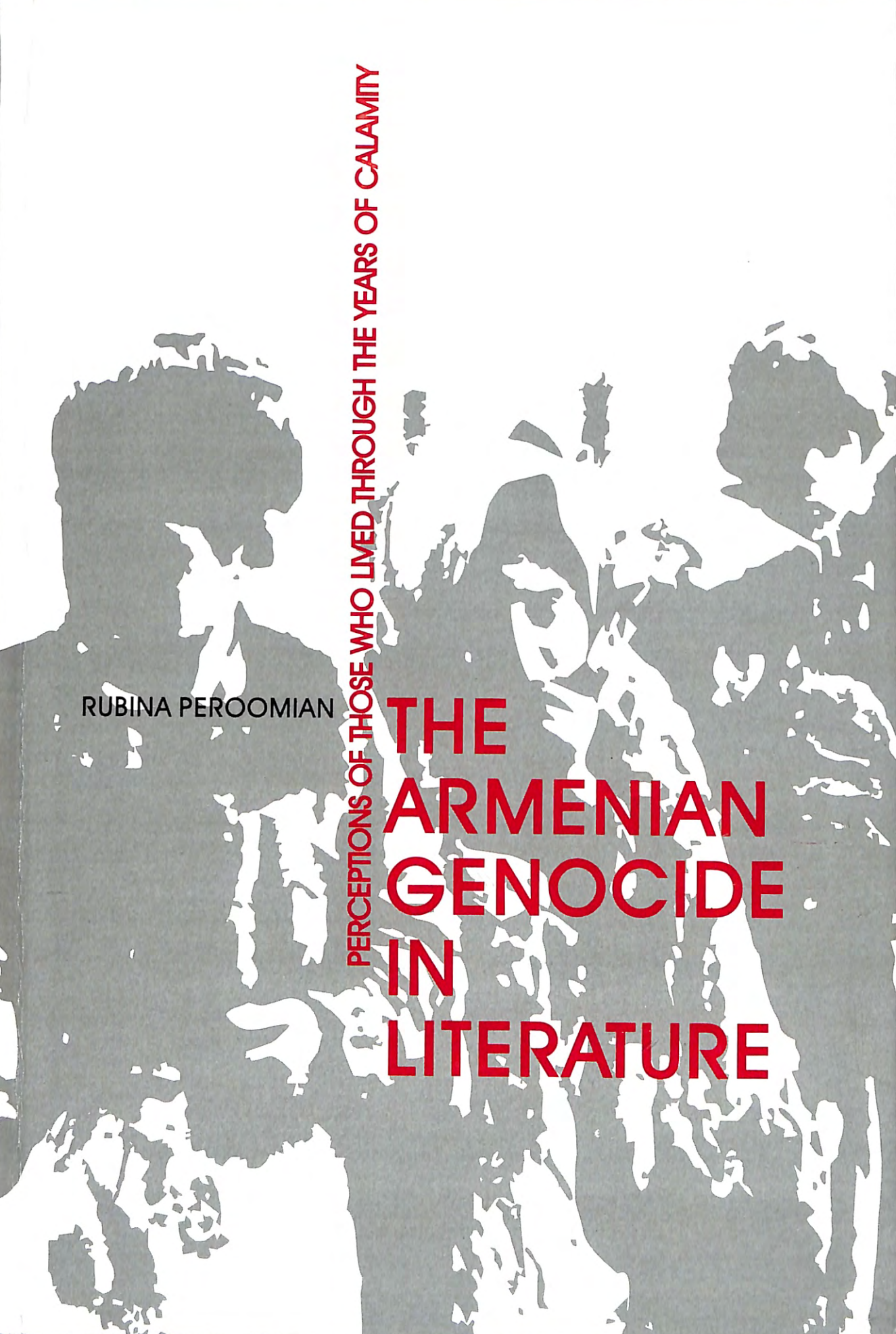




RUBINA PEROOMIAN

PERCEPTIONS OF THOSE WHO LIVED THROUGH THE YEARS OF CALAMITY

THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE IN LITERATURE

Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute
(Research and Studies in Armenian Genocide Series: 2)

**The Armenian Genocide
in Literature**

Perceptions of Those who Lived through
The Years of Calamity

Rubina Perroomian

Yerevan 2014

**The Armenian Genocide
in Literature**
Perceptions of Those who Lived through
the Years of Calamity

by
Rubina Perroomian

© 2012
Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute
2nd printing
With a foreword by S. Peter Cowe

Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute
(Research and Studies in Armenian Genocide Series: 2)
Includes bibliographical references, index, and summary in
Armenian.

ISBN 978-9939-822-18-1

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.

Cover photo: Armenian orphans waiting in line to be
admitted into the American Near East Relief orphanage in
Alexandropol (circa 1920)

Cover design: Lusine Matevosyan-Demoyan
Text layout and printing by "Collage" LLC



11-75645FL

Contents

Foreword by S. Peter Cowe	vii
A personal note in lieu of preface	xv
Why I undertook the study of Genocide literature, and how my life has changed because of it	
Introduction	1
1 The legacy of the first generation	7
The first echoes	11
Siamant'o and Varuzhan as pacesetters	15
Postwar Constantinople: A beacon of hope for revival?	20
Against assimilation: The beginning of a continuous struggle in the new Diaspora	30
To render meaning to the past experience	54

2	The orphan generation	77
	Childhood reminiscences	83
	The pain of orphanhood	117
	Good and evil sparring for dominance	133
	Yearning for the lost homeland	137
	Resort to the world of dreams	155
	Despair leading to psychological collapse	158
	An inward anger translated into vengeance	168
	The collapse of social and moral order	170
	Blaming the ancestors and Christian tradition ...	177
	Themes from ordinary life	187
	Survival as a nation	193
	Recreating the Old World	218
3	A renewed outpouring of memories	227
	Stories of blood and tears	232
	K'erop' Bedouk'ian	232
	Alice Muggerditchian Shipley	237
	John Minassian	242
	Dirouhi Kouymjian Highgas	253
	Hovhannes Mugrditchian	260
	Hrant Sarian	268
	Vahram P'ap'azian	275
	Bertha (Berjouhi) Nakshian K'etchian	278
	Nargiz Zhamkoch'ian	282
	Hampartzoum Mardiros Ch'it'jian	293
	Yervand Kyureghyan	303
	Arshaluys Martikian (Aurora Mardiganian) ..	314
	Revelation of a gloomy landscape	328

The smooth style of narration	331
Against the urge to speak out	335
The straightforward account versus the attempt to explain	337
Vivid descriptions of people and places that are no more	343
The key to survival	347
Coming to America: A dream come true	359
The good Turk	362
Orphans: The leftovers from the carnage	370
Harrowing memories never loosen their grip ...	381
Inundated by the literature of atrocity	393
In lieu of a conclusion to this intermediary volume	
Bibliography	397
Index	409
Note	421
Summary in Armenian	423

Foreword

It is a pleasure for me to introduce the second printing of this important monograph by Dr. Rubina Perroomian, not only as a respected scholar, who has made this field the subject of her special study, but also as the first Ph.D. graduate from the UCLA program in Armenian language and culture. Her thesis of 1989 which she then turned into the book *Literary Responses to Catastrophe: A Comparison of the Armenian and the Jewish Experience* of 1993 already built on a series of more focused articles and has been followed recently by an investigation of the internally displaced diaspora of Armenians entitled *And Those who continued Living in Turkey after 1915* (2008). This current book unites certain strands from both the previous, exploring the phenomenon of Genocide as reflected in Armenian literary and memoirist narratives, some of which also underline the pressing reality of the large numbers of Armenians whose life story has so far been generally overlooked, but who though avoiding the harrowing experience of escape and immigration to foreign states, underwent a complete transformation of identity, the magnitude of

which is only now beginning to be appreciated. Finally, Dr. Perroomian's perspective is informed by her experience in orally interviewing survivors like Yervand Kyureghyan, to whose detailed account of activities as a fedayee in the defense of Van she devotes several pages. He is truly emblematic of survivors in that his memory was so imprinted by his experiences that as he began the task of writing his memories at age 100, his recall of the overall chronological trend of events as well as of the specific details marking many of them is quite remarkable.

Although a work of scholarship distilling an enormous amount of reading, interpreted by insights from literary criticism and psychology, the book is eminently accessible to the general reader. Far from being aloof in tone, the monograph is remarkably personal, particularly in the preface and conclusion, a tribute to all those who endured the horrors of genocide. Indeed, the author displays uncommon courage and candor in talking about the psychological effects of her prolonged research and her empathy with the victims in their suffering. As she puts it, "the literature of atrocity has been holding me in its grip."

As already noted, Perroomian's study reviews a number of literary treatments of the Genocide by acknowledged Armenian writers as well as a selection of memoirist accounts penned primarily by survivors about their actual experiences. These are contextualized by a brief historical background and succinct survey of treatments of the Hamidian massacres of 1894-96 and that of Adana of 1909, which, the author contests, form part of a longer-term trajectory in Armeno-Ottoman relations. The work is completed by a bibliography and

inclusive index, for which she is to be commended, for it will be of enormous utility to student and casual reader alike in zooming in on discussion of particular places mentioned, key players in the narratives, and some of the central themes to be handled.

