate different facets of the multifaceted diasporan Armenian, and each one carries a fragment of the author's own psyche, permanently branded with the pain and yearning of his exiled (ստրպագիր) people. Karapents lives in each one of them; he is one of them; he is them.

⁵³ Karapents, "*Antsanot' hoginer*" [Unfamiliar souls], the title story in *Antsanot' hoginer*, pp. 125-47. Quotation from p. 130. Written in New York in 1957.

Noubar Akishian developed an array of diasporan Armenian characters, second-generation survivors of the Genocide who left their birthplace in the Middle East in search of a better life in America, with tragic consequences. Even the physical comfort and the moral and sexual liberties of the New World could not heal their inherited wound. Akishian's first short story, "*Bazhanvats tunē*" (Broken home), about the miseries suffered by two young Armenians from Beirut, is an example.⁵⁴ As new arrivals in the West, both are infatuated by the liberties on offer: women and wine, ephemeral pleasures and love affairs. Gevorg marries an American and finds that life is hell. To his wife, he is always a foreigner, a crude, unpolished product of the Middle East, unworthy of being a father to their little son. She divorces him and then one day she takes their son and disappears without a trace. Gevorg frantically searches for them, to no avail. In vain he tries to cope with the vacuum left in his life by the absence of his son. At the nadir of his desperation, he commits suicide. What else was there for him to do? The road to the past had been cut off for a long time. "If you want to know the truth," he once told a friend,

We are exiles, expelled from earth and heaven, expelled even from life. There is something alien in our existence, something temporary. We wander from one country to another, but we cannot put down strong, deep, and permanent roots.... I even see something illicit in our life. We simply drag out our existence and run, run from one place to another with the fear of not being able to belong to any place always on our backs. (46)

⁵⁴ Akishian, "*Bazhanvats tunē*" [Broken home], in *Mardē hoghin vra* [The man on the soil], pp. 9–54. Written in 1964.

Gevorg's friend Hagop is more fortunate. He has been given a second chance. After recovering from the perils of his adventurous night life, he returns to the Armenian community and he even marries an Armenian girl. Gevorg admires his courage and firmly contends,

The voice of blood (սրբուհի ձայնը) has a particular meaning for us. We are different from them in every way. We cannot change our inner selves even if we change our clothing and our taste. One day we will cry out our disillusion. We would protest against everything that is forced upon us. (38)

Akishian does not stop there but goes on to show that marriage between two Armenians does not necessarily guarantee happiness when they have different backgrounds, upbringing, culture, and education. He stresses acculturation and reconciliation to the extreme, showing that an immigrant remains an immigrant, foreign to the new environment, foreign to his fellow Armenian-Americans. "The voice of blood" does not suffice. The mindset is the decisive factor: how one views his or her ethnic identity, how one rates the importance of traditional values and their preservation (45).

Sirvart is a highly educated, Americanized Armenian woman who gradually grows contemptuous of her husband and all the Armenian issues he and her father stand for. She criticizes her father's generation who "struggled with no purpose, unable to change anything in the life of the new generation." She calls them "dreamers, simplistic people, unable to adapt, going from one failure to another..." (41). Her marriage to Hagop, the unchanging immigrant, fails. "Broken

Home" ends on a sad note with Hagop pessimistically posing the rhetorical question: "What are we doing here?" There is no hope for the future, no way out. Life is enveloped in frustration and despair.

The atmosphere remains grim throughout most of Akishian's later creations. In "*Otarakanē*" (The foreigner),⁵⁵ Tigran, a successful heart surgeon in Sacramento, leads a lonely life because, some twenty-five years earlier, he was denied a relationship with the love of his life, Louise Smith. Her mother called him a foreigner and lumped him in with all the other foreigners in America: "The Blacks, the Mexicans, and the others, all ungrateful to this land of opportunity.... They cannot fathom the extent of the sacrifices and the deprivations our forefathers suffered to make this land what it is today. They can never become part of our proud history" (86).

Aram, another character in Akishian's "*Avervats p'oghots'ner*" (The ruined streets), immigrated to the United States in the 1960s, and now, twenty-five years later, he returns to Fresno, where he had initially settled, to attend the wedding of a friend. He takes a stroll in the city and reminisces. Fresno has changed. Many of the addresses he checks no longer exist, but he still remembers every corner. He remembers Hagop, an immigrant from Palestine who dropped out of college and married an American girl. They were soon divorced. Obviously, the wife was given custody of their newborn child. Hagop drowned his sorrow in alcohol and soon lost his life in the dark and consuming habits and crimes

⁵⁵ Akishian, "*Otarakanē*" [The foreigner], in *Mardē hoghin vra* [The man on the soil], pp. 75-87. Written in 1977.

of the street.⁵⁶ Then there was Gevorg, another immigrant from Palestine. He arrived with great hopes of earning a college degree, but he too dropped out and married an American just to be able to remain in the country. He cut his ties with the Armenian community and disappeared. As for Aram himself, he made the decision not to start a family: "I don't want to add to the number of miserable people" (156). Yet he is still lonely and miserable because he has never been able to adapt to the new environment and there is no prospect of return.

The exile's predicament is experienced differently by Haroutione Berberian who lived through the civil war in Beirut and immigrated to Canada in the hope of building a new, free, and peaceful life.

But when I crossed the deep ocean,
in the vast and all-devouring
new country,
I felt myself
imprisoned like Mher.⁵⁷

He views the Diaspora as a paradox that draws communities together but at the same time can be fragmented, destroyed, can even be the impetus behind a second exile, a new diasporization. His first collection of poems, *Koriz* (Core, 1979) speaks of the impact of the civil war, the destruction of

⁵⁶ Akishian, "*Avervats p'oghots'ner*" [The ruined streets], in *Mardē hoghin vra* [The man on the soil], p. 145.

⁵⁷ Berberian, untitled, from *Sahmanner* [Borders], p. 19. Mher, as explained earlier, is the last hero of the Armenian national epic, *David of Sasun*. Vahé Oshagan and Vrej-Armen Artinian also refer to this epic character in different contexts.

Lebanon, and his own migration. His second collection, *Vospniak* (Lens, 1984) remains under the shadow of death, a constant presence in the ruins of Beirut.

Indeed, the civil war in Lebanon was highly detrimental to Armenian life. As a close but incomplete substitute for pre-Genocide Constantinople/Istanbul, Beirut as a bastion of Armenianness was never the same after the civil war and could hardly function as the diasporan center of Armenian learning and a sanctuary for the Western Armenian language.

Destruction of the sanctuaries of language

Many believe that a people's culture and literature can only thrive with roots deep in the ancestral soil, and that language—the soul, the mind, the medium of communication, the carrier of the literature, the expression of the culture—can itself become a victim if exiled and deprived of the nourishing native soil. The Armenian Genocide caused exactly that: the destruction of the sanctuary of language and literature. The subject here, of course, is the Western Armenian language, with which the great majority of Armenian survivors dispersed in the world identified themselves.

"Language death... a little discussed aspect of genocide," in the words of Steven Leonard Jacobs,⁵⁸ is more urgent than ever, now that Middle Eastern centers of Armenian learning,

⁵⁸ Steven Leonard Jacobs, "Language Death and Revival after Cultural Destruction: Reflections on a Little Discussed Aspect of Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research* 7/3 (September 2005): 423–30. Jacobs cites Article 2, Sections (b) and (c), of the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide to support the notion of the killing of a language as an instance of "denying the right of a group who speaks that language to exist" (424).

such as Beirut and Aleppo which to some extent served as a substitute nourishing soil, are no longer able to serve that function. And diasporan Armenians are witnessing the evanescence of the Armenian language in the rapid decline of its use. Like many second-generation Armenian thinkers, Jacobs, a second-generation Holocaust survivor, considers language to be central to the affirmation and transmission of the collective identity of a group or a nation, "a multi-generational foundation for their continuing survival" (423–4). I too put great emphasis on language as the principal component of Armenian identity and the guarantor of the preservation of the Armenian nation. Paradoxically, I also believe that the Armenian language, with its rich legacy of cultural expressions, can survive long after the nation, that is, the people who speak the language, has disappeared, assimilated, gone. As evidence I would point to the languages of the ancient world, the carriers of ancient cultures and civilizations. The flip side of the coin is that a nation cannot endure if its language is lost, dead, and that is the danger threatening the Armenian Diaspora. One of the causes of the death of a language, aside from external factors such as killing the group that speaks the language, one that hits home today, is when "a community of people come to perceive that they would be better off speaking a language other than the original one...."⁵⁹

Armenian literature produced in various languages of the East and West would have no standing if it weren't for the literature produced in the Armenian language to which that

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 425. Jacobs is quoting from Daniel Nettle and Suzanne Romaine, *Vanishing Voices: The Extinction of the World's Languages* (2000).

multilingual literature could relate as in the periphery or as an ethnic or minority literature in diasporic settings. In other words, a minority or an ethnic group must be in place with its history, its past, its own traditions and values, and a language with which the ethnic literature can identify, in order for the literature produced in other languages by members of that group to have standing, meaning, and the right to exist.

The problem of losing the Armenian language and the difficulty of producing literature in that language was stark in America where the pace of assimilation was fastest. It was Minas Tölölyan who pointed out the dilemma, as mentioned earlier. The year was 1970 and *Hairenik* monthly, a literary and cultural offshoot of *Hairenik* daily, was ceasing publication. Since its establishment in 1922, *Hairenik* monthly had worked as an institution to safeguard the Armenian culture, language, and tradition, to ensure the perpetuation of the Armenian spirit and the hope of one day returning to a free and independent homeland. Its influence spread well beyond its base in New England, the home of the periodical, throughout the Armenian Diaspora where *Hairenik* monthly was widely distributed. Now, after two years of being published quarterly, the periodical was going to stop altogether. There was not enough interest, there was insufficient financial support, there were too few readers in Armenian, in short, there was no need for it. Tölölyan pointedly titled his editorial "*Tagnapě vor Sp'iurk'inn ē*" (The crisis that is of the Diaspora):

We are suffocating. Everyone, more or less cognizant of our intellectual life, is aware of the diminution to which the Diasporan literature is subjected.

There are talents. They come notwithstanding our will or theirs. However, they do not blossom in our fields. They either change their path or they bloom in the neighbors' gardens. There is not enough air for them to breathe in the Armenian environment; it often becomes like poison. They think they inhale the air, but it makes their lungs shrink.⁶⁰

In his highly figurative analysis, Tölölyan paints the situation of the new generation in the Diaspora. In the same editorial, he asserts that any human community, such as that of the Armenians, which depends on atavism for its perseverance, definitely needs the ancestral land. He returns to the issue of the Armenian writer/intellectual and asserts that never in history have Armenian writers felt so abandoned, so orphaned. For a variety of reasons, these writers/intellectuals quit the field in despair or change direction and adopt the dominant language of the host country as the medium of their creative expression.

Zareh Melkonian (b. 1923, Aleppo, d. 2012, Fremont, California), poet, playwright, educator, and author of Armenian-language textbooks, experienced the same distress as he witnessed the assimilation of generations, especially in the United States. He considered himself the last poet to write in Armenian. His poem dedicated to the Armenian people ends with the following stanza:

Without you here
Who will place the
Armenian Language in its coffin
After my death?

⁶⁰ See n. 40 *supra* for further discussion of Tölölyan's editorial and the role of *Hairenik*.

Again, in "Hope from Foreigners," he laments the death of the Armenian people as a consequence of the Armenian language dying out, but points to poetry in the Armenian language as the nation's path toward immortality:

And I wrote as if
You, Armenian People,
Not only did you exist,
But as if I were taking you
Toward immortality along with me.
I had confused you with my writings about you.⁶¹

Vazgen Gabrielian, the editor of *Sp'iurk'ahay grakanut'iun* (Diasporan Armenian literature), believes that Melkonian sought the answer to the preservation of diasporan Armenians in upholding the spirit of the Armenian homeland and in spiritual communion with the mother tongue. He says that one should inherit the language and not necessarily learn it. He then quotes a poem by Melkonian conceptualizing the Armenian language:

You, fear and fearlessness,
You, unbreakable but also fragile,
You, danger of loss, but also salvation,
You, symbol of eternity
Language of Armenian....⁶²

⁶¹ Zareh Melkonian, "Armenian People" and "Hope from Foreigners," can be found with other poems translated by Alec Ekmekji at <https://sites.google.com/site/thepoetryofzarehmelkonian>.

⁶² Melkonian quoted by Vazgen Gabrielian in *Sp'iurk'ahay grakanut'iun* (Diasporan Armenian literature) (Yerevan: Yerevan University Press, 1987). See pp. 158–62 for Gabrielian's article on Melkonian. The poem is quoted on p. 162 but the title is not mentioned.

Hakob Karapents is one of the few who remained steadfast in his use of the Armenian language. With perfect command of the language which he acquired in Armenian schools and in the streets of Tabriz and Tehran—while fighting, cursing, and making love as a teenager—he was perfectly bilingual. He was at ease in the American literary world but insisted on using the Armenian language for his literary creations, knowing well that he would have a limited circle of readers. That was particularly accentuated by the fact that he was writing in Eastern Armenian in America, where Western Armenian was the language the majority of Armenian speakers knew.

Now, in order to preserve the mother tongue uprooted from its nourishing soil, first after the Genocide and again after losing its Middle Eastern footholds, the Diaspora needs avant-gardes, even revolutionaries to lead its entrance into the New World of international progress and innovative global cultures and civilizations. Krikor (Grigor) Beledian, writer, poet, philosopher, and literary critic, is practically a one-man vanguard who is taking apart the old and cultivating the soil for the growth of the new. Without attempting to bring the Great Catastrophe into the framework of his narrative—whether in poetry, fiction, or theoretical criticism of the old and the new—he paints and exhibits the monstrous image of the destruction and its permanent consequences.

The devastating civil war in Lebanon had a tremendous impact on Beledian and his first published poems. *Teghagrut'iun k'andvogh k'aghak'i mē hamar* (Topography for a

city being destroyed) was dedicated to that disastrous event.⁶³ As he himself said, the civil war "put our forgotten collective tragedy on the table."⁶⁴ In an interview with the Beirut periodical *Azdak* (January 21, 1978), he explained that for him, the civil war was a repetition of the *Aghet* (the Catastrophe). The problematic matter behind his writing is 1915, and Beirut's end (վախճան) was a repetition of the end awaiting in the *Aghet*. The end is waiting for us, he says, because we have not been able to establish a relationship with it.

Marc Nichanian analyzed Beledian's stance and his relationship with that end in one of his lectures at UCLA. Those writers who wrote on the theme of *Aghet*, he said, produced testimonies of the event, not of the end. Beledian's work is an attempt to relate to that end. He created the tradition of the perception of the end. In Nichanian's analysis, Beledian's statement in *Vayrer* (Locus) that "*Aghet* closed the history of poetry" is significant, but it does not mean that it is impossible to write poetry after the *Aghet*.⁶⁵ Here the word

⁶³ Krikor Beledian, *Teghagrut'iun k'andvogh k'aghak'i mē hamar* (Pasadena, CA: Corybantic Press, 1976).

⁶⁴ Beledian quoted in *Dar mē grakanut'iun*, ed. Tölölyan, vol. 2, p. 562. Minas Tölölyan's analysis of *Teghagrut'iun* and his remarks on other works by Beledian were among the first attempts to explain the complex world of the author's thought. See idem, pp. 560–65.

⁶⁵ Krikor Beledian, *Vayrer* [Locus] (Paris: N.p., 1983), p. 149. Beledian was invited to UCLA as a visiting scholar to lead a series of seminars on Armenian literature in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures during the 1980s. As a graduate student at the time, I had the privilege of attending his seminars and benefitting from his guidance in the preparation and writing of my dissertation. I had the same experience with Marc Nichanian who was twice invited to lead graduate seminars at UCLA, in 1986 and 1996. Nichanian, who has written

"poetry" is allegorical: it signifies the search for *Aghet*. In view of the complexity of Beledian's poetry, all one can do is try to explicate it, says Nichanian.

In some of Beledian's poetry, the graphic design and typography reflect the Catastrophe, the fragmentation in dispersion, as in *Teghagrut'iun*, *Hatvatsner "seneak"i masin* (Fragments about a "chamber"), and *hakak'ert'vats* (antipoem), with their broken lines and displaced words.⁶⁶ Beledian aims to enable the language to rise from the ruins of the Genocide and the dispersion and to meet the exigencies of a new era in a new world. For him, it is impossible to confront the Genocide with pre-Genocide norms and traditions.

Daniel Varouzhan was a great poet whose legacy is still unparalleled because he kept pace with modern Western literary trends, for example, the neo-pagan movement in Europe, which he never tried to imitate but whose ideology he drew on and applied to the Armenian reality. Varouzhan is a model for Beledian. Just as Varouzhan looked to European neo-paganism and pagan Armenian heroism (deity) in his search for the liberation of the Armenian nation through literature, Beledian seeks new avenues. And these avenues pass through the labyrinths of European literary movements and philosophical trends and lead to confrontation with the destruction caused by the Genocide. Beledian's objective is to bring the magnitude of that destruction into the realm of language and literature, to raise Armenian literature to the

numerous studies on Beledian, devoted an entire session to explicating the author's work in relation to the Great Catastrophe.

⁶⁶ See Raffi Setian's translation of *hakak'ert'vats*, published in a bilingual edition: *Antipoem* (Los Angeles: Armenian Diaspora Series, 1979).

level of international recognition, and to secure the perpetuation of the Armenian language in a changing world. He writes in Western Armenian but deconstructs and rejuvenates the language, giving it new life. Comparing the state of Western Armenian with that of Eastern Armenian in an interview with Varouzh Sourenian conducted in 2006, Beledian observed that Western Armenian has almost no dialects, and that "some people see it as a fossil (բրաժոյ), perhaps because of the shrinking number of speakers of the language."⁶⁷

What is striking in Beledian's approach is his emphatic concern, not necessarily with the demise of the language in the Diaspora, but with its status within its own sanctuary, as far as Eastern Armenian is concerned. He believes that both Western and Eastern Armenian, even with the latter's "strong footing" in today's independent Armenia, are in danger of vanishing. Language is not only a medium of communication, it is a medium of thought, and as he told Varouzh Sourenian, "When a language is not renewed, when a language is deemed inapt for a certain level of thought, when we cannot think of the world and of ourselves in that language, then that language becomes a provincial dialect" (21). A possible implication of this is the compartmentalization of the language, as when the "mother tongue" is used only in certain, mostly domestic, settings, while the mainstream form becomes ever more dominant. The mother tongue, the "ethnic" language is thus reduced to an increasingly limited

⁶⁷ Krikor Beledian, interview with Varouzh Sourenian, Yerevan, 2006, published in *Handes grakanut'ian ev arvesti* 16 (Summer 2007): 6-21. Quotation from p. 11.

functionality. Beledian brings into his creative literature, and especially his prose works, the mundane, the everyday speech, the dialectal elements that still existed in the language spoken by the survivors of the Genocide who lived in Beirut in the 1920s and 30s. He tries to revive the potency, the robustness of the language. He feels confident in this endeavor because, "If you are proficient neither in the language nor in the tradition, you are unlikely to be able to introduce anything new" (14).