What emerges immediately from the introduction is the preeminent role of the periodical press in Armenian society as the pivot around which internal intellectual life revolved. This is highlighted by the creation of *Bardzravank* under the editorship of Kostan Zarian in allied-occupied Constantinople as writers sought to form a new literary movement to face the past and plan for the future. It is also apparent that writing was viewed as the cultural medium at the center of Armenian social thought and movement. *Hayrenik* (1922) was to perform the same function in Boston, *Haratch* in Paris, alongside others like *Menk'* there and *Nor Gir* (1944) in New York. Several of these not only featured a wide international distribution but present a fascinating diversity of viewpoints, thus promoting civil society in the Diaspora.

This first period is one of swiftly changing contours. While the Genocide was still in progress, literary reaction demands vengeance against the perpetrators as in Shahan Natalie's *Gospel of Revenge* (1918) as manifested in the strategies of the fedayees, paralleled in Suren Partevian's play *Immortal Flame* (1917) and Vahan Tekeyan's poem *Sacred Revolt*. The second phase in the 1920s marks the maintenance of the older generation's nationalist project through the printing of biographies of heroes of the revolutionary struggle, which earned Oshagan's criticism for their lack of literary merit. In contrast, the latter argued the writer's task was to refine the commu-

nity's taste by introducing new critical and aesthetic standards, as had been done in their time by the generation of the 1860s. What resulted instead is poetry of homesickness and nostalgia, which as Perroomian observes, was largely composed by women, who in other respects did not actively participate in the new literary movement, in contrast to their major contributions in the generations from the 1880s on. The late 20s-early 30s ushered in questions of how to represent the readers' diaspora situation, facing exclusion by the Stalinist regime in Soviet Armenia and assimilation to majority cultures in the different states where they were domiciled, as well as the complex issue of a longed for return. Thus NshanDestegul argued for a realistic handling of diaspora potential rather than perpetuating the focus on past glories, believing that suffering is the richest source from which true art is born. The older generation, though clearly visualizing the need to keep abreast of their community's vastly altered circumstances, was not well equipped to accomplish it.

That task was therefore left to their successors, the men of what Perroomian describes as the "orphan generation". Her examination clearly uncovers a major generation gap in perception and literary treatment by this new cohort, especially in France, and to a lesser extent in America and the Middle East. The preponderance of young males bereft of their family peoples the works of several of the French-Armenian writers associated with the *Menk* periodical in the interwar years, men "without a childhood" to quote Tsarukian, who witnessed the collapse of social and moral order and realized the impossibility of conducting normal human relationships, a theme, which, as Perroomian indicates, was often conveyed by

the metaphor of incest. A hallmark of their writing is the almost complete dearth of material regarding the upheavals the characters must have undergone and the means by which they had reached these foreign shores. This absence the author explains psychologically by reference to Mardi Jon Horowitz's view of the impact of trauma secreting the cataclysmic events deep in unconscious, so that only bringing them into the active memory will allow reconciliation to occur.

While representatives of the Dashnaktsutiwn party like Narduni contended that the Diaspora needed to organize itself for the future, and other writers saw their ultimate salvation in the Armenian Republic, even though they did not necessarily agree with its political philosophy, ShahanShahnur views himself as a spokesman for the disillusion of his generation, various of his literary characters trading against the revolutionary program, regarding the parties as an unwelcome intrusion from the Russian bloc into Ottoman Armenian society. Others vociferously denounce traditional Armenian Christianity through the icon of St. Grigor Narekats'i, while yet others rail against the post-Christian movement of neo-paganism articulated by the poets Varuzhan and Siamanto, which evoked the pagan deities as symbols of a powerful new Armenian socio-political ethos of self-assurance and victory. Thus the character Suren in *Retreat without Song* states that "the gods have betrayed us, Anahit has rejected us. Armenians have become weak." This parallels Charents' perspective in poems like *Vahagn* and in his novel *Erkir Nairi* in which this survivor of the Genocide and the defense of Van reflects in these works on the shortcomings of nationalist rhetoric, while struggling with many others in the

Republic against the unpalatable ideological direction taken by Stalinism. The *Menk* vision for the future of their generation is dramatically rendered by Garo Poladian in the image of a shirt of fire to represent Armenian identity, which would burn their flesh and soul till death, albeit they sought to inundate themselves in French culture.

Armenian writers in the USA were much less outspoken and in many ways more comparable with the memoirists who occupy the book's third section. Those like Noorigian and Hamastegh continued the traditions of the provincial school honed by their mentor Tlkatints'i. Naturally, their spatio-temporal absence did not permit them to represent characters and village life with the latter's incisive realism intended to advance the cause of development and reform. However true to life, their depictions were tinged by recollections of the past to give solace to their erstwhile villager readers now struggling to get by in the concrete jungle of the east coast industrial urban landscape. Later in life, as Perroomian outlines, figures like Aram Haykaz, Leon Surmelian, and Hakob Asadourian produced autobiographical novels and other works in which they expressed their apprehensions about what at that time sociologists referred to as America's "mel-tingpot" of the majority culture into which all the minority communities would eventually coalesce.

The book's third and in many ways most lively section is devoted to a random selection of memoirs, most of which have no literary pretensions, but desire to offer a factual account of the survivor's Genocide experience, escape, and immigration, mostly to the USA. Perroomian presents a detailed, engaging synopsis of each, introducing the survivor and contextualizing

the narrative as well as highlighting the historical or other importance of the episodes they describe. Their geographical range is impressive, stretching from Sivas through Konya, Kharpert, Mezireh, Husenig, Van and Erzerum to the Black Sea coast, etc. Their direct unembellished reports in a variety of dialects interspersed with Turkish terms convey the spontaneity of a vernacular conversation with the reader. Moreover, the spectrum of their responses to their experiences significantly parallels the categories developed by Donald and Lora Miller to classify the oral narratives they reviewed in the 90s. As Hambartsum Chitjian remarks, "If you have not witnessed such atrocities, your mind could never perceive that such savagery could be committed by human beings."

The memoirists are not deterred by the impossibility of representation or incapacity of language, which plagued the literary authors, as their project is not imaginative and inclusive, designed to interpret and elucidate the wider meaning of Genocide, but rather to describe their own life history. Moreover, although they experience something of the same existential soul-searching about the divine realm as literary authors, pondering a duality in the godhead, pitting the Christian divinity against the Allah of Islam, they also offer a corrective. For example, the range and diversity of Turks and Kurds in all walks of life who in various ways assist the survivors with food, shelter, or means of escape provides a sobering counterpoint to outmoded essentialist argument such as Oshagan adduces, ascribing the Genocide to the urge to loot and kill endemic in the Turkish character, arguing that "there exist not only criminal people, but also criminal races." At the same time, as survivor Vahram Papazian states, ultimately

Armenians owed their survival “not to the mercy of the enemy, but solely to the sharp and creative Armenian mind which can squeeze water out of a rock.” Sometimes, we might add, that was aided by sheer luck.

As I mentioned at the beginning, Perroomian’s book grips the reader because of its human depth, the author’s devotion to her subject and her overwhelming desire to remain faithful to her sources and their account of events and the genuineness of the writers in affording an accurate narrative of experiences they wouldn’t have wished on their worst enemy that have haunted them over a lifetime and refused to give them rest—tales of the atrocities of Genocide, a modern blight on humanity, still alive unabated in the wastes of Darfur. How comforting it would be to ignore it and pretend it didn’t exist, it doesn’t exist, that all is sweetness and light. Rather it is works like this that shed light on the dark recesses of our psyche and awaken us to the disconcerting truth that Genocide indeed exists, that it must not be tolerated and that the essential weapon in the struggle against it is awareness.

S. Peter Cowe

Narekatsi Chair of Armenian Studies

Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, UCLA

A Personal Note in Lieu of a Preface

**Why I undertook the study of Genocide literature,
and how my life has changed because of it**

Why did I choose to study Genocide literature and write about it in preparation for my doctoral degree over a quarter of a century ago?¹ How did my life change after that? These are questions I often ask myself, questions that my close friends and family ask. Couldn’t I have chosen a lighter subject for my dissertation? My husband, Neshan, used to say, “Imagine how pleasant and enjoyable your research would have been if you had taken up something like the theme of ‘rose and

nightingale' and compared its manifestations in Persian and Armenian poetry."

My research in literary responses to genocide did not stop with the completion of my Ph.D. requirements (1989). It continued with more research, more work and the revision of my dissertation until the eventual publication of *Literary Responses to Catastrophe: A Comparison of the Armenian and the Jewish Experience* (1993), and beyond. In fact, the study of the literature of atrocity² became a dominant field of research in my academic life; moreover, as my friends and family know for certain, Genocide literature became a part of my life.