In response to those who believe that literature can thrive only with roots in the ancestral soil, Beledian argues:

When will we be able to understand that literature/poetry is not a matter of country/homeland and soil? The issue is creating, and creators are individuals. The greatest writers today are the exiled writers. Exile and Diaspora are not places of decline but rather places of free and unrestricted creation.... Real literature does not need an anchor. Literature is its own anchor. (14)

The Diaspora should not be an excuse for the waning of Armenian literature but the locus of myriad opportunities. "Ստեղծել վայրը ուր ըլլալ" (To make/create the place where to be) is the first line of Beledian's *Vayrer*, in which he suggests transforming the post-Genocide exile, the variegated Diaspora, into a locus of continuing Armenian life, culture, and literature.

Bishop Norvan Zakarian, who took on the challenging task of analyzing and explicating a single volume of Beledian's poetry, says that,

What remains in your mind from all the losses is the pleasure, after all, the joy that you reap, as a spiritual richness, when you think, and you realize by thinking, that

you should find the way out of your deadlock, so that diaspora will not become the locus of your loss. I love seeing the search for a solution in Krikor Beledian's art.⁶⁸

Beledian's art in poetry and free verse eludes the ordinary reader by its abstract nature and ambiguity. It is complicated, to say the least, and sometimes appears to be a jumble of words, ideas, phrases, images. But this is not a whimsical arrangement. It stems from the author's own belief that poetry should also be evaluated in terms of its psychology and its philosophy, and furthermore for its graphic qualities, that is, how the words and lines are arranged on the printed page. Here, as Minas Tölölyan pointed out in his biographical sketch of Beledian, the poet turns off the vast majority of his potential audience who would listen to his poetry performed on the stage, hearing, not reading it, even if mostly not understanding it at all.⁶⁹

Multiple readings are required to understand Beledian's literature. What others have done is to come up with what they understand and make sense of it. Their interpretations are actually a search for the meaning for themselves, which is not necessarily the meaning Beledian intended, and the same holds true for any writer's work. My understanding of his work is that he is an extraordinary Armenian writer—he would say not an Armenian writer but a writer—equipped

⁶⁸ Bishop Norvan Zakarian, "Inch vor ke mna" [What remains], in *Handes grakanut'ian ev arvesti* 16 (Summer 2007): 22–4. Quotation from p. 24. Bishop Zakarian devoted a 329-page book to analyzing Beledian's *Hatvatsner "seneak"i masin* which consists of a mere 100 pages. See Zakarian, *Haghags Grigor Belediani k'ert'oghut'ian* [For Krikor Beledian's poetry] (Glendale, CA: S.p., 1987).

⁶⁹ Tölölyan, *Dar me grakanut'iun*, vol. 2, p. 561.

with knowledge of the East and the West which gives him the courage to experiment in order to find the decent and timely place for the post-Genocide Armenian nation, literature, and language. He experiments with what many consider to be inviolate, and many consider his experimentation an act of sacrilege. He takes that step even at the price of being labeled unintelligible.

It is a sad reality that, with the destruction of its sanctuaries, the Armenian language is receding in Armenian communities everywhere. Its oral expression is tainted by borrowings from multiple languages, or it is totally replaced by the dominant language of the host country. This is even true of Eastern Armenian as practiced in Armenia, where Russian words replace their Armenian equivalents in oral and written communications and academic literature. In any event, with respect to Western Armenian, one can confirm that for the younger generation, its written practice is becoming ever more limited, inaccessible, and foreign, and it is not only Armenian educators and intellectuals who sense the imminent danger.⁷⁰

Worried by the decline of the Armenian language in the Diaspora, there are younger writers and intellectuals who work their way through the theories of bilingualism and heritage language and the importance of the mother tongue in acquiring knowledge and education. And that, in order to find

⁷⁰ Only recently, Beirut's *Zart'onk'* newspaper announced the decision to publish a weekly English edition to reach the Armenian youth of Lebanon, 50 percent of whom do not read Armenian. Beirut used to be a stronghold of Armenian education when almost the entire Armenian student population attended Armenian schools.

a niche for the Armenian language in the international concept of living languages and in the hearts of diasporan Armenians. The relentless efforts of these crusaders for the preservation of the Armenian language stem from their firm conviction that the vitalization of the oral and written use of the Armenian language is essential to the sustainability of Armenian culture and identity in the Diaspora. Hagop Gulludjian and Shushan Karapetian are two young intellectuals whose contributions in this domain are worth examining.

Shushan Karapetian views the Armenian language "as martyr, serving as metonym for the millions of victims and the enormous loss."⁷¹ Her holistic approach to the Armenian language, in studying the problems of maintaining both Eastern and Western Armenian in the diasporic setting, is commendable. In diasporic conditions, she observes, the Armenian language eventually became the victim of mainstream language ideologies, "ultimately succumbing to language shift." Karapetian links the reduced use of the language to the great symbolic value placed on it and, paradoxically, sees the language as a victim of that symbolic value, or as she puts it, "actual proficiency *in* the language falls victim to elevated ideologies *about* the language."

Those who hold the strong belief that knowing Armenian is an important element in being Armenian, or that the language is an important component of Armenianness, therefore expose themselves to psychological tension as they

⁷¹ Shushan Karapetian, "The Burden of Language as a Moral Obligation," unpublished paper presented at the Conference on the Armenian Genocide: Accounting and Accountability, California State University, Northridge, January 31, 2015.

experience the constant decline of their actual proficiency in the language, which boils down to a sense of embarrassment and shame at not being able to perform well in the home language. They feel strongly that unless they know the language, they will not be able to preserve and transmit the Armenian culture and heritage to the next generation. Karapetian suggests two options to relieve that discomforting psychological tension. One is to work on improving language skills, which is consonant with the ideology of the inseparability of language and identity. But she waives that option which she considers an insurmountable challenge (I would say, at least in European and American Armenian communities). The second option, more practical and more palatable to the generation immersed in the mainstream reality, is to reconsider the meaning and function of Armenianness, and in that reconsideration, to place less emphasis on knowing the language. Karapetian's skillful analysis is based on the findings of prominent sociologists, linguists, and psychologists who study heritage language functioning in diasporic settings. Neither Karapetian nor the specialists offer a workable plan for the first option. Is the second option a compromise, or a practical way to save the multitudes who are drifting away or driven away because they do not speak the language?

Hagop Gulludjian further expounds on the definition of traditional and symbolic Armenianness, the latter being a "voluntary, rational choice in identity maintenance," in which the knowledge and the practice of the Armenian language are

not prerequisites.⁷² Gulludjian is searching for a way "to rearrange functional diglossia." He suggests "profound planning and action by the community in order to make bilingualism with *managed* diglossia work." However, he is cognizant of the fact that if this effort is directed toward Armenian learning institutions, such as schools, only a very low percentage of Armenian students will be targeted (in California, for example, which has the largest Armenian school network in the Western Diaspora, a mere 5 percent of all student-age Armenians attend Armenian schools). He further believes that with the present politics of Armenian education and the overall unsettled perception of the past, with the Genocide being a major referent in that perception, the Armenian language "becomes not *of the past*, but *for the past*."

Gulludjian is ready to deal with the problem head-on: if the Armenian language is compartmentalized and only used to talk about simple, non-abstract subjects, such as physical objects or family matters, հաց-պանիրի հայերէն ("bread-and-cheese Armenian," as it was known in the old days), then, he says, tear down the walls between the compartments, bring in real life and more abstract thought, in other words, innovation convergent with the dominant language.

In February 2010, UNESCO listed Western Armenian as an endangered language, which means that by 2100 there will be

⁷² Hagop Gulludjian, "Linguistic Compartmentalization in Heritage Language Speakers: Observations in the Armenian Diaspora," unpublished paper presented at the Second Conference on Heritage/Community Languages, University of California, Los Angeles, March 2014.

no more speakers of the language in the world. That provoked emotional outbursts and concerned reactions. One heard romantic statements but no serious discussion of how to reverse the situation.

Yet the issue of endangered languages is a global problem and a central preoccupation of linguists. They see the disappearance of a multitude of languages—and in many cases, of their speakers too—by the end of the twenty-first century as a sign of the impoverishment of world culture. They offer their cause-and-effect findings and even offer suggestions to halt the *linguicide*.⁷³ I find the suggestions made by the British linguist David Crystal, author of *Language Death* (2000), to be congruent with the circumstances surrounding the Armenian language in the Diaspora:

An endangered language will progress if its speakers

1. increase their prestige with the dominant community,
2. increase their wealth relative to the dominant community,
3. increase their legitimate power in the eyes of the dominant community,
4. have a strong presence in the educational system,
5. can write their language,
6. can make use of electronic technology.⁷⁴

Is it possible to put these suggestions to work?

⁷³ *Linguicide* is a word coined by Israel Charny that applies here to the situation of the Armenian language after its nourishing soil was cleared of its speakers. Charny introduced the concept of linguicide as a form of cultural genocide within his expanded typology of genocide. See "Israel Charny's Worksheet for Describing and Categorizing a Genocidal Event," in *Genocide Prevention Now* 12 (November 2012), <http://www.genocidepreventionnow.org/Home/GPNISSUES/Issue12Winter2012.aspx>.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Jacobs, "Language Death," p. 428.

In different contexts throughout the present study, I have tried to bring in the role of the Republic of Armenia. Its role should not be overlooked when addressing the decline of the Armenian language in the Diaspora. Parents, schools, and community organizations in all diasporan communities encourage individual, family, or group tours of young Armenians to Armenia, and in almost all instances, the youth come back spiritually uplifted and instilled with a liking for Armenia and an interest in digging more deeply into their heritage. Visiting Armenia and associating with the locals becomes an incentive to practice communicating in Armenian. The abstract concept of the cherished homeland and the wonders of Armenian culture become accessible and tangible, and the Armenian language, albeit Eastern Armenian, can become an emotional and practical bridge to the homeland. Annual jamborees and various cultural and athletic youth camps add to the rising importance of the Armenian language as a unifying factor among diasporic communities vis-à-vis Armenia, the homeland.

Additional efforts on the part of diasporan communities to take advantage of the ground already prepared, provided by trips to Armenia that have gained popularity nowadays, can be fruitful. Strategies and tactics may well differ in various communities. In some Middle Eastern countries where repression of the Armenian language emanates from the government, where constraints and limits are placed on school curricula, and where the language is experiencing a serious setback, the emphasis should be put on extracurricular activities, dance groups, choirs, theatrical performances, and

poetry recitals, as well as special training in youth organizations.

These strategies can also apply in Western communities where assimilation into mainstream culture has become a way of life. But another possible strategy is to promote the advantages of bilingualism, something that was frowned upon, chastised, even punished in schools when the generation born to the Armenian survivors of the Genocide was growing up. The chasm between the Armenian home and American or European society grew deeper and wider in that period and resulted in alienation from home, total assimilation, and the loss of generations of Armenians. In our changing world, with globalizing trends causing mass relocations, tolerance and even praise for multilingualism and multiculturalism are gaining momentum. In the multi-ethnic and multicultural American setting, for example, ethnicity is a new tool of identification. Armenians are considered an ethnic minority—it does not matter if many consider that a pejorative term—and ethnic minorities have a right to their cultural, religious, and linguistic practices. An important contribution to the understanding of the role of language in ethnic identity is Joshua Fishman's *Language and Ethnicity in Minority Sociolinguistic Perspective*.⁷⁵ Fishman considers language to be one of the most important symbols of ethnicity and maintains that all "distinguishing features of ethnicity are signified with it and within it."⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Joshua A. Fishman, *Language and Ethnicity in Minority Sociolinguistic Perspective* (Philadelphia, PA: Multilingual Matters, Ltd., 1989).

⁷⁶ Fishman quoted in Wittmann, "Language and Postmodern Ethnic Identities," p. 36. See n. 34 *supra*.

Recognition of ethnic identity and of the rights of ethnic minorities also tends to increase the value of instruction in the mother tongue as a way to establish a solid foundation for the students' further education. In an article elaborating on the positive effects of bilingualism on children's linguistic and educational development, Jim Cummins of the University of Toronto writes,

Any credible educator will agree that schools should build on the experience and knowledge that children bring to the classroom, and instruction should also promote children's abilities and talents. Whether we do it intentionally or inadvertently, when we destroy children's language and rupture their relationship with parents and grandparents, we are contradicting the very essence of education.⁷⁷

Cummins goes on to cite research which shows that bilingual children develop more mental flexibility when they process information in two different languages.

Bilingual education has taken root in the Western world. It is up to Armenian educators to utilize its principles to advance Armenian education, language education, as a solid ground for the preservation of the community and as a conscious and coordinated way to counteract linguicide.

The effects of the Armenian Genocide continue, and it takes strategic efforts to counter those effects in all aspects, in all domains. The 3-Rs that suggest world Recognition of the Genocide, the Restitution of financial and property losses, and the Restoration of the lost homeland encapsulate the

⁷⁷ Jim Cummins, "Bilingual Children's Mother Tongue: Why Is It Important for Education?" <http://iteachilearn.org/cummins/mother.htm>.

tremendous work cut out for Armenians in order to reverse the effects of the Genocide. Within the context of the commemoration of the centennial of the Armenian Genocide, a new catchphrase began to circulate as a motto in every speech, in every cultural expression, and even in commodities. Let us hope that "We Remember and Demand" is not just a fleeting slogan but will lead to action.

Bridging to the Next Generations

In Lieu of Conclusion

Bridging is not leaping into the unknown, it is projecting toward a corpus of literary responses by the third generation and the next to the traumatic experience of the Armenian nation and the perpetrator's denial of the crime and refusal to accept responsibility. This body of literature represents the continuing struggle to comprehend, digest, and even come to terms with the great injustice and the past that still hold the nation hostage, impacting its collective psyche, goals, and aspirations. The explication, analysis, and presentation of that corpus of literary responses is the subject of my next volume.

I began the present volume, my fourth on genocide literature, where I left off in my previous book which dealt with perceptions of the Genocide by those who lived through the calamitous years. In the present volume, I anticipated covering a wide spectrum of diasporan Armenian literature in

response to the Genocide, across borders and across generations, as much as my possibilities allowed. Halfway through, however, I realized that I still had a lot of ground to cover with the second-generation responses alone, and the volume was beginning to exceed the scope and space I had envisaged. I stepped back and decided to stop at the threshold of the third-generation responses. I needed to adjust my focus in order to draw a detailed map of the attitudes and behaviors, the worldviews and the child-rearing traditions predominant in the families of first-generation survivors of the Genocide, in order to better explicate their impact on the lives of children growing up in that environment. These children became the voices of the second-generation survivors of the Armenian genocide. Perhaps every man and woman looking back on their childhood in a family of survivors will find something of themselves in this book.

Interviewing the progeny of survivors, asking questions that would lead me to the answers I sought, with sociological theories and guidelines directing my steps, however, was not my way. Exploring the artistic literature, the artistic history of the Armenian Genocide, reading volumes and volumes of poetry, fiction, and memoirs, each one offering a brief glimpse or none at all, has been my journey in my attempt to elucidate the dark and gloomy world of the aftereffects of the Genocide. And still, I do not claim to have exhaustively penetrated that world. I tried to answer questions such as: Why is it that today, after a century has passed, the pain of having experienced a horrifying, unprecedented collective trauma persists unabated? How have the pain and the memory been transmitted? Why is it that a century after the Catastrophe, the

process of healing has not begun? Could world acknowledgment and empathy help to begin the healing process? How forceful and profound is the impact of Turkish denial, such that the pain does not subside even when myriad genocide scholars, historians, and government officials around the world make sympathetic remarks in recognition of the Armenian Genocide? Is Ervin Staub correct when he writes, in "Healing and Recognition," that acknowledgment by the perpetrator "almost never happens"?¹

It is tragically paradoxical that recognition of the Armenian Genocide is still a problem. The Turkish denial continues and, as Staub puts it, cold and callous denial not only stands in the way of the process of healing but "intensifies pain [...], generates anger, and redoubles efforts to establish the truth about what was done" (268). I can clearly see this happening with respect to the Turkish-Armenian relationship. Geoffrey Robertson's statement during a hearing in the case of *Perinçek v. Switzerland* at the European Court of Human Rights supports this and further elaborates on the impact of denial on the victim's psyche in terms of feelings of "worthlessness, contempt, and inferiority."² The psychological impact, in the words of Alicia Ghiragossian, is like "dying every time/we are invalidated/through denial."³ Healing is impossible. We are not a nation, but a nation of survivors.

¹ Ervin Staub, "Healing and Reconciliation," in *Looking Backward, Moving Forward: Confronting the Armenian Genocide*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2003), p. 267.

² See chapter 2 *supra* under "The perpetrator's continuing denial."

³ Alicia Ghiragossian, "An Inconvenient Genocide," in *An Inconvenient Genocide* (Glendale, CA: "A New Age" Publications, 2009), p. 21.

Is there another avenue, besides acknowledgment and compensation for the injustice, that offers the opportunity for the healing process to begin? Others preach to Armenians to "forgive and forget." They want us to believe this is the civilized solution to the dilemma. But how is it possible to forget a catastrophe of such magnitude? The Jewish people have not forgotten and they insist on making sure that the world does not forget, even when Germany has acknowledged the crime and when the Holocaust has received unequivocal world recognition. How is it possible to forgive? Forgive whom? The perpetrator who denies ever having committed genocide? That is not an option. Unilateral reconciliation can only generate feelings of humiliation, inferiority, and anger.

Vahé Oshagan expressed concern about these reactions affecting the creative powers and reverberating in the literary responses to the dilemma. He sought a "fresh start in life and letters.... Now that the battle for survival has largely been won, a viable course between anger on one hand and forgetting on the other hand will have to be found."⁴ With all due respect for Oshagan's views and his approach to literary criticism, I do not see the battle for survival having "largely been won" as giving us the luxury of compromise, particularly in view of the presently intensifying Turkish denial.

What is the way to counter denial? Historians, Armenian and non-Armenian, are pushed to reiterate again and again their irrefutable findings and to probe still deeper to discover new facts to confirm and reconfirm the truth of the Armenian

⁴ Vahé Oshagan, "The Impact of the Genocide on West Armenian Letters," in *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1986), p. 174.

Genocide. Diasporan political organizations and the government of the Republic of Armenia continue to strive for world recognition. Artists, poets, and writers continue to use the best medium available to them to prove in the way they know best, that what happened in 1915 could not be less than genocide. Indeed, the new generation of writers and poets of the Diaspora, the third or fourth generation in the line of descendants of the Genocide survivors, are creating art that is divergent from the polemics of history. They are searching for avenues outside of Armenian diasporan literary traditions to craft their responses to the suffering of their forefathers during the Genocide and to the injustice that still awaits recognition and compensation.

New conceptualizations and representations of the Armenian Genocide will thus enrich its artistic history and show the world the ugliness of the crime that remains unpunished. But that is not all. I see another important role that the artistic history of the Armenian Genocide plays, and that is its contribution to the nation-building process (հայաշինութիւն, ազգաշինութիւն). Third-generation Armenian artistic expressions are inherent carriers of these functions, these missions in the Diaspora and in Armenia.

But is it right to ask genocide literature to assume these roles? Wouldn't that kind of literature cross the boundary of art, not to say pure art, and become tendentious, identified with a political cause? Under the detrimental effects of Turkish denial, will it sound, at best, like a desperate cry or a pathetic bellow? Leonardo Alishan, a third-generation poet and writer, is aware of that paradoxical situation. He writes, "the artist is caught between serving his art and convincing the world of

his people's collective catastrophe. He plays both the role of the detached artist and the passionate propagandist. Consequently, there is a chaotic confusion of genres and roles, resulting in a frustrated failure."⁵

I do not see this polarization to be as stark as to result in failure. On the contrary, I stress the role of artistic literature as a conveyer of the truth of the Armenian Genocide, subscribing to the notion that, as sociologists and literary critics suggest, artistic literature, and fiction in particular, is socially conscious. According to Melvin Vincent, "Fiction and drama make possible an imaginative penetration into human character and social events. When presented with consummate literary skill, this offers a more precise and deeper insight into both human character and events and their significance."⁶

The role of the artistic literature in response to the Armenian Genocide is thus undeniable, and the third generation has assumed that role, that mission. But in what language? We witnessed the evanescence of the Armenian language as a vehicle of communication and artistic expression, we have seen evidence of language shift, that is, the preferential use of other languages, and we see, as a result of all that, the regression of the Armenian language as an important component of Armenian identity. And yet, I myself

⁵ Leonardo Alishan, "An Exercise on a Genre for Genocide and Exorcism," in *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), pp. 340-54. Quotation from pp. 352-3.

⁶ Melvin J. Vincent as quoted by Bernard Cohen in *Sociocultural Changes in American Jewish Life as Reflected in Selected Jewish Literature* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1972), p. 32.

have chosen the English language, not my first language or original/mother tongue, for my scholarship on Armenian Genocide literature. I have chosen the English language to express my thoughts, my concerns, and my analysis of the impact of the Genocide in this and my three previous volumes. Would it be perceived as rationalization, self-justification, or self-acquittal if I explained that my targeted audience is wider? I intend to show the world the magnitude of the Catastrophe and its continuing aftereffects. I intend to educate and sensitize English-speaking Armenians and non-Armenians. I hope this end justifies the means.

Going back to the notion of the role of artistic literature, an important factor at play is that Armenian schools in Europe and America have not produced Armenian-language writers. However, the literature that has been produced, whether in Armenian or other languages, plays that role in one way or another. Coupled with political activities by increasing numbers of politicized youth, these endeavors will eventually convince the world to step in with strong determination to bring the perpetrators to face the facts and acknowledge the Armenian Genocide, that is, acknowledge their own history.

My placing so much emphasis on the third generation does not stem merely from what I have observed. Concerning Marcus Lee Hansen's "principle of the third generation interest," which I discussed in chapter 1 of this study, I repeat that "what the son wishes to forget, the grandson wishes to remember."⁷ Of course, in quoting Hansen's now familiar

⁷ Marcus Lee Hansen, "The Problem of the Third Generation Immigrant" (Rock Island, IL: Augustana Historical Society, 1938;

adage, I would like to put it in more contemporary, gender-sensitive terms, that is, "what the children wish to forget, the grandchildren wish to remember." Hansen's focus was primarily on the ethnic values, traditions, customs, and mores that immigrants brought with them to America. The offspring of those immigrants, as he demonstrated, were sometimes ashamed of their parents for being so different, for their lack of knowledge of the local language, and for their tendency not to mix with the locals. The school atmosphere, the teachers' contemptuous attitude toward their "foreign" looking and behaving students fueled the children's compulsion to distance themselves from their parents' ways and embrace what the New World offered. As we have seen throughout this study, the same hypothesis applies to the families of Armenian survivors, where, in addition to the baggage of ethnic values, culture, and language, there was also the burden of the memory, the shadow of the Armenian Genocide hovering over the familial atmosphere.

The interest that grandchildren show in the life stories of their grandparents and through that also in the history of their predecessors, motivates them to increasing involvement in political activism as well as the production of literary works to that effect—novels, memoirs, biographies, poetry, and drama. Particular sources of that motivation cover a wide spectrum. It may be the shock of suddenly discovering a hidden past. Peter Balakian's *The Black Dog of Fate* (1998) is an example, in which a journey into the past after the sudden discovery of a family secret tied to the Old World, gradually extracts the Armenian

republished by the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center, Augustana College Library, Rock Island, IL, 1987), p. 9.

component from a nebulous memory hole to become an important dimension of this Americanized grandson's self-identity. Likewise, Vickie Smith Foston's *Victoria's Secret: A Conspiracy of Silence* (2001) recounts her amazing journey into the past and the discovery of her Armenian ancestry and the family tragedy that came with it. Micheline Aharonian Marcom's Armenian mother never talked about her mother's ordeal and ran away from Beirut to escape the intense atmosphere of remembrance. But Micheline was always curious: "I had an incredible need to know my family history, to figure out my place."⁸ *Three Apples Fell from Heaven* (2001) encapsulates her findings, creatively fictionalized as her grandmother's story which is also a history of the Armenian Genocide.

Deeply impressed by his grandmother's terrible ordeal and her will to survive, Edward Michael Tashjian was motivated to take action and share the message. He wrote the Foreword to Alice Tashjian's *Silences: My Mother's Will to Survive*, his mother's rendition of his grandmother's life story. Addressing his generation, the third generation of survivors of the Armenian Genocide, he writes, "This book is worth reading because it is a call to action to all of us who live in a troubled world [...] filled with places where people are persecuted, tortured, and 'cleansed' because of their race, religion or ethnicity" (vii).

In some cases, the horrifying stories that children hear from their grandparents permanently affect their souls. They

⁸ From Micheline Aharonian Marcom's remarks on the occasion of the publication of her book, quoted in the UC Berkeley Armenian Alumni Newsletter.

live in the grip of memories that are not their own. Writing may be an escape, a mostly fruitless attempt to loosen the grip of those memories. Leonardo Alishan was never able to transcend, or rather never tried to transcend the tragedy that was his grandmother's and that became his fate too, at the age of nine. His strongest literary creations are about his "Granny" and "bearing witness to her agony." In "An Exercise on a Genre for Genocide and Exorcism," quoted earlier, Alishan shares his grandmother's agony, he is part of it:

I try to be the spectator of that tragedy which culminated in a London hospital room in 1978 where Granny saw Turkish horsemen around her bed before she died. But, alas, I am not the spectator. I am a character caught in that play which never, never, never reaches its equilibrium. (352).

Visiting towns and villages in Western Armenia to trace their parents' past became a trend. I discussed this earlier, labeling it a pilgrimage. This trend continues to motivate the third generation as well. Finding their grandparents' homes, talking to the new occupants of these houses and entire villages, coming face to face with the ruins of their grandparents' past in the looted and desecrated churches and cemeteries, traveling the distance their grandparents walked on foot during the torturous deportation, are experiences that the grandchildren of survivors of the Genocide are seeking to bring them into contact with their ancestors.

Some return with a lighter heart. They find today's Turks hospitable, eager to make friends, and ignorant of the nefarious past. Sometimes, these young visitors themselves know little about the Armenian past but are wary of inherited

sentiments which they erroneously label as fear and hatred. The solution they derive is to come to terms with that uncomfortable inheritance, and it matters not whose terms: unconditional reconciliation which they believe promises a healthier and happier outlook on life.

Others are in pursuit of their own identity which close contact with their roots can offer. Their family history leads them to the ruins of their inherited legacy and contact with the descendants of the destroyers of that legacy. The journey to the past more than often strengthens their allegiance to their roots, provides a tangible referent for the loss, and reinforces the determination to achieve redress. And they respond to this determination in literature or in any other art form—film, music, painting—as well as in augmented activism.

New responses thus inspired by these and other motivations emerge from the attempt to confront the Genocide in order to grasp its historical and psychological impact, and to uphold a memory with which to relate and identify.

Responses to the Armenian Genocide continue just as Holocaust literature is enriched with every generation. Margaret Drew expressed confidence in the continuation of that literature in the Preface to a teaching guide for *Facing History and Ourselves*:

Holocaust literature will not be complete until the last survivor has written the last book, and undoubtedly not even then, as historians, literary critics, and the progeny of survivors continue to struggle with the unanswerable

questions about the human condition which this piece of history demands that we address.⁹

Literary representations of the Armenian Genocide will continue to shape the understanding of this unresolved injustice for generations to come. They will function as the most effective transmitters of memory, shoring up commitment to the national struggle.

Paraphrasing Emil Fackenheim, to renew the past for present life has always been an essential obligation of historians, philosophers, and theologians. And never before has this task been so indispensable and so difficult.¹⁰ To Fackenheim's list of the gatekeepers of remembering the past for the present, I add the literati as well in their role of assuring the continuation of historical memory as a building block of national identity. Therefore, I would like to submit that the passionate expressions ignited by the vision of the Centennial of the Genocide will die down and give way to true art inspired by the present and the future of the Armenian Cause and the Armenian Diaspora. These responses to the Armenian Genocide will stand as a monument to the memory of the Armenian tragic past, to the Armenian aspiration to become a nation again, and to find a way to resolve the

⁹ Margaret A. Drew and Sharon P. Rivo, *Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior; Bibliography and Filmography* (Brookline, MA: Brookline Public Schools, 1978). For more on Facing History and Ourselves, see chapter 2 *supra*, n. 1.

¹⁰ See Michael L. Morgan, "To Seize Memory, History and Identity in Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought," in *Thinking about the Holocaust: After Half a Century*, ed. Alvin H. Rosenfeld (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 151-81, citing Emil Fackenheim, p. 172.

tragedy in order to make national survival and perpetuation possible.

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Notes

Diacritics are used to differentiate between the following Armenian sounds and only in the first mention of a noun. The table is based on the phonetic values of Eastern Armenian. In case an author's preferred Romanized spelling was that of Western Armenian, that variation is also provided.

ւ - p	փ - p'	
ե - e	ը - ě	Ը - Ě
ճ - ch	ջ - ch'	
կ - k	ք - k'	
ծ - ts	ց - ts'	
ի - ē (only for the 3 rd person present indicative)		
Է - Ē (only for the first letter of a capitalized word)		
ռ - r		

Summary in Armenian
ՀԱՅԵՐԷՆ ԱՄՓՈՓՈՒՄ

Հայոց Ցեղասպանութիւնը գրականութեան մէջ,

Երկրորդ սերնդի արձագանքներ

Յաճախ ինձ հարց են տալիս, թէ արդեօ՞ք ծնողներս Ցեղասպանութիւնից փրկուածներ են: Իմ նուիրումը Հայոց Ցեղասպանութեան ուսումնասիրութեան ասպարէզում որոշ մարդիկ այդ կապին են վերագրում: Եւ պատասխանս թէ, - ո՛չ, մենք սերունդներ իրանահայ ենք եղել, զարմացնում է նրանց: Բայց միթէ՞ Ցեղասպանութիւնից փրկուածի զաւակ պիտի լինես զգալու համար կատարուած ոճրի ցաւը, ազդեցութիւնը, ճանաչելու համար անարդարութեան ահագնութիւնն ու նրա հետեւանքները:

Կասկածից դուրս է, որ ես կրում եմ ազդեցութիւնը իմ ժողովրդի դէմ կատարուած եղեռնագործութեան: Այդ ազդե-

ցութիւնը, որի խորքն ու սկզբնաղբիւրը փորձեցի լուսաբանել *The Armenian Genocide in Literature, Perception of Those who Lived Through the Years of Calamity* հատորում, ինձ այս դժուարին աշխատանքին է մղել, դէպի անտակ ու անսահման ամենակուլ մի ծով, որ վերջ չունի ու երբեք քեզ փրկութեան ափին չի հասցնի, թնջուկի լուծմանը հասած լինելու հոգեկան հանգստութեան եւ գոհունակութեան չի արժանացնի: Մենք Ցեղասպանութիւնը վերապրած ծողովորդ ենք եւ դա չի բացատրում նրանով թէ մեր ծնողները անցել են աքսորի ճամբով, կրել են տառապանքը տեղահանութեան, կոտորածի ու հայրենագրկութեան, թէ՞ ոչ: Ցեղասպանութիւնը մեր հոգու, մեր ինքնութեան մէջ է:

Աներկբայելի իրողութիւն է, որ ինչպէս փորձեցի պարզել իմ նախորդ հատորներում, Ցեղասպանութիւնը վերապրած սերունդը իր ամբողջ կեանքը ապրեց Եղեռնից անցած իր սոսկալի յուշերի ոստայնի մէջ բանտուած: Թուրքի ու քուրդի աներեւակայելի վայրագութիւնների, կոտորածի, տեղահանութեան, կողոպուտի, սովի, ծարաւի, հարազատի կորստի պատճառած ցաւի ազդեցութիւնը նրա հոգում բացել էր անբուժելի մի վէրք ու ազդել նրա ընտանեկան եւ ընկերային կեանքի վրայ, ձեւաւորել նրա աշխարհընկալումը, նրա ինքնութիւնը:

Այն ինչ որ փորձել են ներկայ հատորում վեր հանել ու վերլուծել այդ ազդեցութեան փոխանցումն է երկրորդ սերնդին: Եւ դա որեւէ աղերս չունի այն բանին, թէ վերապրողը ինչպէս է վերաբերուել իր ողբերգական անցեալի հետ, կամ նրա կազմած ընտանիքում որքան է խօսուել, կամ բոլորովին չի խօսուել այդ անցեալի մասին, կամ էլ այդ ընտանիքում մեծացող սերունդը ինչ վերաբերմունք է

ցուցաբերել իր ծնող(ներ)ի անցեալի նկատմամբ: Ազդեցութիւնը փոխանցուել է յամենայնդէպս:

Հայոց Ցեղասպանութիւնը վերապրած սերունդը Նոր Աշխարհի իր նոր կեանքում իր համեստ բոյնը շինեց: Փորձեց ստեղծել ընտանեկան այնպիսի միջավայր ուր երեխաները մեծանային առողջ եւ ուրախ, առանց այն դեռ արիւնող վէրքի, որ իրենց կեանքի ընկերն էր եղել: Բայց մեծ մասամբ չյաջողեցին: Նրանց ստեղծած ընտանեկան միջավայրը խիստ էր եւ անուրախ: Յիշելով մէկ օրինակ միայն՝ Կահիրէում ծնուած ու մեծացած Մերի Թերզեանը *The Immigrants' Daughter* ինքնակենսագրութեան մէջ գրում է, «Ցեղասպանութեան ազդեցութիւնը առկայ էր մօրս ապակէ հայեացքում եւ հօրս զայրացկոտ բնաւորութեան մէջ: Դա մեզ բոլորիս ազդեց եւ երեւի կը շարունակի ազդել դեռ գալիք մի քանի սերունդների վրայ»: Նոյնանման երեւոյթներ անշուշտ կարելի է տեսնել հրէական Ողջակիզումը վերապրած սերնդի ընտանեկան կեանքում: Երկրորդ սերունդը վկայում է այդ մասին: Այս հատորում փորձել են որոշ զուգահեռներ գծել՝ հայ եւ հրեայ երկրորդ սերնդի գրականութիւնը համեմատութեան դնելով. սակայն նպատակս բաղդատական ուսումնասիրութիւն ներկայացնելը չի եղել:

Ողբերգական անցեալի պատճառած ցաւը (trauma) ծնողից զաւակին է անցել: Հոգեվերլուծաբանները հաստատում են դա: Ջաք Դանիէլեանը իր հետազօտութիւններից ելած, եզրակացնում է, «աղիտալի դէպքի պատճառած ցաւը (trauma) վարակիչ է եւ այդ վարակը կարող է շատ վնասաբեր լինել: Բոլոր նրանք, ովքեր շփում են այդ վարակի հետ ազդում են դրանից: Դրանք կարող են լինել աղետի անմիջական զոհերը, նրանց ընտանիքները, նրանց երեխաները»:

Հրեայ հոգեվերլուծաբանները մեծ աւանդ ունեն այս բնագաւառում: Նաթան Փ. Ֆ. Քելլըրմանը վկայակոչելով ցայժմ առաջադրուած տարբեր տեսութիւններ, բացատրում է փոխանցման եղանակները՝ Փսիխո-դինամիք, ընկերամշակութային, ընտանեկան դրուածքի եւ նոյնիսկ՝ կենսաբանական տեսանկիւններից դիտուած: Այս տեսութիւնների մէջ ամենից հետաքրքիրը, որ աւելի քիչ է պեղուած եւ որոշ չափով մօտենում է Դանիէլեանի վարկածին, կենսաբանական կամ գենետիկ փոխանցման եղանակն է, ըստ որի՝ ծնողի ապրած trauma-ն կարող է երեխային փոխանցուել՝ ինչպէս որեւէ այլ ժառանգական հիւանդութիւն, եւ ծայրայեղ պարագաներում երեխայի մէջ հոգեկան խանգարում կամ Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) առաջացնել: Իսկ այդ PTSD կոչուած հոգեկան խանգարումը, ինչպէս գիտէինք նախապէս, համարուում էր իւրայատուկ՝ աղէտը վերապրած զոհին եւ ոչ-փոխանցելի:

Հայոց Ցեղասպանութեան ազդեցութեան փոխանցումը քննութեան առնելու համար երկրորդ սերնդի գեղարուեստական գրականութեան եւ դիմել՝ կրկնելով համոզումս, որ ինչպէս Բեռնարդ Քոհենն է հաստատում,

Գեղարուեստական գրականութիւնը հնարաւոր է դարձնում երեւակայական ներթափանցումը մարդկային նկարագիրների ու յատկանիշների ինչպէս եւ հասարակական իրադարձութիւնների մէջ: Եթէ դա վարպետութեամբ է կատարուում, ապա՝ դա ընծեռում է ճշգրիտ եւ խորը իմացութիւն՝ թէ՛ մարդու նկարագրի եւ թէ՛ տուեալ իրադարձութեան ունեցած նշանակութեան մասին:

Գեղարուեստական գրականութիւնը, ուրեմն, ինչպէս նախորդ աշխատութիւններին պարագայում, դառնում է արտա-