Years ago, during a casual conversation among a group of friends, my husband said in a plaintive tone, "If other Armenians have one day of April 24th in a year, everyday is April 24th in our house."³ My husband's comment shocked me. It made me realize how much I had changed and how deeply the sadness, misery, and gloom emanating from the material I read had penetrated my soul and impacted my disposition, behavior, and family life.

Besides the literature on the Armenian Genocide—memoirs, stories, novels, and poetry—I also personally interviewed many survivors, dedicating long hours and sometimes as many as two or three sessions to those who had a wealth of outpouring memories to recount.⁴

During the first few years of my intense work in preparation for my dissertation, I was immersed in my topic. I lived with it literally day and night; that is, the scenes my interviewees described or those I read during

the day would reappear again and again like horror movies in my dreams. Were they simply "day residues," as Freud had labeled such experiences? But I believe they were more than that. As strange as it may seem, oftentimes I was there; I was a player in those scenes. Inevitably, the nightmares would linger on the next day like a parallel life in a different world that I lived simultaneously with the reality around me, as Carl Jung would explain, compensating for the lack of total immersion in the horrible life stories I adopted as I came into contact with them. Or, better yet, as Calvin Hall, a more recent psychoanalyst, would suggest, perhaps these dreams were just the continuation of my waking thoughts and behavior. I sought out these explanations in the psychoanalytic research material available to me in my university courses, none of them offering me satisfaction. Regardless of whether I would find any possible soothing explanation or not, I was certainly affected by the impact.

"Last night I dreamt of me, a six-year-old girl, separated from my family and driven away with a group of children. That was weeks after we had received orders in our village to take whatever we could and get on the road. We were being deported and sent to an unknown destination. We had walked for many weeks or months. I was too young to be able to count. All I know is that the road was rough, and we were hungry and thirsty and sick. One day my grandmother sat at the edge of the road and with her last strength waved us goodbye, as if saying, 'You go on. I can't continue anymore.' Then we lost my baby brother. He just starved to death. My mother had no

milk in her breast to feed him. Now we had reached the desert, which was called Deir el-Zor, I later learned.⁵ The gendarmes separated us children from the adults. It was so hard for me to let go of my mother. I screamed and cried.... They took us to a small village nearby. It was already dark, but we could see the flames of a big fire in the distance. We could also smell flesh burning. We were so scared. We huddled together and watched the flames until they finally died down. In the darkness of the night we found a narrow stream running nearby. We were so thirsty. We drank the water. It was a little salty and funny tasting. The next morning we looked at each other terrified. Our faces were covered with blood, the blood of our fellow deportees murdered last night...."

This horrifying dream visited me repeatedly to torture me time and again after I interviewed Hripsimé Zeneyan on April 30, 1980, in her home in Hollywood.⁶ I had nightmares like this every now and then. And when I think back today, I come to an astonishing realization. Why is it that I was always in the midst of this gruesome chaos as a little girl? Why is it that I tended to identify myself with female child victims of that harrowing tragedy?

"I am in the desert again with a group of 'survivors' of the death march. My mother and I kept together for months and miraculously survived while other members of our large family perished. We were the toughest. But I am starving now. I cannot go on anymore. I am lying on the desert sand. I have no strength to move. I smell meat cooking nearby. 'Mother, please, go ask some for me,' I plead with my mother. She goes and returns empty-handed. 'O Mother! They didn't give you any?

*Remember, Mother, when I die, you eat my flesh alone. Don't share with anyone'...."*⁷

Years later, I received an invitation to participate as a female scholar in the field of genocide studies on a panel titled "Connecting Biography and Research."⁸ Was there a relation between me, the researcher, and the topic I had chosen for my research? The question was itself a revelation to me. But, of course, there should be a connection, was my first thought. The organizers of this panel, female scholars themselves, thought there was one, and they would bring in their own experience. I began to ponder.

I had never thought about this predilection of mine toward exposing myself to the tragedy others lived. Perhaps there was a psychological reason for it, and perhaps this panel was an opportune time for me to cast a psychoanalytic look into my past to find the answer to that question and delve even deeper, to fathom why this urge to speak out for the victims of genocide and vent my rage against the victimizer the best way I could.

My field of expertise lies in the discipline of literary criticism, and I have used that knowledge to examine the literary responses to extreme cases of violence, particularly against the Armenian people. Was it a catharsis I sought for my own painful past? Would it be logical to see myself a victim/witness of violence and seek out the reason for my academic pursuit in that relationship? My discovery was painful but absolutely revealing.

It was the third day of the New Year in 1944. My younger sister and I were playing with the new toys we had received on New Year's Eve and waiting for our father to return from work. He taught chemistry at a public high school in Tabriz. My father did not come home that night. We learned later that he had been abducted by the Soviet NKVD (*Narodnyy komissariat vnutrennikh del*, The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, i.e. the Soviet secret police that succeeded the Cheka or *Chrezvychaynaya Komissiya*, Extraordinary Commission), targeted as the Armenian nationalist opposition leader in Tabriz in then Soviet-occupied northern Iran.⁹ I was only six years old.

Needless to say, I was deeply affected by the pain of losing a loving and caring father and by the deprivations of orphanhood. I grew up with the consciousness of belonging to a victim nation. The violence committed against me and my family was not only personal but also collective, a punishment for daring to aspire to a free Armenia and rise against a powerful Soviet Union. That was not long after my people had been punished for their national and human rights aspirations and annihilated by the million in the Ottoman Empire.

This was perhaps the reason for my being drawn to the collective suffering of my people. The seeds that my father had sown in my soul, the upbringing of my mother, and the training I received as an Armenian youth in national institutions resulted in my strong adherence to Armenian national identity and my activism in preserving that identity in the Diaspora. The

leaders and educators of Armenian youth organizations in Tehran, where I grew up, told us about the Turkish atrocities and the loss of Armenian historic lands. We met survivors who, we were told, had miraculously escaped the massacres. Every year, on April 24, during the commemorative events in Tehran, I was a favorite reciter of poems lamenting the victims of the Armenian Genocide with such elegiac pathos that it made the entire audience weep with me.

With my background, I was predisposed to comprehend and absorb the psychology of the literature of atrocity. Today, as I dig deeper in the field of genocide research, I see that I defy what is believed to hold true among researchers in the field. In fact, Jacques Semelin, a Belgian political scientist, tends to prove that researchers psychologically avoid topics "that trigger horror and repulsion." He also questions how, "faced with acts of pure savagery," is it possible to prove "scientific neutrality," while "the compassion felt for the victims leads spontaneously to the condemnation of their torturers?"¹⁰ Well, I plunged into this horror-stricken topic with a vow to contain my emotions and to judge with scholarly detachment and objectivity.

The canons of psychoanalytic criticism would explain that the psychology I introduced into the literary texts I read, however, deeply affected my experience of reading and explication. Indeed, surrounded by the morbid images of victims and victimizers, the only thing that kept me going and helped me maintain my sanity was that I was able to let out the scream of my people and all

the peoples in the world who have fallen victim to callous injustice. My work was to be an outcry against man's inhumanity to man, against the diabolical schemes of men in power, of governments and political parties in power who are able to eliminate or exterminate a group of people, an ethnic minority, a political opposition, just because they think differently, look different, or pray to a different God.

With Siamanto I lived in the burning hell that the Turkish perpetrators ignited in my homeland. With Zapel Esayan I visited the ruins of the burned churches of Adana and saw half-burned corpses piled up. The Turks had set the churches on fire while the Armenians inside were praying to God for mercy. With Aram Antonian I traveled to the shores of the Euphrates and lived the agony of mothers gone mad mourning their dead children.¹¹ And I tried hard to keep my equilibrium, to analyze the text as a detached critic. I tried to explain the responses of the victims of the catastrophe in their soliloquies addressed to God, their tragic expressions, fragmented speech, and paralysis of diction, in their inability to describe their inexplicable ordeal, their strange conduct stripped of all trace of humanity. I tried to explain the efforts of the survivors to comprehend the cataclysm, to come to terms with the horrifying experience they were destined to endure, to digest it so that survival could be possible. My goal was not to prove the veracity of the Turkish atrocities. I believe that it is duly proven by undeniable facts and documents. In fact, the veracity of the Genocide was and is a given, a point

of departure in my research. I aimed to expose the human dimension of the crime.

And so I tried to understand the collective psyche of the victims and of the victimizers—in the words of the Armenian writer Hagop Oshagan, "What it was that made the Turks so much Turk."¹² I tried to have the victims address today's audience, to tell them their story, tell them the truth that would make the perpetrators' attempts at denial sound even more cynical and preposterous.