ցութեւն Հայոց Ցեղասպանութեան ազդեցութեան, այստեղ՝ երկրորդ սերնդի կեանքի, ներկայի եւ ապագայի վրայ:

Ազդեցութիւնը փոխանցում է: Բայց թէ ի՞նչ խորութեամբ եւ ի՞նչ տարողութեամբ: Չափորոշիչ ազդակները շատ են: Օրինակ՝ վերապրողին ապաստան տուած նոր երկրի մթնոլորտը՝ բարիացակամ էր, թէ՞ կար խտրականութիւն եւ դժկամութիւն նորեկների հանդէպ: Նրա դէմ ծառացած ամէնօրեայ գոյապայքարը որքանո՞վ էր նրան կլանել: Յետոյ կայ մէկ այլ ազդակ, որ ընտանեկան յարաբերութիւններին է առնչում: Արդեօք վերապրող ծնողը իր անցեալը գաղտնի՞ էր պահել ու իր կեանքի սարսափելի պատմութիւնը զաւակների հետ չէ՞ր կիսել: Արդեօք վերապրող ծնողը անդադար պատմել էր իր անցեալի ահաւոր պատմութիւնը ու զաւակներին ազդարարել՝ երբեք չմոռանալ: Իսկ զաւակնե՞րը: Արդեօք հետաքրքրուած եւ գիտակի՞ց էին թէկուզ սարսափելի ու անհասկանալի եւ ներկայի հետ անհամապատասխան, օտարոտի այդ անցեալին, եւ դեռ երբեմն իրենք էլ այդ անցեալի ճիրաններում բռնուած: Թէ՞ անտարբեր էին, անհետաքրքիր դէպի այդ անցեալը եւ զբաղուած՝ իրենց վերելքը ապահովելու մի երկրում ուր իրենց ծնողները խեղճ եւ անյաջող էին մնացել:

Այս բարդ յարաբերութիւնների համացանցում, նախ կենտրոնացել եմ այն ընտանիքների վրայ ուր ծնողների սեւ ու տխուր անցեալը զաւակների համար մնաց արգիլուած ոլորտ, ընտանեկան գաղտնիք: Մեծ է թիւը այն վերապրողների, ովքեր երբեք իրենց երեխաներին չպատմեցին իրենց կեանքի մասին: Պատճառները շատ են: Երբեմն, ամբողջովին մխրձուած հանապազօրեայ գոյապայքարի մէջ ու առօրեայ դժուարութիւններով տարուած, առիթը չկար խօսելու: Նիւթը բացում էր հենց վերապրողների սեղմ

շրջանակում եւ փսփսուքով. ու մեծ մասամբ խօսւում էր թուրքերէնով, որ անհասկանալի էր երեխաներին: Այլ պարագաներում, գուցէ վերապրող սերունդը վախենում էր արեան ու արցունքի պատումներով վնասել երեխաների դեռատի հոգիները ու նրանց փոխանցել այն սոսկալի յուշերը որոնց սահմեկեցուցիչ շուքը ինքը կրում էր ամբողջ կեանքում: Իսկ, ո՞վ գիտէ, գուցէ նրա վերապրումը պայմանաւորուած էր եղել մի անպատմելի իրողութեամբ՝ իսլամացում, բռնաբարում, թլպատում, թուրք ժանդարմին մատուցած ծառայութիւն... Ինքը կարողացել էր այդպիսով ազատուել երբ կոտորուել էր ամբողջ ընտանիքը: Այս փորձառութեան առթած ամօթի ու յանցանքի զգացումը արգիլել էր նրան բացուել գաւակներին: Գուցէ նաեւ նոր կեանք սկսած այդ վերապրողները այն թիւր կարծիքն էին ունեցել, որ անցեալը չվերյիշելով ու չպատմելով պիտի կարողանային մի կողմ դնել այն, միանգամայն մոռանալ անցեալը, վանել անցեալի շուքը ու ապաքինուել մղձաւանջերի յաճախանքից: Հաւանական է նաեւ որ նոր երկրի նոր հասարակութեան հետ նոյնանալու հապճեպի մէջ, բոլորից տարբեր չընկալուելու երկիւղից՝ անցեալը պահել էին գաղտնի: Այս վերջին պարագան աւելի համատարած է եղել Արեւմուտքում՝ ուր օտարները, մանաւանդ՝ նորեկները ընդունւում էին դժկամութեամբ եւ երբեմն նոյնիսկ անհանդուրժողականութեամբ եւ խտրականութեամբ: Յիշուած բոլոր պարագաներում, նման ընտանիքներում ցեղասպանութեան նիւթը թաքու էր, արգիլուած թեմա:

Սուգան Հանդլըրը, իր *The Secrets They Kept* աշխատութեան մէջ, շատ հոգեբանների հետ կիսում է այն համոզումը, թէ ընտանեկան գաղտնիքը, մանաւանդ եթէ դա անցեալի մի ողբերգութեան է առնչւում, կարող է վնասել ընտանիքի

անդամների մտային առողջութեանը եւ խորտակել ընտանեկան յարաբերութիւնները: Այսպիսի պարագաներում աւելի խոցելի իրավիճակում են յայտնւում երեխաները՝ բռնուելով մի անանուն անձկութեան մէջ: Անձկութիւնը տառապանք է դառնում ու երբեմն էլ հոգեկան անհանգստութիւն առաջացնում՝ երբ նրանք իրենք իրենց այդ խորհրդաւոր ու անըմբռնելի, գաղտնի պահուած իրողութեան պատճառն ու պատասխանատուն են համարում:

Երկրորդ սերնդի ստեղծած գրականութեան մէջ շատ են վկայութիւնները նման ընտանիքներում առկայ անբաղձալի եւ անբնական յարաբերութիւնների մասին: Մերի Թերզեան (*The immigrants' Daughter, A private battle to earn the right to self-actualization*, 2005), Վիրջինիա Յարութիւնեան (*Orphan in the Sands*, 1995), Հելէն Փիլիպոսեան (*My Literary Profile: A Memoir*, 2010), Դէվիդ Խերդեան (*Forgotten Bread, First Generation Armenian American Writers*, 2007, եւ հօր մահից յետոյ նրան նուիրած բանաստեղծութիւնները, 1968-), Թէոդոր Խարբերդեան (*Hagop, An Armenian Genocide Survivor's journey to Freedom*, 2003), Էլլէն Սարգիսեան Չեսնաթ (*Deli Sarkis: The Scars he Carried, A Daughter Confronts the Armenian Genocide and Tells her Father's Story*, 2014), Մայքլ Զ. Առլէն (*Passage to Ararat*, 1976) եւ դեռ ուրիշներ:

Վիրջինիա Յարութիւնեանը անգամներ մօրը հարց էր տուել նրա անցեալի մասին. բայց մայրը միշտ մերժել էր խօսել: Նա իր մօրը չէր ճանաչում: Տիաճութեան զգացում ունէր այդ քարի պէս սառն կնոջ հանդէպ, որ այնքան խիստ էր, որ խանդաղատանքի խօսքեր չունէր, ինքնամփոփ էր, մտերիմ չունէր, չէր սիրում հայկական խմբերին մաս կազմել: Նա անգամ մերժել էր պարել իր իսկ հարսանեաց հանդէսում: *Orphan in the Sands* ինքնակենսագրականում նա

նկարագրում է այդ տհաճ մթնոլորտը, որ փոխուեց շատ ուշ՝ երբ մայրը, շատ ծեր ու հիւանդ, վերջապէս տեղի տուեց ու պատմեց իր աննկարագրելի պատմութիւնը՝ տեղահանութիւն, աքսորի չարչարալից ճամբայ, սպանութիւն, կողոպուտ ու բռնաբարութիւն: Ընտանիքի անդամները կորցնում են իրար: Եօթ տարեկան աղջնակը մենակ, քաղցած, ծարաւ եւ հիւանդ թափառում եւ վերջապէս ապաստան է գտնում մի թուրքի տանը, յետոյ մի այլ թուրք, մինչեւ նրան յաջողւում է փախչել խոշտանգումներից ու պատսպարուել խարբերդի ամերիկեան որբանոցում: Վիրջինիան այժմ գիտէր մօր տարօրինակ բնաւորութեան ակունքների մասին, բայց ուշ էր: Նրան մնում էր անդարմանելի խղճահարութիւն միայն:

Հելէն Փիլիպոսեանի *My Literary Prifile: A Memoir* գրական ուրուագիծ/յուշագրութեան ընդմիջից երեւան է գալիս նրա մօր՝ Եղսայի խստաբարոյ բնաւորութիւնը: Դրսում նա ամաչկոտ էր, անընկերական: Նուաստացուցիչ էր նրա հետ լինել երբ նա ջղային նոպաներ էր ունենում, իսկ դա յաճախ էր պատահում: Նա շարունակ, առանց պատճառի կշտամբում ու քննադատում էր Հելէնին: Նա չէր խօսում անցեալից, իսկ Հելէնը հետաքրքրուած էլ չէր լսելու մօր պատմութիւնները: Այդուհանդերձ, այդ տարօրինակ մթնոլորտի ճնշման տակ Հելէնը հոգեկան անկման մէջ էր մտել, նոյնիսկ հոգեբուծի օգնութեան էր դիմել, որը եւ առիթ էր տուել մօր յաւելեալ հեզմանքին ու քննադատութեանը: Մօր եւ դստեր այս յարաբերութիւնը տեւեց մինչեւ այն ժամանակ երբ Հելէնը արդէն հասուն տարիքում եւ իր ընտանիքը կազմած սկսեց կարդալ հայ ժողովրդի պատմութեան այդ ողբերգական ժամանակաշրջանի մասին ու անդրադարձաւ այդ պատմութեան եւ իր ծնողների անցեալի առնչութիւններին:

Դստեր հետաքրքրութեան եւ հարցումներին անսալով, մահուան շեմին հասած 91-ամեայ Եղսան բացեց իր անցեալը: Սովից կիսամեռ, աքսորի ճամբին փլած աղջիկը նայել էր իր մօր ետեւից որ հեռացել էր ու էլ չէր վերադարձել: Թուրք մարդը նրան առել էր ու տուն տարել: Թուրքի տանը... երեւի թէ լլկուել էր խեղճ աղջիկը ու փախել: Ու Հելէնը մտածում է, երանի չէր, որ մայրը հոգեբուծի օգնութեան դիմէր: Կեանքը աւելի դիւրին կլինէր նրա հետ: Նա ցաւով է պատմում իր ծնողների ապրելակերպի ու Բոստոնի ամերիկեան կեանքին ու մշակոյթին ընտելանալու նրանց չկամութեան, նրանց յարաբերութիւնների եւ ջղագրգիռ արտայայտութիւնների մասին: Նրանք իրենց երեխաներին դաստիարակել էին Երկրից բերած հին սովորոյթներով ու արժէքներով: Աւանդական խիստ միջոցներով փորձել էին կաղապարել երեխաների հոգին ու անհատականութիւնը. բայց դրա արդիւնքը եղել էր հոգեբանական ճակատում զաւակների ու ընդհանրապէս աշխարհի հետ:

Ըրուին Ստաուրը, ընկերային հոգեբան, "Healing and Reconciliation" յօդուածում գտնում է, որ ծնողների աղիտալի անցեալը նրանց երեխաների մէջ ընդհանրապէս հոգեկան հիւանդութիւններ չի առաջացնում: Այնուամենայնիւ, հոգեկան անհանգստութիւն եւ այլոց հետ յարաբերելու դժուարութիւններ տեսնուած են մանաւանդ այն երեխաների մօտ որոնց ծնողները գաղտնի են պահել անցեալը: Այս երեւոյթը նուազ կամ շեշտուած չափերով պատկերուած է երկրորդ սերնդի գրականութեան մէջ:

Passage to Ararat-ի հեղինակ Մայքլ Զ. Առլենը խոստովանում է, թէ ինչպէս ինքը թէ՛ ատում եւ թէ՛ սիրում էր հօրը ու միեւնոյն ժամանակ վախենում նրանից: Վախենում էր մի

ծելով ներքաշուել մի յարաբերության մէջ, յարաբերութիւն՝ հայկականութեան հետ, հայերի ու թուրքերի հետ, թրքական ջարդերի եւ դրանց հետ եկող ամէն ինչի հետ որ նուաստացուցիչ էր երիտասարդ Առլէնի համար։ Բայց տարիներ հոր մահից յետոյ, երբ նա աստիճանաբար ներգրաւուեց հայկական իրականութեան մէջ եւ սկսեց ճանաչել իր հայու անցեալը, զարմանքով հարց տուեց ինքն իրեն. ինչո՞ւ այս ծպտանքն ու քողարկումը. ինչո՞ւ էր հայրը այդքան կրքոտ խուսափել իր ցեղի հաւաքական անցեալից, որ իր ինքնութիւնն էր։

Դէյվիդը Խերդեանի հայրը Ադանայի ջարդերից էր ազատուել։ Դէյվիդը այդքանը գիտէր միայն։ Հայրը լռել էր, չէր խօսել այդ մասին։ Իսկ ինքն էլ, Ուիսքանսընի Ռասին քաղաքում մեծացած, ամերիկացած երիտասարդը, չէր ցանկացել, չէր կարողացել, ցաւի ու չարչարանքի այդ պատմութիւնների մէջ խորանալ։ Բայց եւ այնպէս, դրանք կարծես մի խորհրդաւոր անդունդ էին առաջացրել հայր-եւ-որդու յարաբերութիւնների մէջ։ Եւ անդունդը տակաւ խորացել էր ու խառնակ եւ կնճռոտ զգացումներ առաջացրել՝ վախ, յարգանք, ակնածանք, բայց եւ օտարում ու մի տեսակ տհաճ զգացում։ Ամերիկածին Դէյվիդը իր ինքնութեան փնտռտուքի մէջ խորշում էր այն ամէն ինչից որ հայկական էր եւ իր հորն էր ներկայացնում, նախընտրում էր ամերիկեանը։ Ամենահասարակ նիւթերի շուրջ նրա անվերջանալի վէճերը հոր հետ, ապացոյցն էին նրա օտարացած հոգու որ տուայտանքի մէջ էր՝ բռնուած երկու իրականութեան մէջ՝ անցեալ, որ ինքը անտեսում ու արհամարհում էր ու ներկայի աշխարհը իր շուրջ, որին փարել էր խանդավառութեամբ։ Հօր մահից յետոյ էր միայն, որ երիտասարդ Դէյվիդի սրտում սողոսկաց մի տարօրինակ զգացում՝ յետ-մահու սիրոյ, յար-

գանքի, նոյնիսկ յանցանքի եւ խղճահարութեան։ Սկսեց կարդալ հայ ժողովրդի կոտորածների պատմութիւնը, ու այնտեղ գտաւ հոր խորթ ու տարօրինակ խառնուածքի արմատները։ Հօր նուիրումն իր բազմաթիւ բանաստեղծութիւնները "For My Father," *Homage to Adana* հաւաքածոյի մէջ եւ յետ-մահու նրան գրած նամակները *Letters to my Father* հատորում, խօսում են Խերդեանի ուշացած խղճահարութեան, ինքնագիտակցութեան եւ իր արմատներին վերադառնալու եւ նախնիներին հասկանալու նրա ճիգի մասին։

Սան Ֆրանսիսքոյում հասակ նետած Էլլէն Սարգիսեան Չեսնաթը վկայում է այն անսովոր եւ անհաճոյ զգացումի մասին, որ ունեցել էր ծնողների նկատմամբ։ Այսօր, Սարգիսեանը դա համարում է ընտանեկան մթնոլորտի վրայ ճնշող Հայոց Ցեղասպանութեան սեւ ստուեր։ Նրա հայրը երբէք չկարողացաւ ձեռքազատուել այդ ստուերից, որ դրսեւորում էր նրա յաճախակի կատաղի ժայթքումների մէջ։ Էլլէնը իր ծնողներին ընկալում էր որպէս ոչ-սովորական ու շատ տարբեր իր շրջապատի անհոգ ամերիկացիներից։ Նա չկարողացաւ գտնել պատճառը այդ տարօրինակ մթնոլորտի եւ իր ծնողների վերաբերմունքի, ուրեմն՝ նախընտրեց հեռաւորութիւն բռնել նրանցից, հեռաւորութիւն, որին ի հարկէ հետեւում էր օտարումը։ Բայց դրանք կիսամիջոցներ էին, որ մտքի հանգստութիւն եւ հոգու անդորրութիւն չբերեցին Էլլէնին։

Տարիներ յետոյ, երբ մայրը մահացել էր արդէն եւ հայրը հիւանդկախ ու անօգնական ծերունի, կեանքը նկարիչ, գրող, արուեստագէտ Էլլէնին դէպի հայ աւանդական արուեստը, ու այդ ճամբով դէպի հայ ժողովրդի անցեալը ներգրաւուեց։ Նոր բացուած աշխարհը նրան դէպի իր ընտանեկան պատմութիւնը տարաւ, պատմութիւն որ մութ էր մնացել նրա

համար, պատմություն որ առանց իր գիտակցության իր ինքնության ծեաւորման մէջ մեծ դեր էր ունեցել: Հօր հետ ունեցած իր երկարատեւ հարցազրոյցները հայթայթեցին նիւթը, որ ատաղձը պիտի դառնար *Deli Sarkis: The Scars he Carried, A Daughter Confronts the Armenian Genocide and Tells her Father's Story* (2014) յուշագրութեան: Այդտեղ զուգակցուած են երկու կեանքերի պատմութիւններ: Նկարագրուած է հօր կեանքը, ահաւոր տեսարանների ու տառապանքների ազդեցութիւնը նրա վրայ՝ հոգեկան եւ ֆիզիքական սպիացած վերքի խորհրդանշումով. յետոյ, այդ բոլորի ազդեցութիւնը որ փոխանցուել էր զաւակներին եւ ուրեմն, հեղինակի եւ իր քոյրերի ու եղբօր կեանքը այդ ընտանեկան մթնոլորտում:

Այսպէս, նման ընտանիքներում, երեխաները մեծանում են ծնողների ցաւին ու անցեալի թողած անբուժելի վերքին անտեղեակ, ոչ-բնական մթնոլորտում: Բայց դէպքերի բերումով եւ կամ հոգեբանօրէն բացատրելի հանգամանքներով, ծնողների մահից յետոյ կամ անմիջապէս դրանից առաջ փոխուում է ամէն ինչ: Նրանց առջեւ յանկարծ բացուում է ցաւի, արիւնի, տառապանքի ու հսկայ կորստի ցարդ անծանօթ, բարդ ու խճճուած մի աշխարհ, որ իրենց ծնողներինն է եղել եւ հիմա իրենք են ժառանգել: Եւ ծնունդ է մղումը, գրգիռը: Ընտանիքի այդ տառապալից կեանքի պատմութիւնը պիտի գրի առնուի: Աշխարհը պիտի իմանայ: Որոշ պարագաներում, երբ դեռ կենդանի է ծնողը, հարցումներ, հարցազրոյց, արձանագրութիւններ, արդէն հայթայթում են ապագայ աշխատութեան հում նիւթը: Այլ դէպքերում, երբ արդէն ծնողը չկայ այլեւս, կարծես անտարբերութեան իր մեղքը քաւելու համար, զաւակը սկսում է պրպտել, անցեալի պատմութիւնները իրար կապել ու իր ընտանիքի ու իր

ժողովրդի վիպականացուած բայց այնքան ճշմարիտ անցեալը պատմել աշխարհին: Վէպը իբրեւ ճշմարտութիւն: Չէ՞ որ Միշել Ֆուքոն գրել է պատմագրութեան մասին, թէ «ես շատ լաւ գիտեմ, որ բացի վէպեր այլ ինչ չեմ գրել: Բայց դա չի նշանակում որ այնտեղ բացակայում է ճշմարտութիւնը: Ես կարծում եմ, որ վէպը հնարաւորութիւն ունի ճշմարտութեան դերը կատարելու»:

Հետաքրքիր է Դէյվիդ Խերդեանի հաւատամքը, որ մղիչ ուժն է եղել *Forgotten Bread*-ում տասնեօթ անգլիագիր հայ գրողների գործերից բաղկացած իր խմբագրած հաւաքածոյի հրատարակութեան: «Մեր պատմութիւնները պարունակում են մեզ, բացայայտում են մեզ ու իրազեկ դարձնում: Մեր պատմութիւնները լեցնում են մեզ իսկական հպարտութեամբ՝ կարողացել ենք ապրել ու դիմանալ, ո՛չ միայն մեր լիակատար կեանքով բայց նաեւ մեր պատմութիւնները պատմած: Որովհետեւ, առանց մեր պատմութիւնների, մենք ոչինչ ենք»:

Ընտանիքի պատմութիւնը, որ պատմութիւնն է Հայոց Ցեղասպանութեան պէտք է պատմուի աշխարհին: Եւ դա պայմանաւորուած չէ նրանով, թէ այդ պատմութիւնը ընտանիքի գաղտնիքն է եղել, թէ՛ անկաշկանդ կիսուել է զաւակների հետ: Եւ Դէյվիդ Խերդեանը իր մօր՝ Վերոն Դիւմեշեանի պատմութիւնը պատմեց՝ *The Road from Home, The Story of an Armenian Girl* (1979): Յակոբ Խաչիկեանը Հայոց Ցեղասպանութեան վիպականացուած պատումով, *A Summer Without Dawn* (2000), պատմական յիշողութեան շարունակականութիւնը, դրա սերնդէ սերունդ փոխանցումը ամրագրեց: Երբ որպէս վէպի վերջին արար, նոր իրար վերագտած ընտանիքը հայր, մայր եւ զաւակ, նկարչի մօտ յիշատակի պատկեր են նկարուում, հայրը զաւակին դառնալով ասում է

«Նրանք մեր ետին են կանգնած» ու ապշած զաւակին բացատրում, «մեր նախահայրերը, իմ հայրը, նրա հայրը: Դու վերջին օղակն ես տասնեակ սերունդների, որոնք ստեղծել են մշակոյթ, որ քո ժառանգութիւնն է հիմա: Դու պիտի սովորես եւ հարստացնես այն, որպէսզի այն երբեք չմեռնի: Այդպիսով, քո նախնիները կապրեն յաւիտեան»:

Թէոդոր Խարբերդեանը իր հօր՝ Յակոբի անասելի պատմութիւնը յաւերժացնելով, կարծես ցանկանում էր իր ուսերին առնել այն յանցանքի զգացումը, որ ամբողջ կեանքում տանջել էր հօրը՝ թէ ինչո՞ւ ինքը կենդանի էր մնացել երբ իր շուրջ զոհուել էին բոլորը: *Hagop, An Armenian Genocide Survivor's Journey to Freedom* (2003) աշխատութեան մէջ արտացոլում է Թէոդորի շրջուած խղճահարութիւնը. յանցա՞նք է արդեօք, որ ինքը երջանիկ է ու հպարտ իր ծնողներով, իր ընտանիքով, իր ապրած երկրի դաւանած սկզբունքներով, որոնք երաշխաւորում են իր մարդկային իրաւունքները: Ու նա մահացած հօրն ուղղուելով, խնդրում է թոյլ տալ իրեն ազատուել յանցանքի զգացումից ու երջանիկ ապրել:

Քէյ Մուրադեանի մայրը, մահուան անկողնում, մերժում էր հոգին աւանդել մինչեւ դուստրը չխոստանար իրեն թուրքի վառած դժոխքում բռնուածի իր պատմութիւնը պատմել աշխարհին: *A Gift in the Sunlight, An Armenian Story* (2005) յուշագրութիւնը մարմնաւորում է Քէյ Մուրադեանի առաքելութիւնը՝ պատմելու ու այդ պատմութիւնը կրթութեան ճամբով փոխանցելու երիտասարդ, մանաւանդ՝ ոչ-հայ սերնդին:

Էլլէն Սարգիսեանը, նոյն ճամբան է բռնել. *Deli Sarkis*-ը ցոյց պիտի տայ ոչ-հայ երիտասարդին՝ թէ թուրքերը ի՞նչ ոճիր գործեցին, ոճիր որի պատճառած աւերը շարունակւում

է վերապրողների կեանքում ու ներգործում նրանց սերունդների հոգիներում:

Ցեղասպանութիւնից ազատուածների ընտանիքներում մէկ այլ յատկանշական երեւոյթ է տեսնւում. դա դրսեւորւում է երեխաների հանդէպ մի անսովոր գեր-հոգատարութեամբ, գեր-հոգածութեամբ: Կրած սոսկալի կորուստներից բխած մի տեսակ երկնչանք է սա, յանկարծ սրանք էլ չկորեն: Այս ոչ-բնական վերաբերմունքը կաշկանդում է երեխաներին, նրանց դարձնում անվստահ: Իրենց արարքների համար նրանք կախեալ են դառնում ուրիշների հաստատումից, չեն կարողանում անկախօրէն որոշումներ տալ իրենց կեանքի, իրենց գործառնութիւնների եւ յարաբերութիւնների ոլորտում: “Diaspora” բանաստեղծութեան մէջ, Դայանա Տէր-Յովհաննիսեանը հարց է տալիս,

Ինչո՞ւ հայ երեխաներին
այնքան սքանչանքով են մեծացնում, կարծես
հիմա է որ
պիտի անհետանան:

Մերի Թերզեանը յետոյ է գգում, թէ ինչո՞ւ էր հայրը այդպէս բարկանում ու արգիլում էր նրան Կահիրէի փողոցներում մենակ պտտել, յատկապէս՝ քաղաքում տիրող քաղաքական խառնակ օրերին: Ցեղասպանութիւն տեսած մարդ էր. նրա համար բռնութիւնը, սպանութիւնը, բռնաբարութիւնը խառն օրերի սովորական երեւոյթներն էին: Իսկ դա այնքան տարբեր էր ազատ երկրներում ապրած մարդկանց աշխարհընկալումից:

Silences, My Mother's Will to Survive (1995) գրքի հեղինակ Ալիս Թաշճեանի մայրը չափազանցութեան գնալով, վախեցնելու աստիճան անդադար զգուշացնում էր աղջկան տղա-

մարդու հետ մենակ չմնալ: Այս սպառնալիք հնչող խրատները լալու աստիճան տանջում էին Ալիսին, ով մօր մահից յետոյ, նրա տառապած կեանքի պատմությունը գրի առնելու ընթացքում միայն պիտի անդրադառնար. մօրը բռնաբարել էին թուրքերը, եւ խեղճ կինը իր գիտցած եղանակով փորձում էր պաշտպանել աղջկան, հեռու պահել նրան այդ սոսկալի վտանգից:

Ամբողջովին օտար ու անծանօթ մթնոլորտում գաղթական ընկած հայ վերապրողները ծուլման վտանգի հոսանքն ի վեր պայքարեցին: Իրենց գիտցած ձեւով երեխաներ դաստիարակեցին՝ շեշտուած հայկականություն նրանց ներշնչելով/թելադրելով/պարտադրելով՝ «Դուն հայ ես, եւ ատիկա չմոռնաս», կամ՝ «Իմ ընտանիքը զոհուեցաւ անապատներուն մէջ եւ դուն պէտք է փոխարինես անոնց կորուստը՝ հաւատարիմ մնալով քու արմատներուն»: Մերի Թերզեանը այս ամէնի իմաստին անդրադարձաւ միայն երբ հայոց դպրոցն էր աւարտում: Ինչո՞ւ է հայկական դպրոց, նոյնիսկ մանկապարտէզ աւարտելը այդքան նշանակալից գաղթականի կեանք ապրող մարդկանց համար: Նրանք աւարտողներին տեսնում են որպէս կոտորուած սերնդից ընծիւղած նոր ճիւղեր: Իւրաքանչիւր աւարտական վերյառնումն էր մոխիրներից ու յաղթանակը ընդդէմ ոճրագործների, ովքեր ցանկանում էին հայի գոյութիւնը ջնջել աշխարհի երեսից:

Այնուամենայնիւ, յստակ է, որ օգտագործուած միջոցը՝ մշակութային, կրօնական եւ ազգային տարբերութիւնների շեշտաւորումը՝ ի շահ հայկականի, շատ դէպքերում դժուարացրել է գաւակների անխուսափելի մուտքը «օտար» շրջանակ՝ դպրոցում կամ աշխատանքի վայրում, եւ պարտադրել է նրանց լուսանցքային դիրքում մնալ: Մերի

Թերզեանին այդ զգացումը պատեց երբ հայկական դպրոց աւարտելուց յետոյ սկսեց Կահիրէի Կաթողիկէ Կոյսերի վարժարանը յաճախել: Նրա կարծիքով օտար մշակոյթի մէջ ներծծուելը հաւասար էր փոխակերպման ընթացք բռնելուն, որ ինքնին նշանակում էր մասամբ ինքնասպանութիւն, մասամբ դաւաճանութիւն եւ մասամբ էլ վերածնութիւն: Ինքնութեանդ ո՞ր մասը կը դիմանայ, ո՞ր մասը փոխակերպման կենթարկուի եւ ո՞ր մասից պիտի ամբողջովին հրաժարուես: Ուղեղդ չարչարող հարցեր:

Ֆրանսահայ ժերար Շալեանը, վերապրողի գաւակ, մանկութիւնից ի վեր շատ էր լսել մեծմօր սարսափելի պատմութիւնները: Եւ գուցէ հենց այդ պատմութիւնների անչափելի յորձանուտը պատճառ դարձաւ, ինչպէս *Mémoire de ma Mémoire* (2003) ինքնակենսագրականում է գրում, որ նա «հեռանայ իր ցեղի կապանքներից, խուսափի այդ պառաւ կանանցից, որ իրենց վիշտն էին պարպում, մոռանայ, որ ինքը ժառանգորդն է ցեղասպանութեան»: Շալեանի օտարումը, նրա մուտքը համամարդկային արկածախնդրութիւնների աշխարհ, որ միեւնոյն ժամանակ զուգադիպում էր իր մասնագիտական կեանքի վերելքի ու յառաջդիմութեան ժամանակահատուածի հետ, քառորդ դար տեւեց միայն: Նա անդրադարձաւ, որ հնարաւոր չէ խուսափել, որ ինքը իրօք կրում է ցեղասպանութեան բեռը, ազդեցութիւնը:

Վիրջինիա Յարութիւնեանը նկարագրում է իր զարմանքը երբ առաջին անգամ դպրոցական ընկերների հետ շփուելով անդրադառնում է, թէ իրենց տան մթնոլորտը, կենցաղն ու ամէնօրեայ սովորութիւնները որքան տարբեր են բոլորից: Նրա խիստ մայրը իրաւունք չէր տալիս աղջկան ընկերների հետ դուրս գալ, տղաների հետ ժամադրութիւններ ունենալ: Նրա կարծիքով դա անպատշաճ ու նոյնիսկ անբարոյ էր:

Միայն փողոցի աղջիկները տղայի հետ մենակ ինքնաշարժի մէջ կը նստեն: Վիրջինիան օրեցօր աւելի էր մեկուսանում ու ընկճում:

Տան եւ դրսի երկուութիւնը մշտական լարուածութեան աղբիւր էր Հելէն Փիլիպոսեանի համար. իսկ այդ իրավիճակի արդիւնքում նա ըմբոստանում էր տանը, իսկ դրսում՝ մեկուսացած էր ու անհաղորդ: «Տունը շատ հայ էր, դպրոցը շատ ամերիկացի»: Այս զգացումը աւելի էր շեշտում ուսուցչի ու դասընկերների, կամ նոյնիսկ աշխատակիցների հեզնական կամ բացասական ակնարկներով, մանաւանդ՝ եթէ հայերը իրար մէջ հայերէն էին խօսում: Երեւոյթը նուաստացուցիչ էր, արդիւնքը՝ բարդոյթ, հայի ստորակայութեան բարդոյթ, որ նստում էր վերապրողներից ծնուած սերնդի հոգիներում: Փիլիպոսեանի համար տառապանք էր երկուութեան տեւական հակադրութիւնը, երկու աշխարհի, երկու բեւեռ իրար բախուող, երբէք հաւասարակշռութեան չհասնող: Որքան շատ են այս հոգեվիճակը մարմնացնող կերպարները Յակոբ Կարապետեանի բազմազան գործերում, «Որեւէ տեղից մինչեւ այստեղ», «Անծանօթ հոգիներ», «Մի մարդ եւ երկու շիրիմ», «Փայտէ նժոյգը» եւ դեռ ուրիշներ: Իսկ Փիլիպոսեանի բանաստեղծական ստեղծագործութիւնների մէջ դա արտացոլում է հպանցիկ արտայայտութիւններով եւ կտրատուած տողերով: Օրինակ՝ *History's Twist* (2008) բանաստեղծութիւնների ժողովածուի մէջ ամէն տեղ ցրուած, երբեմն առերեւութապէս բուն նիւթին ջարդող բառակապակցութիւններ, "the Turkish sword" (թուրքի սուրը), "the hoary history" (գորշ պատմութիւնը), "the apricot spoke Armenian, / and there I found my seed" (ծիրանը հայերէն խօսեց, / եւ այնտեղ գտայ իմ սերմը), "My mouth is dry with the stories of the desert / of Der-el Zor so long

ago" (Բերանս չոր է անապատի պատմութիւններով / Դեր Ջորում, այնքան երկար ժամանակ առաջ), "Remembrance is the epitaph / for the ghosts of humble glory" (Յիշատակութիւնը տապանագիրն է / համեստ փառքի ուրուականների համար):

Բոլոր պարագաներում, անկախ ծնողների վերաբերմունքից, պատմած կամ չպատմած պատմութիւնից, յիշելու պարտաւորութիւնը, յիշողութեան բեռը փոխանցուել է գաւակներին:

"How to Talk with the Dead" բանաստեղծութեան մէջ, Դայանա Տէր-Յովհաննիսեանը խօսում է յիշողութեան բեռան մասին, որ կրում է ինքը, յիշողութիւն որ նա ուխտեց պահել եւ այն փոխանցել յաջորդ սերնդին: Այդ բեռը նա զգացել էր երբ տասներկու տարեկանում, Ցեղասպանութիւնը վերապրած հոր կողքին, կանգնել էր մեծմօր գերեզմանի առջեւ.

Նրա գերեզմանի առջեւ կանգնած, ուզում էի
խոստանալ նրան մի բան
յիշելու մասին

Ուզում էի ասել նրան, թէ
եթէ ես երեխաներ ունենամ,
նրանք կ'իմանան
թէ նա ինչպէս էր թելը կորցրել.
ուզում էի ասել
որ թէեւ իր ամբողջ ընտանիքը
կոտորուել էր թուրքերի ձեռքով,
բայց մենք մնացողներս
իրենն էինք
բայց ես չգիտէի
մեռածի հետ ինչպէս խօսել:

Երբ տուն վերդարձայ
առաջին բանաստեղծութիւնս գրեցի:

Ընտանիքում պատմուած է եղել Ղայանայի մօր կողմից մեծ մայրիկի, քաջ Ջարիֆի մասին, ով յղի էր երբ թուրքերը իր յեղափոխական ամուսնուն իր աչքի առջեւ սպանեցին: Ջարիֆը ամուսնու հրացանը պահեց. եւ երբ զաւակը պատանի դարձաւ յանձնեց նրան, ով մօր շնչի տակ յեղափոխական էր դարձել: Ու երբ թուրքերը եկան տղային ծերեակալելու, չարչարեցին մօրը, թելը կոտրեցին, որ զաւակի տեղը ասի: Բայց նա չասաց: Չնայած գիտէր:

Ղայանայի համար բանաստեղծութիւնը դարձաւ Հայոց Ցեղասպանութեան զոհերի հետ անդրշիրիմեան կապ հաստատելու միջոց:

Փոխանցուած յուշերի բեռը երկրորդ սերնդի մօտ երբեմն այնքան ծանր է կշռել, որ տիրապետել է ներկային. ու ենթական անցեալը ապրել է ներկայի պէս: Ալիսիա Կիրակոսեանը վկայում է «An Inconvenient Genocide» (2009) բանաստեղծութեան մէջ.