Submerged in the reality of the Armenian Genocide as I am, it is, indeed, frustrating and aggravating to see so-called "facts" and "repudiations" thrown in your face with a vicious coldness, with no respect for your people's sufferings, by so-called "objective" Western "historians" and pro-Turkish politicians as well as Turkish diplomats and the "scholars" of the Turkish official line. It is frustrating to hear the trivialization, rationalization, and "contextualization" of the Armenian "massacres" offered by the new generation of Turkish historians. And they speak of reconciliation as a solution to all conflicts and a cure to all historical wounds. When the Turks are not ready to face the past, when injustice still continues to hold so strong a grip upon the Armenian nation, when the crime is not duly recognized, how can there be reconciliation? How can Armenians think of coming to terms with their past and with the unyielding and unremorseful perpetrator of the crime?

Preoccupied with analyzing the responses of others to extreme cases of violence, I had never thought of the

effects of this intense reading on my own psyche. I began to reflect upon my own responses as I was preparing to participate in that unusual panel exploring the connection between a person's, or rather, a female academic's life experience and the doleful topic dealing with extreme cases of violence she has chosen as her field of research. The exercise proved enlightening.

Yes, this inexplicable sadness does not let go of me even in the happiest moments of my life. I feel alone even when I am surrounded by those who love me. The literature of atrocity has been holding me in its grip. After so many years, I am still not comfortable with it. Jack Danielian, a psychoanalyst, suggests that "those witnesses that have progressed beyond knowledge to psychological awareness are at increased risk themselves of acute symptoms and disabling states."¹³ Do I need a psychiatrist to reconcile me with my practice (or academic life), perhaps to change my outlook on the everyday life of my present? Israel Charny thought I did.¹⁴ I remember years ago when he was visiting our university (the University of California, Los Angeles, or UCLA), in an intimate conversation with graduate students in our department, I told him about my distress. He said that in Israel they have psychiatrists who are specially trained to help people with problems similar to mine. I have not followed his advice to get help with a psychiatrist. I want to believe that the result that I will produce with my work will cure me of my psychological tumult. I pray for a swift recovery, that is the soon-to-come completion of my work.

To wrap up this personal note, the advocates of reader-response criticism believe in the "dynamic interaction between text and reader." My life is the manifestation of that interaction. Furthermore, as the proponents of the psychoanalytic approach to literature suggest, "individual responses disclose essential psychological characteristics of the individual responding."¹⁵ It was my childhood experience, my family upbringing, and my ensuing personality that drew me toward this particular topic. It is my individual and my social identity, my emotional and intellectual relations to the texts at hand that have become the catalyst between the texts and the interpretive process with which I have engaged them. In other words, as psychoanalysts suggest, my interpretation has put "into language a relation" to the material of my research "that can never be emotionally or ideologically neutral."¹⁶ The result is the interpretively critical language that I have developed.

The result is also the emotionally brittle but strong-willed and determined person that I have become for my people as well as for my family and friends.

Notes

¹ This introspective psychoanalysis was attempted for a presentation on a panel titled "Connecting Biography and Research," as part of the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association Congress of May 25-30, 2001. I include it with some modifications in this volume in order to help my readers better understand my perspective and my work.

² The term "literature of atrocity" was coined by Lawrence Langer in reference to literature in response to the Jewish Holocaust.

³ April 24 is the day Armenians commemorate the one-and-a-half million victims of the Genocide of 1915–23 with special events, church masses, candlelight vigils, and somber memorial programs. The day is chosen to mark the date in 1915 when the arrest of the civic and religious leadership took place in Constantinople. In two days, April 23–24, some 600 intellectuals, teachers, and religious and civic leaders of the community were arrested and incarcerated. They were either executed in prison or exiled to be killed on the road. The arrest of notable men continued in Armenian towns and villages throughout the Ottoman Empire.

⁴ These interviews were assigned to me as a part of the requirements (which I exceeded in terms of the number of interviews required) to complete the Oral History course offered by Professor Richard G. Hovannisian of the UCLA History Department.

⁵ Deir el-Zor was one of the last few stops, "destinations," on the deportation route in the Syrian desert where the scant survivors of the huge numbers in the deportation caravans were gathered to be liquidated. These wretched survivors were either shot by firing squad or, to save bullets, they were dumped in a huge pit, which very often the victims themselves were ordered to dig. Then they were set on fire to burn alive. In other cases the deportees were simply abandoned in the uninhabited desert to wander and eventually perish of thirst, hunger, and disease.

⁶ Obviously, my dream was concocted based on the story Mrs. Zeneyan had told me, weeping all along and barely able to maintain her poise and composure during that interview. She was born in Malgara and was deported with her family from that westernmost town in the empire, finally to reach faraway Deir el-Zor after a long and torturous trek. She did not remember her birth date, but said she must have been seven or eight years old when the deportations began.

The children, separated from the remnants of their families, were taken away and sold to Bedouins. In 1919, some children, Hripsimé among them, were rescued by Andranik's troop. Andranik was an Armenian freedom fighter who led many battles against the Turkish army and the Kurdish assaulters of Armenian villages. After the armistice he led one of the Armenian volunteer groups who searched for Armenian children deep inside the Ottoman Empire. These children had been abducted or bought and forcibly converted

to Islam. Hripsimé still bore the tattoos of the Bedouin tribeswomen on her face and arms.

⁷ This dream of mine is an echo of an episode described by Aram Antonian in his collection of eyewitness accounts as he had experienced or were described by Naim Bey. See *Mets vochirë* (The great crime, 1921) (2nd ed., Beirut: Ghukas Karapetian, 1977). Antonian published an English translation under the title of *The Memoirs of Naim Bey* (1965). For a discussion of this episode, see Rubina Perroomian, *Literary Responses to Catastrophe: A Comparison of the Armenian and the Jewish Experience* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1993), p. 156.

⁸ See n. 1 supra.

⁹ Ironically, my father, Dr. Baghdasar (Baghdik) Minassian, was negotiating with the Soviet representatives for the safety and security of the Armenian community in Azerbaijan (the north-eastern province of Iran). The meetings with the Soviet representatives were held in that same building.

The Soviets kept my father in the basement of the Cheka building, forbidding him to communicate with the outside world. The next day, my father was taken in a boxcar over the border straight to prison in Yerevan. There he was subjected to repeated torturous interrogations and solitary confinement for six months. After a trial conducted *in absentia* in a court in Moscow, he was found guilty, labeled as an enemy of the people, and exiled to Siberia. After Stalin's death, Georgy Malenkov proclaimed a general amnesty for political prisoners of World War II. My father returned home emaciated and in poor health after spending nearly eleven years in labor camps in the tundra of northern Siberia.

¹⁰ Quoted in Wendy C. Hamblett, "Guilty of Innocence, or, Nobody Remembers the Armenians," *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 7, no. 1 (March 2007), p. 130.

¹¹ Siamanto (1878–1915) was an Armenian poet who powerfully portrayed the massacres of 1894–96 and the massacres of Cilician Armenians in 1909. He was arrested on April 24, 1915, and murdered on the road to exile. Zapel Esayan (1878–1942) was a novelist whose eyewitness accounts of the Cilician massacres of 1909 are titled *Averaknerun mej* (Amid the ruins, 1919). Aram Antonian (1875–1951) was a writer-survivor whose eyewitness accounts were published in

Ayn sev orerun (In those dark days, 1919) and *Mets vochirč* (The great crime, 1921, as referenced in n. 7 supra).

¹² Hagop Oshagan (also spelled Hakob Oshakan) frequently used the word “Turk” as a descriptive, qualifying adjective connoting the negative characteristics of a Turk. See Perroomian, *Literary Responses to Catastrophe* (1993), pp. 197–204, for Oshagan’s characterization of the Turk.

¹³ Jack Danielian, “A Century of Silence: Terror and the Armenian Genocide,” *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, vol. 70, no. 3 (2010), pp. 245–64 (quotation from p. 247).

¹⁴ Israel Charny, himself a psychologist, is a respected and widely published genocide scholar and the Executive Director of the Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide Studies in Jerusalem.

¹⁵ See Murray M. Schwartz and David Willbern, “Literature and Psychology,” in *Interrelations of Literature*, ed. Jean-Pierre Barricelli and Joseph Gibaldi (New York, NY: Modern Language Association of America, 1982), p. 214.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

Introduction

I have spent long years studying the Armenian literature of atrocity in order to be able to comprehend and explicate the Genocide, the unprecedented cataclysmic experience of the Armenian people in the Ottoman Empire, and the survivor-nation’s response to it. I have tried to develop a methodology by which this unique topical genre could be critically approached and analyzed. Embarking on this laborious endeavor, I first focused on the reactions of the first-generation survivor-writers. I intended to track down a paradigm in its ruptures and continuity that would encapsulate the efforts of this generation to conceptualize the Catastrophe in a historical context. My venture into comparative analysis, namely the parallel study of the literary responses of Armenians and Jews to the

Armenian Genocide and the Jewish Holocaust, respectively, smoothed many obstacles on my way.¹ However, all along, I was cognizant of the fact that literary responses to the Armenian Genocide do not come to an end with the reactions of the first-generation survivor-writers to their own traumatic experience, but continue to emerge in different ways in the works of successive generations. I came to realize that this phenomenon is a strong indication of an old wound not yet healed and a source of pain still unabated. Indeed, there still exists a conscious or subconscious urge to comprehend the traumatic experience of the past for the sake of a healthy future.