Ցաւը միշտ թարմ է
թաքնուած
բիլիոնաւոր մեր բջիջների
խորհրդաւոր թելարկումների մէջ
ու խաղի է բերում մեր մտքերը
մեր արեան թրթռումի
հետ խառնում
նեխում, ազդում է կեանքի վրայ:

Վեհանուշ Թեքեանը զգում է սահմնկեցուցիչ ներկայութիւնը Եղեռնի, որ երբեմն «յիշողութեանս տարածքին վրայ կ'իջնէ իբրեւ լախտ, այնտեղ բնակելու իրաւունք չունի, գիտէ որ չունի»: Թեքեանը իր «Մոխիրէ ծառ» (1987) գեղարուեստական արձակի մէջ փորձում է ծերեագատուել Ցեղասպանութեան պարտադրիչ ներկայութիւնից, բայց գիտի, թէ

«պիտի չանհետի բոլոր միջանցքներէս. ամենակուլ, բոլոր դուռներուն առջեւ իր անուանատախտակը դրեր է»:

Անցեալը ապրում է ներկայի նման, եւ երբեմն այնպիսի բուռն կերպով, որ շրջապատի առթած ամենաչնչին զուգորդութիւն ենթակային անցեալի մէջ է փոխադրում, նոյնիսկ եթէ այդ անցեալը իրենը չէ եւ գտնուում է ժամանակի եւ տարածութեան մեծ հեռաւորութեան վրայ: «Ayash Prison» բանաստեղծութեան մէջ, Ղայանա Տէր-Յովհաննիսեանը իր ինքնաշարժով գիշերով անցնում է անծանօթ փողոցներով ու հասցէ է փնտռում: Բայց յանկարծ փողոցների անունները տարբեր պատկեր են ստանում, Չաննինգը՝ Չանկերի, Այերը՝ Այաշ են երեւում: Ու Ղայանան Սիամանթոյի, Ռուբէն Սեւակի ու Գրիգոր Զօհրապի հետ է:

Յակոբ Կարապետեանը որպէս թղթակից մասնակցում է Urban Renewal Federation of America (URFA)-ի տարեկան համագումարին Հարթֆըրդում. բայց URFA մակագրութիւնը սրահի մեծադիր պաստառների վրայ նրան մտովին Ուրֆա է փոխադրում՝ 1915-ի հերոսական ինքնապաշտպանութիւն: Ու նա այլեւս չի լսում բեմից արտասանուող ճառերն ու զեկոյցները: Ահա բեմից Նշան Պեշիկթաշլեանն է խօսում իրեն, հերոսամարտն է դրուատում: Մեր նախնիները հետեւում են մեզ ու մեզ հետ են միշտ «Մեր նախնիների ստուերները» (1987) պատմուածքում գրում է նա:

Եղեռական անցեալի նման մտաւոր վերապատկերացում աւելի յաճախակի երեւում է իբրեւ զգայախաբութիւն, որի օրինակը տեսնում ենք քանադահայ անգլիագիր եւ ֆրանսագիր գրող, բանաստեղծ եւ գրական քննադատ եւ ինքն էլ Ցեղասպանութիւնը վերապրած ծնողների զաւակ Լորն Շիրինեանի «Delirium» երկարաշունչ բանաստեղծութեան մէջ: Շիրինեանը նկարագրում է իր ծնողների ապրած

ու հիմա իրը դարձած անապատի սարսափները որ ապրում է ինքը՝ որպէս զգայախաբութիւն բերող իրականութիւն: Երբ ենթական այս բոլորը քնի մէջ է ապրում, դա արդէն զառանցանք է ու մղձաւանջ, եւ տարօրինակ կերպով անսովոր չէ երբ նա ինքն իրեն բռնուած է տեսնում իր ծնողների անցած դժոխքի բոցերում:

Ֆրանսահայ ժանին Ալթունեանը, վերապրողի դուստր, փորձում է վերլուծել ու բացատրել իր հետ պատահած նոյնանման փորձառութիւնը, *“Mémoires du génocide arménienne, Héritage traumatique et travail analytique”* իր յօդուածում, ուր իր հօր թողած սեղմ նոյնիսկ լակոնական յուշերն է վերլուծում: Յենուելով Ֆրոյդի *“Construction dans l’analyse”* տեսութեան վրայ, Ալթունեանը որպէս պատճառ այդ տարօրինակ երեւոյթի բացատրում է, թէ մեզ հալածում է անցեալը, քանի որ մենք չենք կարողանում այն իւրացնել կամ սեփականացնել, որովհետեւ չգիտենք ո՞ւր տեղաւորել այն, ինչպէ՞ս պատմագրել այն՝ դարձնել համահունչ մեր գոյութեան ժամանակի ու տարածութեան հետ:

Աղէտի սարսափների ժառանգած յուշերը ապրելով, երկրորդ սերունդը իր ծայնը միացրեց Հայոց Ցեղասպանութեան գրական ազդումներին, պահանջեց ու բողոքեց: Բողոքեց իրեն բաժին ընկած ճակատագրի դէմ. բողոքեց ոճիրը ուրացող ոճրագործի դէմ, որ իր անբարիշտ կեցուածքով չբուժուած վերքն է փորփրում, կրակի վրայ իւղ աւելացնում: Չայրոյթ եւ յուսահատութիւն արձագանքում են գրական գործերում: *“An Inconvenient Genocide”* բանաստեղծութեան մէջ Ալիսիա Կիրակոսեանն է ծայնում.

Ուրեմն, մենք
անպատեհ ցեղասպանութեան
վերապրողների զաւակներս

ծայնում ենք
աշխարհը շարժող հնչեղութեամբ

*Այո, դա պատահեց
եւ դա մենք չենք մոռացել:*

Մէյ Տէրսէրեանը (Derdarian), որպէս հակադարձ թրքական ժխտողական քաղաքականութեան եւ անճիշտ ու միտք խոտորեցնող յայտարարութիւններին, տարիներ առաջ իրեն յանձնուած Վերժին Մեղրունիի ձեռագիր յուշերին վերադարձաւ: Աննկարագրելի դժուարութիւններ քաջաբար յաղթահարած, Ցեղասպանութիւնը վերապրած Վերժինը գրել էր իր կեանքի պատմութիւնը եւ 1975-ին, մահուանից քիչ առաջ յանձնել էր իր մտերիմ ընկերուհու դստեր, Մէյին խնդրելով, որ նա յղկի ու հրատարակի, որ աշխարհը իմանայ թուրքի ոճրագործութեան մասին: Մէյը յիշեց ձեռագիրը երբ 1980-ական թուականներին, հայ զինեալ պայքարի թէժ օրերին թուրք իշխանութիւնը բազմապատկել էր իր հակահայ քարոզչութիւնը եւ իր խեղաթիրած պատմութիւնն էր մատուցում աշխարհին: Վերժինի կեանքի պատմութիւնը համակեց Մէյին: Չէ՞ որ իր մայրն էլ էր այդ դժոխքից անցել, ու քիչ բան էր պատմել այդ մասին: Եւ նա ընկղմուած այդ յուշերի մէջ կարծես իւրացրեց դրանք: Իւրացրեց նաեւ Վերժինի նպատակ/պատգամը, այն է՝ խորասուզել ընթերցողին իր կեանքի պատմութեան մէջ ու պայքարել պատմութիւնը խեղաթիրողների եւ ճշմարտութիւնը ուրացողների դէմ: 1997-ին լոյս տեսաւ *Vergeen: A Survivor of the Armenian Genocide* Մէյ Տէրսէրեանի գործը, ուր լսում էր Վերժինի բողոքի համոզիչ ու հուժկու ծայնը, «Ես ԱՅՆՏԵՂ էի. Ես ՎԿԱՅ էի. Ես ՋՈՂ էի»:

Թուրքի ուրացման եւ աշխարհի անտարբերութեան դէմ շղթայագերծուած պայքարում, Վահէ Օշականը, Յակոբ Կարապենցը, Պօղոս Գուրելեանը հայ ազատամարտիկների գինեալ պայքարը արդարամատոյց գործողութիւններն են պանծացնում: Թուրքի ժխտողական կեցուածքը գէնքի ուժով պէտք է տապալուի:

Յատկանշական է Օշականի «Թելեֆոնը, Լիզբոնի նահատակներուն» պատմութեամբ, որ գրել էր 1980-ական թուականներին, երբ հայ երիտասարդական խմբեր թուրք դիւանագէտներ եւ դիւանագիտական հաստատութիւններ էին թիրախ դարձնում: Արարքին հետեւող ազատամարտիկների հաղորդագրութիւնը անպայման շօշափում էր Հայկական Հարցը եւ արարքը ներկայացնում էր իբրեւ յուսահատական քայլ, վերջին միջոց, քանի որ հայու ճակատագիրը փոխելու այլ միջոցները արդիւնք չէին տուել: Ինքնասպան արարքով, ուրեմն, այս հինգ երիտասարդները Լիզբոնի թրքական դեսպանատունը օդը ցնդեցնելու էին ելել՝ այդպիսով աշխարհի ուշադրութիւնը Հայոց Ցեղասպանութեան եւ Հայկական հարցի վրայ հրաւիրելու:

Անակնկալ լուրը ցրուել էր ամէն տեղ: Ու հեռու Ամերիկայում ցնցել էր հայութիւնից հեռացած, միամգամայն ամերիկացի ընտանիք կազմած երկու հայ մարդկանց, նրանց մէջ արթնացրել պատանի օրերի ոգեւորութիւնն ու դաւանած ազգային գաղափարախօսութիւնը, որոնցից միայն «Ցեղակրօն» շարժման համագգեստն էր մնացել: Օշականը ըմբռնել էր իմաստն ու նպատակը հայու գինեալ պայքարի, որ շատերը ահաբեկչութիւն (տեռորիզմ) կոչեցին: Երիտասարդ կեանքերի գնով, աշխարհի անտարբերութիւնը պիտի շարժուէր, Հայկական Հարցն ու Հայոց Ցեղասպանութիւնը պիտի մէկ անգամ եւս արժարժուէր: Օշականը

տարուող պայքարը իրաւամբ տեսնում էր ոչ միայն ընդէմ ոճրագործի ժխտողականութեան եւ աշխարհի անտարբերութեան, այլ՝ նաեւ ներքին իմաստով, մանաւանդ Արեւմտեան գաղութներում: Եւրոպական կամ ամերիկեան մշակոյթն ու արժէքները իւրացրած, օտար ամուսնութիւններ կնքած եւ ուծացած հայի համար Հայկական Հարց, Հայոց Ցեղասպանութիւն անցեալին յանձնուած, մոռացուած նիւթեր էին դարձել, ենթագիտակցութեան մէջ թաղուել: Եթէ սփիւռքահայութիւնը պիտի յարատեւէր եւ ուծացման վտանգը վանէր, այդ հարցերը հայու պատմական յիշողութիւնը պիտի առաջին դիրքերում լինէր, ենթագիտակցութիւնից գիտակցութիւն փոխադրուէր:

Օշականի «Օծում»ը, «Թակարդին շուրջ» (1980) ժողովածուից, ամենացայտուն օրինակն է՝ անտարբերութիւնը կոտրել, հային ուշքի բերել: Նպատակը, «Գաղտնի Բանակ»ի երիտասարդ անդամների համար, հայութիւն հասկացութեան վերակենդանացումն է, թէկուզ ամենացնցիչ եւ անընդունելի միջոցով, որ այս պարագայում սրբապիղծ արարքի բեմադրութիւն էր եկեղեցում: Արարքը կազմակերպող ղեկավարի խօսքով՝

Հայութիւնը՝ սառած, քարացած, բրածոյ դարձած է կրօնին կեղծ դրախտին մէջ: Նախ քանդենք եկեղեցին ու կրօնին միստիկը, անկէ ետք հայութիւնը կազատենք իր կրաւորական անփոփոխ վիճակէն, կը վերածենք կեանքի, ապրող բանի որ կարելի ըլլայ սերունդէ սերունդ փոխանցել....:

Նոյն ազդեցութեան տակ, Դայանա Տէր-Յովհաննիսեանը եւ Ալիսիա Կիրակոսեանը իրենց ստեղծագործութիւններով թուրքին դաշնակից ուրացող դիւանագէտների ու պատմաբանների դէմ են ելնում: Հրանտ Մարգարեանը փորձում է ցոյց տալ թուրքի սուտը, աշխարհին ներկայացուող

այսօրուայ թուրքիոյ քաղաքների, շինությունների ու բնիկ ժողովուրդների ու մանաւանդ՝ դրանց մօտիկ անցեալի խեղաթիւրուած պատմութիւնը: Բայց թուրքը շարունակում է ուրանալ: Եւ սա նշանակում է «մեռնել ամէն անգամ երբ ուրացումով անվաւեր ենք սեպւում» “An Inconvenient Genocide” բանաստեղծութեան մէջ գրում է Կիրակոսեանը:

Ուրացումը արգիլում է ապաքինումը:

Եւ այսպէս, դեռ պիտի շարունակուի: Պատմագէտները դեռ երկար պիտի տքնեն նորանոր փաստերով ապացուցելու ապացուցուածը: Արուեստագէտները իրենց տաղանդը ի գործ պիտի դնեն արուեստի մէջ ճակատ ճակատի գալուցեղասպանութեան հետ, դարձեալ ու դարձեալ պարզելու, որ ինչ որ պատահեց 1915-ին ցեղասպանութիւն էր, ոչ պակաս, եւ այդ ճամբով մաքառելու ուրացման դէմ: Երկրորդ սերնդի գրականութիւնը արտացոլքն է այդ հսկայ ճիգի, արծագանքը՝ ցեղասպանութիւնից անցած հայ ժողովրդի հաւաքական հոգեվիճակի, որ բոլորինս է: Ու խնդիր չէ, թէ քո նախնիները անցել են անապատից, թէ՞ թուրքի եաթաղանը նրանց չի էլ դիպել: Ինչպէս Ղայանա Տէր-Յովհաննիսեանն է ասում “We are children of Der Zor” մենք զաւակներն ենք Դեր-Զորի:

Ցեղասպանութեան ազդեցութիւնը նստած է հայ մարդու հոգում: Ցեղասպանութիւնը կարելոր մի տարր է նրա անհատական եւ հաւաքական ինքնութեան կառոյցում: Լորն Շիրինեանի ծեւկերպումով՝

1915-ը գործում է իբրեւ խորհրդանիշ, որ հային տալիս է ինքնագիտակցութիւն, ինքնիմացութիւն: Ցեղասպանութիւնը վերապրած լինելով, հայը ոչ միայն ինքն իր վրայ հաւատք պիտի ունենայ, այլ իր գոյութիւնը պիտի փաստի ուրիշներին: Սփիւրջահայ գրականութիւնը այս պահանջի արտայայտութիւնն է:

Հայը ապրում է չմարող յուշերը իր նախնիների դէմ կատարուած եւ անպատիժ մնացած ոճրի: Պարզապէս, տարբեր սերունդները տարբեր են դիտում անցեալը ու տարբեր եղանակով են դիմակայում իրենց ինքնութեան եւ ինքնագիտակցութեան հարցերին: Լորն Շիրինեանի բնութագրութեամբ՝ վերապրող առաջին սերունդը ապրեց հայաբար, իր հայ շրջապատի մէջ: Հայրենիքից հեռու կեանքի հետ համակերպուեց խոր գիտակցելով, որ ինքը պահող ու պահպանողն է անցեալի յիշողութիւնների եւ դրանց փոխանցողը յաջորդ սերունդներին: Բայց յաջորդ սերունդը արդէն կրողն է երկու մշակոյթի, երկու ժառանգութեան: Որի՞ն յարել. որը՞ պահպանել: Անձնական կեանքում Լորնը իրեն գտել էր մի անգոյ աշխարհում, ուր ոչ պատկանելիութիւն գոյութիւն ունէր եւ ոչ էլ հաւասարակշռութիւն: Դա մղձաւանջ էր, եւ դա ապրել են երկրորդ սերնդի շատ ներկայացուցիչներ, մինչեւ որ իւրաքանչիւրը գտել է իր լուծումը, իր ճամբան: Նոնա Բալաքեանի վկայութեամբ, Ուիլիամ Սարոյեանի համար՝ լուծումը նրա գրականութեան բաղկացուցիչ տարրերի մէջ է, «անգլերէն լեզուն, ամերիկեան հողը եւ հայ հոգին»:

Ինքնութեան երկուութեան մէջ տուայտող Ղայանա Տէր-Յովհաննիսեանը ահա թէ ինչ է պատասխանում երբ հարց են տալիս թէ ինքն իրեն հա՞յ է զգում թէ՞ ամերիկացի: “Two Voices” բանաստեղծութեան մէջ գրում է,

Ո՛չ, յաճախ, ինչպէս դու
Ես մոռանում եմ պիտակները:

Բացի եթէ կտրես ինձ

Յետոյ ես արեանս կը նայեմ

Նա հայերէն է խօսում:

Յաւերժ փնտռող իր ինքնութեան, սփիւռքահայ ինքնութեան, բարդ կառուցուածքը հանգուցազերծող Յակոբ Կարապենցը «Գրողը եւ իր Ճամբան» գրութեան մէջ իր հոգու ծալքերն է բացում.

Ես Սփիւռքի ծնունդ եմ, աւելի սփիւռքահայ քան պարսկահայ կամ ամերիկահայ: Սփիւռքից գատ այլ աշխարհ չգիտեմ, եւ, իր բոլոր հակասութիւններով հանդերձ, ինձ հարազատ եմ զգում Սփիւռքի ճամբաներում... Այս լա՞ւ է, թէ վատ, չգիտեմ: Միայն այն գիտեմ, որ մենք կամուրջ ենք հանդիսանում Անապատի Սերունդի եւ Նորագոյն Սփիւռքի միջեւ, մի ահագին առաքելութիւն, որ իրականութիւնն է դրել մեր ուսերին:

Այդ նոյն պարբերութեան մէջ, Կարապենցը խոստովանում է, որ լիովին իւրացնելով հանդերձ Ամերիկան, ուր իր կեանքի մեծ մասն է անցկացրել, ու ընտելանալով հանդերձ ժողովրդին, որպէս E Pluribus Unum, երբեմն ինքն իրեն զգացել է «ինչպէս երկկենցաղ մի էակ, մերթ գալարուելով երկուութեան անվերջ փակուղիներում...»:

Ինքնութեան երկուութիւն պատճառող ազգայինն ու օտարամուտը երբեմն անկարելի բախումի մէջ են յայտնուում: Շատ անգամ ազգայինն է, որ տեղի է տալիս՝ կարծեցեալ հոգեկան անդորրութիւն բերելով ենթակային: Եւ դրանից յետոյ ծուլումի ճամբան աւելի յստակ է երեւում: Վրէժ-Արմէնը գրում, խօսում, բացատրում է «Սպիտակ ջարդ»ի մասին որի վտանգը սպառնում է քանադահայութեանը եւ ընդհանրապէս Սփիւռքահային: «Ոստայն 1», «Ոստայն 2», «Ոստայն 3» եւ «Ոստայն 4» (վերջինը՝ «Իմ ուղեպատում» վերնագրով), ժամանակի հայելին հանդիսացող գրութիւնների շարքը, արծագանքն է նրա մտորումների

ու մտահոգութիւնների: Յատկանշական է «Ոստայն 1»-ում տեղ գտած «... Աբովեանի հետ» երեւակայական զրոյցը Խաչատուր Աբովեանի հետ: Չէ՞ որ Աբովեանն էլ իր ժամանակ նոյն լեզուի ու ինքնութեան կորստի մտահոգութեամբ էր ապրել: Եւ Աբովեանը իր փորձից խօսելով, յորդորում է դարոց բանալ, մանուկներին հայերէն սովորեցնել «Հայերէն գիրք հասցնես, լեզու պիտի սորվեցնես, լեզուին հետ մեր հաւատքը, մեր պապերուն անուշ խօսքը ... այն ատեն ալ ինչո՞ւ պիտի վախնաս: Կրակը իրենք կը վառեն»:

Պոլիս ծնուած ու մեծացած եւ Ֆրանսիա հաստատուած Հիլդա Գալֆայեան, Փանոսեանը ամենօրեայ հաղորդակցութեան մէջ է հայ ծնուած ու հայութեան հանդէպ անստեղծալ ու անտարբեր մեծացող երեխաների հետ: Իր հեղինակած դասագրքերով փորձում է փոխել կացութիւնը. բայց իզուր: Սփիւռքը վայրն է քանդումի ու այլասերման: «Սփիւռք» բանաստեղծութիւնը նա այս տողերով է սկսում.