The reason why I chose literature, that is, artistic or creative literature, as the site and the main resource for my research, is because I believe literary art to be the form of cultural representation that provides the place where the making and remaking of the relationship of the self and the social can be recognized. Literature is a reflection of social life. As Bernard de Voto suggests,

Literature is affected by all social energies and is frequently the best and sometimes the only place

¹ This was the essence of my doctoral dissertation submitted in 1989. With changes and additions, my study was later published as a book titled *Literary Responses to Catastrophe: A Comparison of the Armenian and the Jewish Experience* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1993), under the auspices of the G. E. von Grunebaum Center for Near Eastern Studies, University of California, Los Angeles, as the eighth volume in the Studies in Near Eastern Culture and Society series.

where their actual working can be examined. It is the most dependable guide to ethics and morals, to the process of change in them, and to the implications of change.²

By the same token, in my attempt to discover the inner workings of the impact of the Armenian Genocide on the Armenian collective psyche, I chose not to focus so much on the literary quality of the responses. The aesthetic value or the beauty of the text was a secondary concern in choosing my resources. Isn't it true that, as Lawrence Langer writes concerning the Holocaust literature, "Whatever 'beauty' Holocaust art achieves is soiled by the misery of the theme"? An aesthetic assessment of the text would only prove paradoxical vis-à-vis the theme it encompasses. Furthermore, I did not view the text as an "autotelic artifact," but focused on its status as social realism, on a sort of mimesis with a direct relationship to Armenian life. I view the texts upon which I have chosen to dwell as acts of language which in themselves are signifiers of the persistence of Armenianness or the stressful struggle for its perpetuation.

All this being said and done, there was another reason, perhaps a subconscious impulse, that drove me to choose artistic literature as a resource for understanding the concept of genocide, the why and how of the

² Quoted in Bernard Cohen, *Sociocultural Changes in American Jewish Life as Reflected in Selected Jewish Literature* (Rutherford, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1972), pp. 28-9.

murder and deportation of the Armenian people, the cleansing of the Armenian homeland of its indigenous people, and the impact of it all on the victims and on the perpetrators. I have discussed the intrinsic value of Genocide fiction or symbolic poetry in the understanding of the Armenian Genocide as elucidators of universal truths that lie at the roots of historical facts, putting inconceivable realities into human perspective.³ Historians may reject the role of artistic literature in assisting readers to grasp the meaning of a historical event. For example, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi declared with dissatisfaction, "The Holocaust has already engendered more historical research than any single event in Jewish history, but I have no doubt whatsoever that its image is being shaped, not at the historian's avail, but in the novelist's crucible."⁴ Departure from historiographic methodology may be questionable for some historians, but documents, statistics, and data do not provide the full story. It is not possible to penetrate the world of the Armenian Genocide without reading the memoirs, the artistic literature, and the eyewitness

³ See Rubina Perroomian, "How To Read Genocide Literature: The Problematics; The Search for a Canon," *International Network on Holocaust and Genocide* (April 1996), pp. 22-5. I also gave a presentation on the role of artistic literature at a roundtable on "The Armenian Genocide after 95 Years: Recent Developments and Future Prospects for Research" at the annual conference of the Middle East Studies Association, San Diego, California, November 18-21, 2010.

⁴ Quoted in Lawrence L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London, UK: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 51.

accounts. Indeed, it is the artist's creative power that can capture the unthinkable horrors of genocide and bring them down to the level of the reader's imagination. In spite of Yerushalmi's dissatisfaction with the image of the Holocaust being shaped by novelists, in spite of Yehuda Bauer's warning against the Holocaust being understood through the works of imaginative writers and his labeling this kind of understanding as "metaphysical comprehension,"⁵ there is an undeniable truth in the power and intensity of the impact that a literary representation of genocide can make and the crucial role it can play. In my study of the Armenian Genocide I relied on that very role, the power of artistic literature.

The study of Armenian Genocide literature thus constitutes the main field of my research and scholarship, the essence of which I present to you with the current volume to be added to my first monograph, *Literary Responses to Catastrophe* (1993), and my second, *And Those Who Continued Living in Turkey after 1915* (2008).⁶ I hope

⁵ James E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 7.

⁶ *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) is an exploration of the effects of the Genocide and of the continuing persecutions and pressures on the life and identity of generations of Armenians in Turkey, a fluid denomination comprising those who held on to their Christian faith despite all odds, those who converted to Islam and kept faith with their new religion, and those who pretended faith in Islam and secretly practiced their Christianity (the hidden or crypto Armenians), the

the publication of the next volume dealing with the literary responses of the second- and third-generation survivor-writers will follow shortly. To complete the project I am simultaneously working on the final volume, a study of the reflections of the memory of the Armenian Genocide in Soviet Armenian literature. Here, I intend to demonstrate how, in spite of strict censorship, this forbidden subject, the historical memory of the tragic past, was subtly but unmistakably echoed in literary responses, and how the theme incorporated the memories of subsequent persecutions.

This quartet, if you will, will encapsulate my understanding of the Armenian Genocide, my approach and methodology applied to its literature. It will sum up my lifelong endeavor to shed light on this unspeakable and unforgettable collective trauma that is transformed into the struggle to confront the past, to liberate the generations of survivors of their debilitating victim psychology, and to survive as a proud, forward-looking, and free nation.

I wish you good reading, and I beg your understanding of the severity of the topic and the importance of confronting it and dealing with it.

number, essence, and overall situation of whom no one can correctly determine.

1

The Legacy of the First Generation

The first-generation survivor-writers of the 1915 Genocide did not leave a very rich literary legacy in response to what they experienced. The Armenian literati, the talented men of letters who could eternalize their first-hand experience, were liquidated at the outset.¹ Very few, who somehow escaped certain death and reached freedom in the outside world, ventured to craft art out of that cataclysmic event. The shock was so powerful and so overwhelming that some distance of time and space was needed for it to be absorbed and to allow the indescribable experience to burst out as literary

¹ As a pre-planned phase in the process of the annihilation of the Armenian population in the Ottoman Empire, the government launched the full-scale arrest, incarceration, exile, and eventual murder of the Armenian intellectuals, teachers, writers, poets, and the entire civil and religious leadership.

expression. Added to this profound psychological withdrawal was the soul-consuming struggle to adapt and adjust to the new and alien environment, to earn a living while the pain of the great loss did not seem to subside. This dispersion of the surviving literati as an aftereffect of the Genocide is in stark contrast to the outcome of the pre-1915 massacres. Although some survivors of those massacres fled the country, they were not forcibly deported or driven from their homes. The majority of them continued to live rooted in their ancestral land and were able to gradually mend their broken lives and rebuild their ruined houses. Armenian cultural life gained normalcy and continued to flourish. Absolute "social death," to use Claudia Card's terminology, was the destiny of Armenian survivors in the Ottoman Empire and in dispersion.

Despite the scarcity of literary responses to the 1915 catastrophe, however, literary responses of the pre-1915 massacres were there to fill the gap, both in terms of their cathartic value for the survivors, as a way of mourning their enormous loss, and as sources of inspiration to generate new responses. This is also to say that the Armenian Genocide literature encompasses not only what was produced after 1915 but stretches back over the tragedies of 1894-96 and forward into the modern times. To put this specific time period in its historical context, I submit—and many scholars likewise believe—that the events of 1915 did not happen in a vacuum. The attempted genocidal acts against Armenians did not begin with the massacres and deportation of 1915. In fact,

after centuries of discriminatory and oppressive treatment of the Armenian minority (*millet*) by the Ottoman sultans, murderous intentions against the Armenian population reached their apex and were manifested in the massacres of 1894-96. These were executed by Sultan Abdul-Hamid II and have come down in history as the Hamidian massacres. The next large-scale massacres occurred in April 1909, just a few months after the Young Turk revolution and their taking power over the Ottoman Empire. These massacres began in the city of Adana and spread to the surrounding towns and villages. They have come down in history as the Adana or, to give a holistic meaning to the event, the Cilician massacres.²

The deportations and massacres of 1915 actually marked the culmination of the continuing anti-Armenian policies. This time they were planned and executed by the Young Turk government led by the extremist triumvirate, Talaat, Cemal (Jemal), and Enver. The only difference with the prior massacres was in the political agenda behind this one. Whereas the pre-1915 massacres were intended to break Armenian financial power and influence in the empire; whereas they were the result of Armenians refusing to pay the heavy taxes that the

² Among many sources on the subject of the pre-1915 Armenian massacres in the Ottoman Empire, see a cursory survey in Richard G. Hovannisian, "The Armenian Question in the Ottoman Empire, 1976-1914," in *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), vol. 2, pp. 203-38.