Կարօտներէս դարաւոր ու իղծերէս
Չաւակ մը ծնայ
Անունը օտար դրի
Քանի կարօտն ինչ է չի գիտեր

Եւ այսպէս, պատկերաւոր գրչով ցաւ է յայտնում, թէ զաւակը, որ հաւաքական կերպարն է Սփիւռքում մեծացող նոր սերնդի, չգիտէ թէ ո՞վ են իր նախնիները, ի՞նչ է հայրենիքը, ի՞նչ է հայ գիրքը: Բանաստեղծութիւնը վերջանում է հետեւեալ տողերով,

Ախ, զաւակ մը ծնայ
Որ հաւատքն ինչ է պայքարն ինչ է
Գոյատեւումն ինչ է չի գիտեր:

Սփիւռքի կեանքում ներգործող նոր ազդակներ են վերջին երկու տասնամեակներում թուրքիայում տեղի ունեցող փոփոխությունները: Արմատախիլ հայի համար թուրքիան դարձել է աւելի հասանելի: Որքան էլ տարօրինակ, սակայն երկրորդ սերունդը «ուխտազնացութեան» պէս այցելութեան է գնում թուրքիա՝ Ցեղասպանութիւնը վերապրած ծնողի արմատների, նրա հայրենիքի, ապրած մանկութեան եւ տուած կորուստների հետ հաղորդակցուելու համար: Այստեղ պէտք է նշել, որ թուրքիա եւ ո՛չ Արեւմտահայաստան անուանումը գործածուած է՝ գիտակցաբար, քանի որ Ցեղասպանութիւնը վերապրած ծնողի, եւ հիմա իր արմատների ու «հայրենիք»ի հետ ֆիզիքական շփում փնտռող «ուխտաւոր» զաւակի համար շատ անգամ փնտռած վայրը դուրս է Արեւմտեան Հայաստանի սահմաններից:

«Ուխտազնացութիւն»ը հնարաւորութիւն է խոստանում դէմ հանդիման գալու փոխանցուած յիշողութեան հետ: Դա նաեւ զաւակի կողմից ի կատար ածումն է ծնողների լուռ իղծերի՝ վերադարձ պապենական, հարազատ օձախին: Մարգարէթ Աճեմեան Ահներթը, Հրանտ Մարգարեանը, Հրանտ Խաչատուրեանը, Արփինէ Գոնիալեան Գրոնիէն, Էլլէն Սարգիսեան Չեսնաթը եւ այլք պիտի շօշափէին այն հողն ու ջուրը, սարն ու քարը, որ սուրբ նշխարք էր եղել իրենց մանկութեան օձախներում, որպէսզի ծնուէին *The Knock at the Door* (2007), «Քարածայն պատարագ» (1998), *The Way it Turned out, A Memoir* (2012), «A Place in the Sun, in Turkey, Malgre Sangre» (2009), *Deli Sarkis: The Scars he Carried, A Daughter Confronts the Armenian Genocide and Tells Her Father's Story* (2014) եւ այլ հարուստ բովանդակութեամբ, անկեղծ վկայութիւններ:

Այցելութիւնը «ուխտաւոր»ի առջեւ նոր տեսադաշտ է բաց անում, պատկանելիութեան մի նոր զգացում առաջացնում: Եւ նա վերադառնում է երբեմն իր պարտքը կատարածի բաւարարութեամբ, երբեմն տեսած ու զգացած անգիտութեան կամ ուրացման պատճառած ցասումը սրտում ու տիրոջ պահանջատիրութեամբ, երբեմն էլ հաւաքած նիւթով ու գիտելիքներով հարստացած՝ ծնողի կեանքի պատմութիւնը գրելու աւելի մեծ վճռականութեամբ:

Արփինէ Գոնիալեան, Գրոնիէն իր հօր ծննդավայր Գոնիայում, իր կորցրածն է փնտռում: Պատրաստ է սիրել տարբերութիւններն ու նմանութիւնները, նոյնիսկ ջնջել ազգութիւն բաժանումը՝ մտորումի եւ ներդաշնակութեան սիրոյն: Նա իրեն լաւ է զգում Գոնիայում, վերագտնում է լեզուն, որ «որպէս մի գանձ կորցրել էր ժամանակաւորապէս»: Գտնում է մշակոյթը, որ միշտ իր մէջ էր: Եւ վերադառնում է «բարենորոգուած», տարօրինակ փոխակերպումով, «անգիտակցաբար թուրքանման հայ լինելուց դարձայ հայանման ամերիկացի»: Արփինէ Գոնիալեանը հասած է թւում լինել հաւասարակշռութեան, փարատուած է թւում նրա ինքնութեան եւ պատկանելիութեան տանջող շփոթը: Արդեօ՞ք:

«Ուխտազնացութիւնը» դէպի նախնիների հայրենիք միանգամայն այլ ազդեցութիւն թողեց Հրանտ Մարգարեանի վրայ: Նա իր հօր ծննդավայր, Վանին կից գտնուող Շուշանց գիւղն էր փնտռում, գիւղի աղբիւրն ու եկեղեցին, որ մնացել էր հօր յիշողութեան մէջ, որ իրն էր հիմա: Նա հօր անխօս փափագն էր կատարում, «Երթամ Երկիր ու իր հոգիին հետ աղօթեմ չթաղուած մեր զոհերուն համար: Երթամ Երկիր ու մեր պատմութեան քարացած բայց չմարած երազներու հետքերով իր եւ իմ ուխտը կատարեմ»: Մարգարեանը դէպի

իր պապենական «ՀՈՂ»ն էր գնում, բայց միեւնոյն ժամանակ կասկածը կրծում էր սիրտը: «ՀՈՂԴ». հեգնական հարցման նշանը փոխարինում է շեշտին:

Վանայ Ծովի ափին կանգնած այսպէս է թախանձում,

Կը մրմնջեմ յափշտակ,
Ծո՛վ, պարուրէ ինձ մէջդ,
մանկութիւնս եմ քեզ բերեր...

Ամէն քարի հետ սակայն
ես իմ հայրը կը յիշեմ,
որ ափերուն այս Ծովուն,
մանկութեան խինդ է ապրեր...

.....
Կը մրմնջեմ ես յուշիկ,
Ծո՛վ, պարուրէ ինձ մէջդ,
Քեզի շա՛տ եմ երագեր,
Քեզ որբութիւնս եմ բերեր:

Բայց Շուշանցում հիմա քրդեր են ապրում: Եկեղեցին աւերակ է, հօր տունը չի գտնուում, աղբիւրը, Ապարանջան Աղբիւրը չկայ: Ուխտը կիսատ է մնացել: Գիւղացիները ապշած նայում են իրեն երբ ասում է, թէ հայրը այստեղ է ծնուել: Բայց բարիացական են, հրաւիրում են իրեն պարտէզ ու հիւրասիրում. «Դիմացս մոռացութեան տրուած գիւղ մը կայ որ իր նոր բնակիչներով ինձի որպէս հիւր՝ կ'ընկալէ... Ե՛ս՝ հիւր իմ պապենական հողին վրայ...»:

Մարգարեանի այցելութիւնը Թուրքիա ու քաղաքներ մէկ առ մէկ, Այնթափ, Խարբերդ, Մուշ, Կարս, Անի, նոր բնակիչներով, յառաջադէմ, այժմէական, ուր միանգամայն ջնջուած է հայու գոյութեան յիշողութիւնը, նրան մղում է հակադրուելու, գոնէ իր գրչով բացայայտելու իւրաքանչիւրի պատմական անցեալը, տեղն ու դերը հայ ժողովրդի ու Հայաստանի

պատմութեան մէջ, եւ այդպիսով՝ ճակատելու թուրք պաշտօնական ուրացման եւ թուրք սերունդների անգիտութեան դէմ: «Քարածայն պատարագ / Liturgy-Sound of Stones» (1998) երկլեզուեան արծակ եւ չափածոյ ստեղծագործութիւնների ժողովածուն Մարգարեանի պատասխանն է իր հայրենիքի նոր տէրերին:

Մարգարեանը յոյս ունէր, որ վերադարձին կարող է բացատրել ու ճանաչել «ԲԱՑԱՏԸ», որովհետեւ, ինչպէս ինքն է գրում,

Ամէն գիտակից հայ սեւ փոսի նման ԲԱՑԱՏ մը ունի իր ենթագիտակցութեան մէջ, եւ որուն ինչ ըլլալը չի գիտեր: Անուն չունի այդ ԲԱՑԱՏԸ: Շուրջը կը դառնանք ազգովին ու կը փորձենք ածականներով բնորոշել՝ կարօ՞տ, պահա՞նջ, բարկութիւն, վրէժ՞, դառնութիւն, անկարողութիւն, անարդարութիւն, պահանջատիրութիւն...:

Կարողացա՞ւ արդեօք: «Քարածայն պատարագ»ը ապացոյցն է այն բանին, որ այդ զգացումները աւելի սրուեցին, ԲԱՑԱՏԸ աւելի խորացաւ:

Սփիւռքահայ կեանքում աստիճանաբար աճող դերակատարութիւն ունի նաեւ իր դեռ մանկութիւնն ու կազմաւորման տարիներն ապրող, խորհրդային օտարաշունչ կապանքներից ազատուած Հայաստանի անկախ Հանրապետութիւնը: Ի սկզբանէ մեծ էր նրա գոյութեան հետ կապուած յոյսերը: Արդեօք կարո՞ղ էր առնուազն սփիւռքահայի հոգին կրծող հայրենիքի կարօտը փարատել, դառնալ հայրենիքը համայն հայութեան: Սփիւռքի տագնապը թեթեւացնել: Տագնապը՝ հոգեվարքն էր երկարաձգուած, որ տիրում էր մանաւանդ՝ Արեւմտեան Սփիւռքում, քողարկուած հանգըստաբեր անտարբերութեամբ եւ ուժացումով: Ահազանգը հնչեցրել էին Մինաս Թէօլէօլեանը, Վահէ Օշականը, Յակոբ

Կարապետնքը, Նուբար Ակիշեանը, Վրէժ-Արմէնը եւ ուրիշներ դեռ 1970-ական, 80-ական թուականներից: Չուլունը անխուսափելի էր եւ ազգային հաստատութիւնները կքում էին փլուզման վտանգի առջեւ:

«Հայրենիք» ամսագիրը, որ սերում էր «Հայրենիք» օրաթերթից եւ հրատարակւում էր Բոստոնում դեռ 1922 թուականից, 1970-ին, երեք համար որպէս եռամսեայ հրատարակուելուց յետոյ, դադարում էր՝ ընթերցողների պակասի եւ սփիւռքահայութեան անտարբերութեան պատճառով: Եւ պարբերաթերթի խմբագիր, Մինաս Թէօլէօլեանը մեկնաբանում էր տխուր իրադարձութիւնը «Տագնապը որ Սփիւռքինն է» խորագրով վերջին թուի իր յօդուծում: Իսկ «Հայրենիք» ամսագիրը, որ ցրում էր ամբողջ Սփիւռքում եւ իր տեղն էր բացել բոլոր գաղթօճախներում, պարզ մի պարբերաթերթ չէր: Նրա շուրջ հաւաքուած էին ժամանակի ամենից երեւելի մտաւորականութիւնը՝ առաջնորդելու, ուղղութիւն տալու, յոյս ներշնչելու Ցեղասպանութիւնից եւ Հայաստանի խորհրդայնացումից յետոյ գաղթական ընկած հայ բեկորներին, նրանց մէջ վառ պահելու ազգի յարատեւման յոյսը եւ հայրենիքի գաղափարը:

Հայաստանի անկախացումով նոր փուլի մէջ մտան Սփիւռք-Հայաստան յարաբերութիւնները: Իրականութեան մէջ, նոր փուլի սկիզբը դրուել էր դեռ Խորհրդային կարգերի փլուզումից առաջ, Գորբաչովեան մեղմ քաղաքականութեան պայմաններում: Հ.Յ.Ղաշնակցութիւնը իր 24-րդ Ընդհանուր ժողովում (1988), «Ղէպի Երկիր» կարգախօսով, որոշեց իր կառոյցներով վերադառնալ Հայաստան: 1988-ի Ղեկտեմբերին Հայաստանում տեղի ունեցած եւ անդարմանելի կորուստներ խլած երկրաշարժի առթած հսկայ կարիքը աւելի արագացրեց գործընթացը: Օգնութեան խմբեր

առաքուեցին, բայց միեւնոյն ժամանակ Հայաստան եւ Արցախ գործուղուեցին մի շարք երիտասարդներ, որոնք մեծ ոգեւորութեամբ ու նուիրումով գնում էին իրենց գիտելիքը, ուժն ու եռանդը ներդնելու հայրենիքի վերագարծման գործին: Այնուամենայնիւ, մարդկային յարաբերութիւնները միշտ չէ որ շինիչ ու դրական էին: Վերջապէս եօթանասուն տարիների հեռաւորութիւնից յետոյ դէմ դիմաց էին գալիս տարբեր դաստիարակութիւն ստացած, տարբեր մշակոյթների ու գաղափարական դաշտի ազդեցութիւնը կրած հայ մարդիկ: Սփիւռքն ու Հայրենիքը իրարու չէին ճանաչում:

Հալէպում ծնուած, Բէյրութում մեծացած եւ 1970-ականներից ԱՄՆ-ում կայք հաստատած Խոսրով Ասոյեանը, բանաստեղծ ու դաշնակցական գործիչ, առաջիններից էր, որ ամբողջ հոգով իւրացրեց «Ղէպի Երկիր» կարգախօսը ու շուրջ երկու տարի, այդ թէժ տարիներին, գործեց Հայաստանում եւ Արցախում: 1992-ին լոյս ընծայած «Վեր-ա-դարձ» բանաստեղծութիւնների ժողովածուն, իր երազած բայց անկատար մնացած ու կոտորակուած վերադարձն է: ԱՄՆ-ն աքսոր էր նրա համար, մթնոլորտը խեղտիչ էր ու կաշկանդում էր թռիչքը: Նա ձգտում էր վերադարձ դէպի Լիբանան՝ հայկական այն տաք քուրան, ուր նրա անձն էր կազմաւորուել:

Վերադառնա՛մ արեւուն
անապատէն հոգիի
խաչմերուկէն այս անել,
արեւմուտքէն յլիացած
վերադառնամ երգերուս...

Վերադարձ դէպի իր սիրելի Լիբանանը, ուր

.... կը ծորի,
ազաններու եւ կոչնակի
խորհուրդովը օծուն
հոգիին մէջ
հող ու արեւ որոնող
այդ պատանի եկուորին...

Իսկ որտեղի՞ց պիտի գայ վերադարձի յոյսը, բայց եւ ուժն ու կարողութիւնը: Ասոյեանը այդ ուժը հայցում է Մօքինից, Պատմական Հայաստանի այդ երբեմնի փառքի մայրաքաղաքը, որի աւերակների վրայ Ցեղասպանութիւնը վերապրած հօր ծննդավայր Մարդինն էր կառուցուել եւ որի կարօտն ու ձգողական ուժը գաւակը պահում էր իր հոգում որպէս յիշատակ իր արմատների:

«Դէպի Երկիր» կանչը համակեց Ասոյեանին, վերադարձի նոր ճամբայ բացեց, աքսորից ճողոպրելու նոր հանգրուան: Ու գնաց յոյսով.

Վերադառնամ,
մայր,
ու քեզ խնկարկեմ
Հայկի
ընդվզումով նորոգուած
Արտաւազդի շղթաները
փշրելով...

Հաւաքածոյի երրորդ բաժինը, «Դէպի Երկիր» ընդհանուր վերնագրով, սկսում է Հայաստանի դրուատանքով, յետոյ մղձաւանջ՝ երկրաշարժի պատճառած աներեւակայելի աւերին դէմ հանդիման: Բայց ինքը հայրենիքի գրկում է, «Սփիւռք/հողի անէծք...»ը թողած, ու միշտ յուսալով, որ իր երթը անվերադարձ է լինելու: Այնուամենայնիւ, հակասութիւնները շատ են, բախումը անխուսափելի: Ցաւով է

նկատում Սփիւռքում եւ հայրենիքում տիրող մտայնութիւնների տարբերութիւնը

Սփիւռք
Տէր-Ջորի
արհաւիրքով մկրտուած՝
բազմապատկուած
ճշմարտութիւն.

Մնացորդացի
անառարկելի ժառանգորդ
ու տէ՛ր
եօթանասունամեայ կամուրջ...

որ մերժում է ու դառնում՝

Երկիր-արտերկիր
բառախաղին մէջ
ընդգծեալ բազմակէտ...