Sublime Porte levied upon the Armenian population to subsidize the sultan's debauchery; whereas they were intended to punish Armenians by methods of looting, destroying, and killing to stifle the voice of protest and the demand for justice and fair treatment; the driving force and the secret agenda behind the events of 1915 was the final solution, extreme measures to attain the political goals of usurping the historical Armenian homeland and reaching the Turkic tribes of the East by exterminating the entire Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire. These goals were thus backed by the ideology of Pan-Turanism and the Young Turk aspiration of a Turkey for Turks only.

After the war which left the country defeated and economically devastated, the rise of Mustafa Kemal and the national movement he initiated opened a new era in Turkish history. The new regime, however, proved disastrous for the surviving Armenians who had begun to return to their homes and who hoped for a better future in their homeland. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, continued the unfinished task of the Young Turks by massacring the Armenian and Greek population of Smyrna (Izmir) and the surrounding regions in 1923. The policy of ethnic cleansing, that is, the deportation of the Armenian remnants and other Christians from the interior of the Turkish Republic, was also pursued. The policy of ethnic cleansing and Turkification continues to date.

This is the premise, based on research and intense reading of historical writings and documents, which I

have established for my study of Genocide literature beginning with the responses to the Hamidian massacres. With this premise, it is also possible to see the depth and richness of this subgenre of Armenian literature in response to the genocidal acts prior to 1915 and the reason for the abrupt halt of its flow after the final solution beginning in 1915.

Before proceeding any further, I need to clarify that my intention in this chapter is not to provide a comprehensive overview of the literary output of the writers and poets surviving the Genocide, but to trace their outlook and their philosophy of life as these were heavily influenced by their traumatic experience during the Genocide, by their futile effort to recover and leave that past behind, and by the continuing misery surrounding them and the entire surviving nation. This outlook and this philosophy of life were reflected in their scarce literary responses to the Genocide to be handed down to the next generation.³

The first echoes

The literary responses to the massacres of 1894-96 and 1909 are the first echoes of the topical subgenre that we

³ To be able to present a more comprehensive backdrop for the subject at hand and for the benefit of discussions in the following chapters, I will make references to my previous work, *Literary Responses to Catastrophe: A Comparison of the Armenian and the Jewish Experience* (1993) (henceforth *Literary Responses*), but I will mainly discuss new material that remained outside the scope of my previous work.

recognize today as Armenian Genocide literature. They resonated in short stories, novels, poetry, and dramaturgy by such authors as Siamant'o, Daniel Varuzhan, Zapel Esayan, Suren Part'evian, Vahan T'ek'eyan, Mihran Damadian (Tamatian), Hovhannes Hovhannisian, Avetis Aharonian, Arp'iar Arp'iarian, and others. In a chapter of *Literary Responses* titled "Rehearsal for Genocide," I briefly analyzed this subgenre within the context of Armenian traditional responses to national catastrophes throughout history (discussed in the first two chapters of the same book). I demonstrated the continuum and the rupture of the old paradigm; in other words, I discussed authors who have continued to use the old concepts to respond to the tragedies of their time and others who have rejected the old interpretations and searched for a new meaning and a new explanation for the unprecedented catastrophe.

To add to my aforementioned discussion, I should also like to briefly dwell upon dramaturgy as a farfetched and unlikely literary genre to lend itself to a response to the ongoing tragedy. Indeed, with no expectation of staging a play about the plight of the Armenian people in the pressurized atmosphere of intense censorship in the Ottoman Empire, and because of that, the state of the revolutionary movement, and the ongoing persecutions, Mik'ael Gurjian⁴ dared to write a one-act play titled

⁴ Mik'ael Gurjian (1879–1965) was born in Constantinople but spent most of his life in Egypt. Together with Vahan T'ek'eyan he co-founded the periodical *Shirak* in 1905. He contributed to several

Turk'ë (The toll).⁵ This play dramatized the activities of secret political organizations, mainly those of the Hnchak Party, while the massacres of 1895 were underway and Armenian leaders were being arrested in Constantinople.

Vahan Tekeyan⁶ symbolically picked up the theme, the setting, and the characters of Gurjian's play to stage a representation of Armenian life in the immediate aftermath of the Young Turk revolution of 1908. His play was titled *Mayrerë* (The Mothers).⁷ The spirit or the mood of

other papers too and authored satirical essays, short stories, and novellas. He is also known as a playwright.

⁵ Mik'ael Gurjian, *Turk'ë* (The toll), in *Mek arar: Haykakan t'aterkashar* (Anthology of Armenian one-act plays), ed. Arby Ovanessian (Paris: Armenian Theatre Association, in collaboration with "Spiurk" Publications, Yerevan, 2001), vol. 1, pp. 195–215. The play was first published in 1905 in *Shirak*, but the date of its writing is not known. Obviously, it was not staged then. It premiered ninety years later in the form of a theatrical reading in Yerevan in 1996.

⁶ Vahan T'ek'eyan, the famous poet whose responses to the 1915 Genocide will be discussed later, was one of the intellectuals who returned to Constantinople after the Young Turk declaration of *Hurriyet* (Freedom). Tekeyan was born in 1878 in Ortagiugh (Ortaköy), a suburb of Constantinople, to a well-to-do family, but as the fifth child born unwanted to an older mother, he saw no affection from his parents. It was his maternal grandmother who raised him with love and care. He was in Liverpool, England, when the massacres of 1894–96 occurred. After short stays in England, France, and Germany, he settled in Cairo, and then returned to Constantinople in 1909. When the 1915 arrests began, he happened to be in Cairo on a mission. He returned to Constantinople again after the war but left Turkey for good in 1922 to avoid the Kemalist persecutions. He died in Cairo in 1944.

⁷ Vahan Tekeyan, *Mayrerë* (The Mothers), in *Mek arar*, ed. Ovanessian (2001), vol. 2, pp. 29–44. The play was staged for the first

the play fluctuates between optimism and suspicion. On the one hand, there is trust in the Young Turk promises of freedom and equality and a better future for Armenians. It was because of this trust that many young Armenian intellectuals, activists, and civic and political leaders had returned to Turkey after having fled the country to avoid arrest and incarceration twelve years earlier. Aram, Gurjian's Hnchak protagonist in *Turke*, reappearing in Tekeyan's play, represents this state of mind. On the other hand, there is pessimism about the truth and sincerity of it all. It is not known when Tekeyan wrote this play; most likely before 1915. Arby Ovanessian's research did not uncover the exact date. The play was first published in *Bardzravank'* in 1922 but was never staged. Aside from Gurjian's *Turke*, I know of no other play entertaining a similar theme written or published before 1915.

Tekeyan's play focuses on Aram's return after twelve years of self-exile in Europe. Nonetheless, the author also tends to show the gravity of inter-party relations and the altercations among them that resulted in the assassination of Arpiar Arpiarian, one of Tekeyan's best comrades.⁸ In this atmosphere of rivalry and intolerance during the period after the 1894-96 massacres until the

time in 1996 in Yerevan, along with Gurjian's *Turke*, likewise in the form of a theatrical reading.

⁸ See Perroomian, *Literary Responses* (1993), pp. 77-8, for a detailed discussion of Arpiar Arpiarian and his novel, *Karmir zhamuts'* (The red offering), as an important contribution to the pre-1915 Genocide literature.

Young Turk revolution, however, as Tekeyan attests, Armenian life continued and to some degree even prospered. Suffering the pain of separation and yearning for self-exiled sons was the fate of poor mothers to bear, and the reason why his play was titled *The Mothers*.

Siamant'o and Varuzhan as pacesetters

The literary responses to the 1909 Cilician massacres, especially the poetic tools devised by Siamanto and Daniel Varuzhan, remained unparalleled in Armenian Genocide literature.⁹ The literary responses to the 1894-96 massacres had evolved into perfection. The initial silence, the natural response to the shock and bewilderment caused by the unexpected catastrophe, gradually broke into lamentation, marking recourse to the old poetic form proven to have cathartic qualities. Lamentation, indeed, was a tool to vent frustration and unleash the shackles of language to find, as Ulrike Bail puts it, "a textual space of survival." Then, gradually, lamentation, pathetic confessions of the inadequacy of language to do justice to the unparalleled violence and destruction, as well as of helpless struggle to depict the morbid scenes of carnage, began to give way to hopeful visions of the future. The revival of the victimized nation was underway, and its effects resounded in literature.

⁹ I discussed this in detail in a paper titled, "The Poetics of Violence in Literary Responses to the Adana Massacres," presented at the International Conference Commemorating the 100th Anniversary of the Adana Massacres, organized by the Armenian Genocide Museum, April 20-21, 2009, Yerevan.

Daniel Varuzhan had labored to concoct the language of violence, a language wrought with metaphoric images and laconic strokes of his powerful pen to encapsulate the literary image of the massacres. His two long poems, *Jardē* (The carnage, 1906) and *Hayhoyank'* (The curse, 1907), clearly show this metamorphosis.¹⁰ Siamanto, on the other hand, found a key to the impossibility of language by distancing in time, by overcoming the urge to describe the indescribable scenes of carnage, and finally, by recourse to the past. This recourse, however, was not by way of borrowing old devices such as lamentation over loss. Siamanto found new inspiration in the heroic deeds of pagan Armenia. And with renewed enthusiasm he began to laud the revolutionary acts of reprisal and armed resistance carried out by contemporary *fedayees*. *Diuts'aznoren* (Heroically, 1902) and *Dareru Vrezh* (Revenge of the centuries, 1902) represent this new direction.¹¹ Siamanto's credo, "Justice must be created and freedom fiercely seized," which resounded as a central idea in *Revenge of the Centuries*, was adopted by devotees of the Armenian armed struggle, and its powerful ring is heard to date.

¹⁰ Daniel Varuzhan, *Jardē* (1895-1896) and *Hayhoyank'*, in *Banasteghtsakan erker* (Poetic works) (Antelias, Lebanon: Daniel Varuzhan Literary Fund-1, Catholicosate of Cilicia, 1986), pp. 141-9 and 152-4, respectively.

¹¹ Siamanto, *Diuts'aznoren*, in *Amboghjakan erker* (Complete works) (Antelias, Lebanon: Daniel Varuzhan Literary Fund-8, Catholicosate of Cilicia, 1989), pp. 25-37, is a series of six poems; *Dareru Vrezh*, in *ibid.*, pp. 41-2, is the first poem of the series of poems titled *Hayordiner* (Sons of Armenians).

In such an atmosphere of revival, renewed hope, and resolve to create a better future, the Young Turk revolution of 1908 was received with enthusiasm. Equality, Brotherhood, and Justice for all, ideas adorning the pledge of the Young Turk leaders, were turned into slogans in the streets. Paradoxically, the massacre of Armenians in Adana and surrounding towns and villages within and beyond Cilicia in 1909 occurred only a few months after the reinstatement of the constitution and the proclamation of *Hurriyet* (freedom). That was a blow to the ideal of peaceful coexistence with the Turks and a detrimental shock to all literary conventions that could ever help to devise responses to the new calamity.

The road from silence to lamentation, to descriptive narrative, to the call for action to reverse the fate of the nation, reaching eventually to Hope for a better future, had hit a dead end. Standards had collapsed. Poetic expressions were once again condemned to impotency. New tools were necessary to respond to the catastrophe, that is, to digest it, explain it, and overcome its effects, so that survival would be possible. We look back today and marvel over the powerful literary responses which remained unsurpassed. The tools Siamanto and Varuzhan used and the poetic strategies they devised were armed with the power and potency to respond even to the catastrophes yet to come. At the core of these responses was a powerful masterful language, the language of violence.

The massacre of Cilician Armenians was in absolute negation of Young Turk promises, but it proved

7-57954-11



consistent with subsequent policies and practices. It is commonly believed that the massacres were instigated by reactionary forces as another manifestation of their counter-revolutionary activities. However, even if there is some truth in that, the way the Young Turk government handled the issue leaves no doubt about a conspiracy at least to continue what the reactionaries started. The government's conduct was in corroboration with its true mindset in relation to the ethnic minorities, Armenians in particular, and a contradiction to what it pretended to have espoused. Society willingly absorbed that mentality because the culture of violence was already in place. That was an intrinsic characteristic of the centuries-long Turkish-Armenian relationship which had never shown any sign of easing. The culture of violence had to find expression in language in order to prompt action. We witnessed the initial use of this language in the beginning stages of its development as manifested in Armenian literary responses to the massacres of 1894-96. That language, more powerful and intense, echoed in the poetic responses to the 1909 catastrophe.

Every one of the poems in Siamanto's *Karmir lurer barekames* (Bloody news from my friend) testifies to the power of language.¹² Metaphors and imagery come into play to shape the perpetrators' utterances and their portrayals of the crime. The language of violence plays

¹² Siamanto, *Karmir lurer barekames*, in *Amboghjakan erker* (1989), pp. 140-67. This series of poems was first published as a separate booklet in 1909.

its role to ensure the smooth operation and full participation of the populace. Then there is the binary opposition shaping the crushing, heart-rending, tragic images of the catastrophe which the executioners had accomplished. Siamanto's response reaches a meaningful synthesis: "So that people would understand / the crimes men do to men." This formulation can very well be considered the prototype of the renowned and oft-quoted later formulation of "man's inhumanity to man." Siamanto offers another poetic outburst that has endured through time to become the ultimate defiance of humanity, its principles, and its values: "Human justice / Let me spit in your face."¹³

Daniel Varuzhan's textualization of the 1909 catastrophe is more complex and abstract. In *Kilikian mokhirnerun* (To the ashes of Cilicia), to give one example, the narrator guides a stranger (*otarikan*) to the disaster-stricken land. He makes him see the wounded left dying, listen to their agonizing sighs and moans, see the unburied corpses scattered in the smoldering ruins of their homes, see the crucified men, blood running down their naked bodies into streams of blood gushing down the hill. "Behold! The Turk ignited the pyres of his amusement / Sobbing skeletons are burning grandly."¹⁴

Siamanto and Varuzhan did not survive the Genocide of 1915 to immortalize in their greatness its horrific debt as it occurred. But if we take any of the poems they

¹³ Siamanto, *Parē* (The dance), in *ibid.*, pp. 143-4.

¹⁴ Varuzhan, *Kilikian mokhirnerun*, in *Banasteghtsakan erker* (1986), pp. 155-8.

created in response to the massacres of 1909 and change the date they were written, we will have a landscape of the atrocities of the 1915 before our eyes. Indeed, these literary gems served the survivors of the 1915 Genocide to commemorate and mourn their dead, to vent their grief, anger, sorrow, and vengeance against the perpetrators.

It can be easily said that in terms of magnitude, extent, duration, and participation of the populace, the massacres of 1909 were a microcosm of the Genocide of 1915. But the literary responses to the former, the poetic tools, the language, and the intensity of images remained incomparable to the immediate responses to the 1915 Genocide. The literature created in response to the 1909 massacres became a powerful source of inspiration for new art forms to introduce the truth about the Armenian Genocide. A paradigm was built to last and assist the poets and the writers of the future in their struggle to portray the Catastrophe, what was called the 1915 Genocide of Armenians at the hands of the Turks.

Postwar Constantinople: A beacon of hope for revival?

As the war came to an end, many surviving intellectuals returned to a Constantinople that was under the occupation of the Allied Powers. They returned with a hope to play their part in reviving the Armenian remnants and restoring the erstwhile glory of Armenian life in Constantinople, the Western Armenian cultural center. The exiled patriarch, Archbishop Zaven Der (Ter) Yeghiayan, had also returned and was engaged in

reorganizing the patriarchate and its infrastructure. He spoke of "the high level of enthusiasm among the Armenians and other subject peoples" to build anew when he arrived in Constantinople in February of 1919.¹⁵

The founding of a new periodical, titled *Bardzravank'*, (High monastery) by such intellectuals as Kostan (Gostan) Zarian, Hagop Oshagan, Vahan Tekeyan, Shahan Berberian, and Gegham Gavafian was a decisive effort toward the revival of Armenian cultural life and national spirit. An elaborate manifesto established *Bardzravank'*'s aim to evolve into a new literary movement to face the past and plan for the future. Kostan Zarian,¹⁶ a co-founder of the *Mehian* movement in Constantinople in 1914,¹⁷ assumed the role of editor of the new periodical. Meanwhile, Tekeyan was publishing the periodical *Zhoghovurdi dzayn*. (People's voice).

¹⁵ Zaven Der Yeghiayan, Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople (1913–22), *My Patriarchal Memoirs*, trans. Ared Misirliyan (Barrington, Rhode Island: Mayreni, 2002), p. 175. This work was originally published in Armenian under the title, *Patriark'akan hushers, Vaverager ev Vkayut'iunner* (My Patriarchal memories: Documents and testimonies), in Cairo, Egypt, in 1947.

¹⁶ Zarian had evaded arrest and execution in April of 1915 by escaping to Bulgaria.

¹⁷ The group that initiated the *Mehian* movement intended to rouse the Armenian nation from the lethargy borne of centuries of darkness in the Ottoman Empire. The means was to be the revival of literature, taking inspiration from the glorious pre-Christian past. The group had chosen their name in reference to the pagan past, *Mehian* meaning "heathen temple." Their movement also aimed to purge Armenian literature of foreign influences and bring it closer to the spirit of the race.

The daily *Chakatamart* (Combat) also continued to reach Armenian homes.¹⁸ Hagop Oshagan's¹⁹ immediate responses to the 1915 massacres in five stories were published as feuilletons in the paper between January 18 and October 18, 1920.²⁰ These stories embody Oshagan's view of the events of 1915. Attempting to assume the role of a detached observer, he sketches a multifaceted picture of the humongous crime committed by "humans against humans" (another variation or prototype of "man's

¹⁸ This paper was launched in Constantinople on November 20, 1918. The first issues were symbolically titled *Ardaramart* (Struggle for justice); that was changed to *Ariamart* (Struggle of the brave); and the last issues were titled *Chakatamart*. The paper continued publication until 1923.