Ցեղասպանութեան ազդեցութիւնը հայ հաւաքական հոգեբանութեան վրայ անկասկած աւելի խորն է եղել Սփիւռքում քան հայրենիքում: Եւ դա ի հարկէ հայ ժողովրդի երկու հատուածների վրայ ներգործող կրթա-դաստիարակչական քաղաքականութեան եւ մտքի ու գաղափարի արտայայտութեան կարելիութեան առկայութեան կամ բացակայութեան բերումով: Եթէ Սփիւռքում սերունդները դաստիարակուել են ազգային պատմութեան, ծեռքբերումների, ծախողութիւնների, Եղեռնի թողած հետեւանքների ու հայոց դիմադրական ուժի ընդհանուր համատեքստից բխած կրթա-դաստիարակչական քաղաքականութեան թելադրանքով, ապա՝ Խորհրդային կարգերը այդ ազատութիւնը խլել են հայ մարդուց: Պատմական յիշողութիւնը փոխանցուել է պատահական, որպէս արգիլուած պտուղ, կամ գաղտնօրէն,

ցեղասպանությունը վերապրած ծնողների, տատիկների ու պապիկների վախուժորած շշուկներով:

Ցեղասպանությունը վերապրած եւ աշխարհի չորս կողմերը սփռուած սփիւռքահայը վերադարձ է երազել եւ յաւերժ աքսորեալ է մնացել: «Մենք արքանդից դուրս յղացած հայրենիքի գաւակներն ենք, տարբեր քաղաքացիութիւններով: Արմատախիլ ենք եղել մէկ անգամ ու օտարական ենք միշտ ու ամէն տեղ», գրում է Մերի Թերզեանը: Եւ սա տիրող տրամադրութիւն է Սփիւռքի գրականութեան մէջ, վկայ Կարապենցի, Օշականի ու Ակիշեանի ստեղծած այնքան կեանքին մօտիկ կերպարները: Վկայ Բեյրութի քաղաքացիական պատերազմի բերումով երկրից հեռացած եւ Քանադա հաստատուած Յարութիւն Պէրպէրեանի խոստովանանքը երբ իր կեանքի պատմութեան ճշմարտութիւնն է արտայայտում: «Սահմաններ» բանաստեղծութիւնների ժողովածուի մէջ այսպէս է գրում,

Բայց երբ կտրեցի ովկիանոսը խոր,
լայնատարած, համայնակուլ
երկրին մէջ նոր,
ես ինքզինքս
Միտին պէս բանտուած գտայ:

Ընդհանրապէս գոյութիւն ունի այն համոզումը, որ մի ժողովրդի մշակոյթը, այս պարագայում գրականութիւնը կարող է բարգաւաճել միայն արմատները հայրենի հողում խոր տարածած: Եւ լեզուն այդ գրականութեան արտայայտչական միջոցն ու հոգին՝ եթէ գրկուած սնանող հողից, կը զոհագործուի աքսորում: Ցեղասպանութիւնը հենց այդ աւերը գործեց: Ցեղասպանութիւնը կործանեց դաբիրը, ապաւէնը հայոց լեզուի եւ գրանութեան: Ի հարկէ նպատակս արեւմտահայ լեզուն եւ գրականութիւնն է, որը Սփիւռքի

մեծամասնութեան համար միջոց է (էր) գրաւոր եւ բանաւոր հաղորդակցութեան եւ որով ինքն իրեն ճանաչում է Սփիւռքի մեծամասնութիւնը: Սթիվըն Ջէյքոփսը, հրէական Ողջակիզումը վերապրած երկրորդ սերունդ, "Language death and revival after cultural destruction: reflections on a little discussed aspect of genocide" յօդուածում լեզուն համարում է մի ժողովրդի կամ հաւաքականութեան հաւաքական ինքնութեան հաստատման եւ փոխանցման կարեւորագոյն միջոցը, որ «կը հայթայթի, կամրակայի հիմքը դեռ բազմաթիւ սերունդների յարատեւման»:

Ես հաւատում եմ լեզուի կարեւորութեան այս շեշտաւորմանը: Հաւատում եմ, որ հայրենի հողից կտրուած ազգային համայնքները կարող են աստիճանաբար տարտղնուել ու օտար երկրի մեծամասնութեան մէջ ներծծուել ու անհետանալ՝ եթէ լեզուն կորի: Եւ դա Ցեղասպանութեան հետեւանքներից է Սփիւռքի վրայ պարտադրուած: Հաւատում եմ, որ եթէ կանգ առնի արեւմտահայ գրականութեան շարունակականութիւնը, հայու գրչի արգասիք Արեւմուտքի ու Արեւելքի լեզուներով արտադրուած գրականութիւնը կը կորցնի այն սիւնը որին պիտի յենուի իմաստ ունենալու համար: Այլ խօսքով, փոքրամասնութիւն համայնքը օտար երկրում պիտի ապրի իր պատմութեամբ, իր անցեալով, աւանդութիւններով ու արժէքներով, մշակոյթով ու իր լեզուով, որպէսզի այդ երկրի լեզուով նրա գաւակների ստեղծած գրականութիւնը իր իմաստն ու ճանաչողութիւնը վաստակի եւ նոյնիսկ գոյութեան իրաւունքը ստանայ:

2010 թուականին UNESCO-ն Արեւմտահայերէնը ներառեց վտանգուած լեզուների ցանկում: Ըստ այդ կազմակերպութեան որդեգրած սկզբունքների, ուրեմն, 2100-

ին այլևս այդ լեզուով ոչ ոք չի խօսի: Եւ դա Ցեղասպանութեան հետեւանքներից է Սփիւռքի վրայ պարտադրուած: Դա Իգրայէլ Չարնիի առաջադրած յղացքի Linguicide-ի, լեզուասպանութեան արտայայտութիւնն է, որ իր աստիճանական լրումին է հասնում երկու դար յետոյ: Ո՞րն է միջոցը Հայոց Ցեղասպանութեան հետեւանքով ստեղծուած այս իրողութեան առաջին առնելու: Ո՞վ (հաւաքական իմաստով) պիտի դիմակայի այս կորուստին:

Երկրորդ սերնդի գրականութեան մշակները մեծաւ մասամբ Հայոց լեզուն համարում են ազգային ինքնութեան հիմքն ու կենտրոնական բաղադրատարրը: Այսօր, Միջին Արեւելքի հայապահպանման ամրոցները ընկնում են մէկ առ մէկ, եւ Ցեղասպանութիւնից յետոյ իր տակի հողը կորցրած ու որբացած արեւմտահայերէնը, հազիւ իր մէջքը ուղղած ու Բէյրութի ու Հալէպի հայկական քուրաներում նոր ուժ ու արդիականութիւն ստացած, մէկ անգամ եւս աքսորական է դառնում: Այլեւս դասական միջոցները բաւարար չեն նրա գոյատեւումն ու զարգացումը ապահովելու համար: Նոր գաղափարներ, յաւելեալ ճիգ ու ծրագրաւորում է պէտք: Գրիգոր Պըլտեանը մէկն է այն առաջատարներից, որ հաւատում է թէ հայոց լեզուն ու գրականութիւնը կարող է Սփիւռքում եւս ծաղկել, առանց հայրենի հողի: «Ստեղծել վայրը ուր ըլլալ» նախաբանով կամ կարգախօսով, առաջարկում է սփռուածութիւնը վերածել մէկ հաւաքական վայրի ուր հայկական կեանքը կը շարունակուի եւ հայ գիրն ու գրականութիւնը կը զարգանայ: Նա իր գրականութեամբ, մանաւանդ՝ արծակ ստեղծագործութիւններով, փորձում է փրկել լեզուն՝ վերակենդանացնելով նրա այն ջիւղը, այն երանգները, կորովն ու կարողականութիւնը որ դեռ ապրում էր գաղթականական ճամբարներում ու զոհ գնաց

«քանդուող քաղաքի» հետ՝ Լիբանանի քաղաքացիական պատերազմի շրջանին: Աղէտը վերապրած արեւմտահայերէնը սփիւռքացաւ եւ չպիտի յարատեւի եթէ քայլ չպահի արդիական աշխարհի զարգացումների հետ, ինչպէս Պըլտեանն է հարցադրում, եթէ դատապարտուի պարզունակ հաղորդակցութեան միջոց դառնալու եւ դադարի մտքի ու գաղափարի լեզու լինելուց:

Լեզուն այս իրավիճակում խորշաւորման է ենթարկւում, ինչպէս ներկայացնում են աւելի երիտասարդ մտաւորականներ՝ Յակոբ Կիւլլիւճեանն ու Շուշան Կարապետեանը, որոնց գործունէութիւնն ու ներդրումը լեզուապահպանման մէջ նշանակալից ընթացք է բռնել եւ ապագայ իրագործումների ճամբի վրայ է: Կարապետեանը փորձում է գտնել ընդունելի այն այլընտրանքը, որ կը փոխարինի հայ ազգային ինքնութեան մէջ լեզուին վերագրուած, կամ նրա համար սահմանուած կենտրոնական կարեւորութեանը: Կարապետեանի կարծիքով, լեզուի մէջ կատարելագործուելը զոհ է գնում լեզուի մասին վերամբարձ գաղափարախօսութիւններին: Նա հակուած է ազգային ինքնութեան յետ-արդիական յղացքներին, ուր լեզուի կարեւորութիւնը այլ կերպ է դիտուած: Յակոբ Կիւլլիւճեանը լեզուի պահպանման պայքարի յաջողութեան գրաւականն է համարում նրա արդիականացումն ու համատարած գործածութիւնը: Եթէ լեզուն խորշաւորուած է, եւ դատապարտուած միայն գործածուելու պարզունակ, ոչ-վերացական նիւթերի համար, տնական, ընտանեկան յարաբերութիւնների մէջ եւ անցեալի մասին, այսինքն՝ երբ լեզուն սկսում է նուազագոյն մարզեր ու սահմանափակ դեր ընդգրկել—ես կասէի հացուպանիի լեզու դառնալ—ապա պիտի տարածել այդ դերը, քանդել խորշերի պատերը, ներս բերել իրական

կեանքը, վերացական մտքերը, այսինքն՝ կապ հաստատել իրական աշխարհի հետ եւ առաջանալ տուեալ երկրի մեծամասնութեան լեզուի զարգացման զուգընթաց:

Եթէ պիտի յենուել ազգային ինքնութեան յետ-արդիական նորամուտ յղացքների վրայ, ի՞նչ են առաջադրում դրանք եւ կարո՞ղ են փրկութեան լաստ լինել սփիւռքահայ իրականութեան համար: Այս առաջադրանքների ոլորտում, մանաւանդ բազմալեզուեան համայնքներում, մայրենի լեզուին կենտրոնական նշանակութիւն չի տրուում: Լիվիա Ուիթմանը, օրինակ, ներկայացնում է հայկական իրականութեան մօտիկ մի իրավիճակ, որտեղ մայրենի լեզուն, իր ուսումնասիրութեան պարագայում՝ եփրայերէնը, կորում է երբ ենթական մէկ կամ մի քանի այլ լեզուների մէջ է հմտանում եւ այդ լեզուներից մէկը դառնում է նրա հաղորդակցութեան գլխաւոր միջոցը: “Language and Postmodern Ethnic Identities” յօդուածում նա օգտագործում է Ջաշուա Ֆիշմանի յետ-արդիական ազգային ինքնութիւն հասկացութեան բնութագրումը, որ առաջադրում է անցում կատարել այն հասկացութիւններից որոնք ազգային ինքնութիւնը դասում են որպէս անփոփոխ եւ ինքնաբաւ համակարգ. բայց նոյն ժամանակ պահել քո ինքնութիւնը որպէս քո նախընտրածը, որին գիտակցաբար ես յարում, որին մասնակից ես եւ ընդունում ես նրա զարգացող ընթացքը: Այս կեցութեան փոփոխութիւն է առաջադրում, որ տեղի է ունենում մեծամասնութիւն համայնքի լեզուի եւ մշակոյթի հետ յարաբերութիւնների ոլորտում:

Դառն իրականութիւն է, որ Սփիւռքում նահանջում է լեզուն, խամրում ազգային ինքնութիւնը եւ շատ պարագաներում իջնում է մի քանի ազգային, մշակութային խորհրդանիշների մակարդակի: Պէտք չէ հանդուրժել: Առ նուազն,

ընդունելով հանդերձ Ֆիշմանի առաջադրած ազգային ինքնութեան թափանցելիութիւնը, ճանաչել եւ պահել կենսաբանական արմատները. դա բացատրենք իբրեւ հայկական առհաւութիւն, ժառանգութիւն կամ հասարակաց պատմական անցեալ: Այդ ժառանգութեան եւ պատմական յիշողութեան պահմանման մէջ հետաքրքիր երեւոյթ է յետ-Եղեռնեան սերնդի անուանակոչման դերը, այսինքն՝ երբ Ցեղասպանութիւնը վերապրած ծնողը իր երեխային կոչում է իր զոհ գնացած, քրոջ, եղբօր, մօր, հօր, կամ մէկ այլ հարազատի անունով: Անունը զաւակի համար դառնում է կորցրածի ու թուրքի ոճրի յարատեւ յուշ, որ մէկ թէկուզ աննշան անկիւն է գրաւում նրա ազգային ինքնութեան կառոյցում:

Ազգային ինքնութեան պահպանման պայքարի այս տազնապալի հանգրուանին որքան կարելոր է հայրենիքի եւ Սփիւռքի կառոյցների համագործակցութիւնը: Որքան կարելոր է Ցեղասպանութեան հետեւանքները վերացնելու համար տարուող կամ աւելի ճիշտ տարուելիք պայքարի ծրագրաւորումն ու համադրումը:

Հայոց Ցեղասպանութեան հարիւրամեայ տարելիցի ոգեկոչման ձեռնարկների թէժ մթնոլորտում, շրջանառութեան մէջ մտաւ «Յիշում եմ եւ պահանջում» խօսքը, կարգախօսը: Ոգեւորութեամբ արտասանեցին բոլորը, նրանով հանդերձ, որ այդ պարզ բառակապակցութիւնը բոլորովին տարբեր իմաստ էր ենթադրում տարբեր մարդկանց, բայց եւ աւելի կարելորդ՝ տարբեր քաղաքական շերտերի համար: Հայոց ազգային գոյատեւման ու ապահովութեան այս ճակատագրական պայքարում որքան նպատակասլաց կլինի, եթէ այդ խօսքը դուրս գայ գեղեցիկ կարգախօսի իր պարունակից ու գործ դառնայ, եթէ իւրաքանչիւր հայ այդ խօսքը ականջի օղ

դարձնի—ինչպես մեր հները կասեին—ու դրա թելադրանքով առաջնորդուի նոյնիսկ իր առօրեայում:

Այսպիսով, փակում եմ հնարաւորութիւններին եւ կարելիութիւններին սահմաններում իրագործած ուսումնասիրութիւնս, յուսալով որ կարողացել եմ ինչ որ նոր բան ասել Ցեղասպանութիւնը վերապրած երկրորդ սերնդի հոգեվիճակի, կեանքի փիլիսոփայութեան եւ աշխարհընկալման մասին, այսինքն՝ Ցեղասպանութեան հետեւանքների մասին: Բայց որպէս հենց ներկայ հատորին մէջ արդէն հաստատուած երեւոյթ, Ցեղասպանութեան հետեւանքները չեն փարատուել: Ցեղասպանութեան ազդեցութիւնը շարունակում է փոխանցուել սերնդէ սերունդ: Նոյնիսկ, կարելի է ասել, որ երբեմն երկրորդ սերնդի մէջ լռութեան մատնուած այդ ազդեցութիւնը աւելի բուռն դրսեւորում է ստանում յաջորդ սերնդի մօտ: Այս պարունակում հետաքրքիր է գաղթականների Ամերիկա բերած ազգային արժէքների, աւանդութիւնների ու սովորութիւնների մասին "The Problem of the Third Generation Immigrant" Մարքըս Լի Հանսընի հետազօտութեան արդիւնքը՝ այն ինչ զաւակը ցանկանում է մոռանալ, թոռը ցանկանում է յիշել: Սա համընկնում է հայ իրականութեանը. դեռ հայերի պարագայում, Հանսընի նկատի առած ներգործիչ ազդակների վրայ աւելանում է Ցեղասպանութեան ստուերը ընտանիքում, որ երրորդ սերունդը փորձում է իր ձեռով վանել: Նրա ճակատումը իր ընտանիքի անցեալի հետ, Ցեղասպանութեան հետ, աւելի է սրւում երբ դէմ հանդիման է գալիս վերջին ժամանակներում աւելի ընդգծուած թուրք ժխտողական քաղաքականութեան հետ, երբ ոճրագործը սառն անտարբերութեամբ ուրանում է

կատարած ոճիրը ու փորձում իր թեզը ամէն կերպով համոզիչ դարձնել աշխարհին:

Իսկ եթէ թուրքը ճանաչի Հայոց Ցեղասպանութիւնը, միթէ՞ կը վերանան ողբերգական անցեալի առթած հետեւանքները: Հրէական Ողջակիզման ազդեցութիւնները դեռ շարունակում են, վկայ ողջակիզման գրականութիւնն ու ընդհանրապէս գեղարուեստական արտայայտութիւնները: Եւ դա նրանով հանդերձ որ յետ-պատերազմեան Գերմանիան ընդունեց ոճիրը եւ հատուցում կատարեց: Ազդեցութիւնը պիտի շարունակուի եւ պիտի իր արծագանքը գտնի գրականութեան մէջ: Գալիք սերունդները դեռ պիտի շարունակեն ձգնել, նոր միջոցներ գտնել՝ արտայայտելու ցաւը, բողոքելու ու արդարութիւն պահանջելու: Եւ գեղարուեստական գրականութեան դերը այդ բնագաւառում դառնում է անժխտելի, մանաւանդ՝ երբ զուգորդուած է քաղաքական գործունէութեան հետ:

Այս հատորից անդին, յաջորդող սերնդի գեղարուեստական գրականութեան այդ դերը կենտրոնական թեման է շարունակուող վերլուծական աշխատանքին, եւ այդ պարունակում փորձս լուսաբանելու քաղաքական, հոգեբանական, եւ այլ այն ազդակները, որոնք մղում են փորփրել, գտնել եւ աշխարհի հետ կիսել տատիկի, պապիկի ու նրանց նախնիների պատմութիւնը, պատմութիւնը ողբերգական մի անցեալի որի թողած հետեւանքները դեռ պիտի փարատուեն: Հաւատում եմ, որ պատմական յիշողութիւնը չի մարում: Համարում եմ Ցեղասպանութեան գրականութիւնը, Եղեռնի գեղարուեստական պատմութիւնը, որպէս իմաստալից ու խօսուն ոգեղէն մի յուշարձան: Յուշարձան, որ մարդկութեան դէմ թուրքի անպատիժ մնացած ոճիրը կրած սերունդներն են կառուցել քար առ քար, սկսած Համիդեան

կոտորածների սարսափը երգող ու ապագայի լոյսը ջատագովող Սիամանթոյից ու Վարուժանից ու մինչեւ այսօր, մինչեւ վաղը, մինչեւ ի կատար ածումը հայ մարդու ազգային իղծերի՝ Աղէտը վերապրած ժողովրդի հոգեբանությունից վեր յառնելու, ազգ դառնալու, ազգովին լուծելու անցեալի ողբերգությունն ու նրա հետեւանքները՝ որպէս հաւաստիքը ազգային յարատեւման:

Ռուբինա Փիրումեան
Լոս Անջելըս
2015

ՀՀ Ազգային գրադարան



NL0937273

The Armenian Genocide in Literature
The Second Generation Responds

Rubina Perroomian

The children of survivors of the Armenian Genocide were affected by their parents' traumatic experience: regardless of how they or their parents perceived and dealt with that trauma, its psychological effects were impressed upon the family atmosphere and familial relationships.

This volume, the fourth by the author in her continuing study and analysis of Diasporan Armenian literature, shows how the shadow of the Genocide has surfaced in the works of second-generation Armenian writers to reflect a variety of reactions/responses conditioned by the individual's perception of the past, in the context of his or her relationship with mainstream society and the dominant culture. The author examines a broad spectrum of responses, ranging from total immersion/assimilation to total commitment to the Cause. In some second-generation survivor-writers, the Armenian component remains dormant, at least in appearance; in others, it is gradually retrieved from a nebulous memory-hole to become an important dimension of their self-identity; in still others, the transmitted memory of images of suffering and death never loosens its grip and imposes upon everyday life. When coupled with the vague image of a lost homeland, a sense of deprivation, anger and frustration sets in and is further fueled by the perpetrator's denial of the crime and distortion of history. Are healing and reconciliation possible? Even after one hundred years, the process is yet to begin. "Healing is denied to Armenians." Second-generation Armenian artistic expressions thus echo the struggle to cast off the shadow of the past and challenge the present stance of the perpetrators and world bystanders.