¹⁹ Oshagan (né K'iufechian) was already known as an educator and the author of critical reviews and short stories. He was residing in Constantinople when the arrests of Armenian intellectuals began in 1915. Kiufechian, as he was then known, escaped by constantly changing his hiding place, finally reaching Bulgaria after the war.

This revered intellectual had a wretched childhood. Born in 1883 to a poor family in Brusa, he lost his father at the age of five. His widowed mother worked in a silk spinning mill to support her children. He remembered his childhood ruefully, exclaiming, "O my barefoot, hungry, and miserable childhood." He returned to Constantinople in 1920, only to leave again to escape the Kemalist threat. Eventually he settled in Jerusalem. He died in Aleppo in 1948 during a visit to the Armenian community, then consisting mostly of survivors of the 1915 deportations.

²⁰ Oshagan's plan to publish these stories in a separate volume did not materialize. Much later, Poghos Snpian collected, edited, and published them under the title of *Kayserakan hagh't'ergut'iun* (Imperial song of triumph) (Beirut: Altapress, 1983), which is also the title of the last story. For a detailed analysis of this work by Oshagan, see Perroomian, *Literary Responses* (1993), pp. 177-92.

inhumanity to man"). Oshagan was experimenting with a new approach to artistic representation of the crime and about the crime, that is, a literary response that required a physical, temporal, and emotional distance. Moreover, by adopting various and sometimes unusual vantage points and variegated contexts, Oshagan tried to present a picture as complete as an unimaginable atrocity could lend itself to. He continued this approach in his later literary creations and inspired future writers in their attempts to embody the Genocide in various genres of artistic expression.

Shant (Lightning) weekly also continued publication, with Meruzhan Barsamian as its editor-in-chief. It mostly published articles and artistic literature in prose and poetry lamenting the tremendous loss and the martyred intellectuals in the very near past.²¹

Cultural activities were indeed escalating in Constantinople. Schools were reopened. Many survivors, stranded in the interior of the country, were finding their way to Constantinople. It was a huge task for community leaders in the city to shelter these refugees, mostly widows and children, and provide them with a scant living until something permanent could be arranged. Several organizations and committees were formed to attend to the needs of these refugees and collect Armenian orphans still wandering in the interior, or

²¹ It is beyond the scope of this study to present a thorough account of the Armenian press in Constantinople. The above-mentioned periodicals are only cited as examples to demonstrate the ongoing process of cultural revival.

remaining captive in Muslim households, or being held in Turkish orphanages. Patriarch Zaven Der Yeghiayan listed the orphanages set up in and around Constantinople and run by Armenian organizations.²² The decision was made to levy a tax on those who had some revenue in order to help the dislocated refugees and try to return them to their homes in the provinces. It was named the "Fatherland Tax" because it was meant for the repopulation of Western Armenia, or Hayastan.

Mushegh Ishkhan, whose literary responses will be discussed later, remembers the remnants of his family reaching Constantinople together with another group of refugees. They were placed in the classrooms of a deserted Armenian school in the suburb of Guru-Ch'eshmé. As the number of arriving refugees increased, Mushegh recounts, the rooms became more and more crowded. Each family occupied a small area of a room, deprived of the most basic hygienic requirements, living in abject poverty, longing for a bowl of hot porridge. The special committee in charge of refugees arranged for the refugee children to attend school in the Ortagiugh (Ortaköy) quarter of Constantinople. This was how young Mushegh began his formal education as a kindergarten student.

Postwar Constantinople was a kaleidoscope of the diversity and incompatibility of Armenians, remnants of

²² For the list of these orphanages and the painstaking process of collecting orphans, see Der Yeghiayan, *My Patriarchal Memoirs* (2002), pp. 178–88. For details of the activities of the Armenian organizations, see *ibid.*, pp. 176–7.

the Genocide mixed with locals who had mostly avoided deportation, and the school in Ortagiugh was a microcosm of the kaleidoscope. The local students simply did not want refugee children in their class. They were filthy and dressed in rags; they came to school barefoot and contaminated with lice.²³ Sometimes repugnance was expressed loudly and blatantly. Then the teacher had to intervene and inspire compunction in the local children by telling them about the ordeal these poor kids had endured and the miserable conditions they were living in. But the class and cultural differences were striking. The erstwhile clash between *Polsets'is* and *Gavarats'is* (i.e. the Armenians of Constantinople and those who came from the provinces) was renewed.

Along with the cultural revival in Constantinople, theatrical activities also resumed. Groups were formed to stage plays without fear of censorship, with famous actors such as Vahram P'ap'azian and Neshan Peshikt'ashlian taking part. For example, Arpiarian's *Karmir zhamuts* (The red offering) was converted into a play by Vahan Tekeyan and Suren Partevian and staged in 1920. The piece depicted the clash of mentalities in the period prior to the 1894–96 massacres. It tended to show support and encouragement of the newborn Armenian revolutionary movement, whereas conservatism and clinging to the status quo and servitude toward the Turkish rulers was the norm. Through Tekeyan's efforts,

²³ Mushegh Ishkhan, *Mnas barov mankut'iun* (Farewell childhood) (Beirut: Hamazkayin, 1974), p. 98.

the House of Armenian Arts was founded to promote graphic, literary, and theatrical arts.

The pre-1915 Armenian political parties also began to reorganize themselves. Constantinople became the scene of a historical merger. The Armenakans, Reformed Hinchakists, and Sahmanadir Ramkavars joined together to form the *Ramkavar Azatakan Kusakts'ut'iun* (the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party, ADL) in 1921.

Hopes were high. Constantinople offered a promising milieu for the continuation of Armenian life under the protection of the Allied Powers. The military tribunals of 1919-20 and the arraignment of Turkish war criminals, the condemnation and sentencing of those responsible for the Armenian massacres and deportations, albeit *in absentia* and with no guarantee of execution, inspired hope for the future.

But enthusiasm and excitement were not able to camouflage the painful reality that was gradually engulfing the city. Intellectual ruin and the smoldering fire of the holocaust permeated the city. Constantinople could never be the same for Armenians because, as Kostan Zarian maintained, it was cut off "from its pure, original source." The inspiration coming from the Armenian masses in the interior of the Ottoman Empire, or the heart and soul of Western Armenia, was eradicated. Zarian eloquently described the Armenian community of Constantinople at the time as the waters of a fountain, away from its source, that "sometimes form small, stagnant pools in valleys. They seem to flourish and give life to a new vegetation, creating a new

landscape. But all they can offer are occasional reflections of the moon and the croaking of a love-smitten frog."²⁴ Zarian's disappointment and frustration with Armenian life in Constantinople was shared by other Armenian intellectuals of the time who had been enthusiastically engaged in the revival of Armenian life in the city. Zarian viewed the Armenian nation having "always been victims. Victims of unfavorable circumstances, elemental forces, and events over whose evolution we have had no control" (6). The vision of renewed Armenian life in Constantinople which these intellectuals had fostered was shattered. As Zarian put it, *Bardzravank* had become "an observation post in a burning forest.... Everything is dying" (22). Efforts to forget the past and carry on living a normal life had proven futile. The Armenian intellectual in Constantinople was faced with the ugly reality of assailing memories that refused to be harnessed and fit into the framework of creative work. "Our loss is so enormous that it is impossible to write about it. We all have this great desire to forget. Our yesterdays are filled

²⁴ Gostan Zarian, *The Traveller & His Road*, trans. Ara Baliozian (New York: Ashod Press, 1981), p. 10. Subsequent page numbers cited in parentheses refer to this edition. The Armenian original, *Ants'ordē ev ir chamban*, encompassed Zarian's diary which he began recording in Constantinople in 1922 and which covers the years until 1925. It was published in serial form in *Hairenik'* between 1926 and 1928.

The Traveller & His Road is a detailed description of many hardships Zarian experienced after fleeing Constantinople and taking refuge in Soviet Armenia. After three years, disillusioned by the regime, he got out and began his life as an exile in Europe and America.

with blood and fire, our todays with uncertainty, and our tomorrows remain shrouded in mystery" (20). In 1949, after the horrors of the Jewish Holocaust, Theodor Adorno was to observe that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric." He distilled the problem that Armenian writers were experiencing a quarter of a century earlier: the impossibility of creating art out of a cataclysm, especially with the tools of yesteryear.

Post-WWI history took yet another turn for the worse for Armenians. Constantinople was in turmoil again. The temporary peace established by the presence of the Allied Powers was jeopardized by their hasty flight under the threat of the approaching Kemalist army. The danger of a Turkish occupation of the city drove many of the inhabitants and the newly settled refugees to flee the country. The Kemalist army had swept the interior and was at the door of Constantinople. The Turkish mob was in fury. Patriarch Zaven testified, "In November 1922, a terrified flight started out of the country. The Armenians of Constantinople, who had been spared the deportation, were now caught up in a wave of terror, and they started emigrating abroad...."²⁵ Orphanages were being transferred out of the country as well.

In the period between 1922 and 1923, the return of Turkish power and the birth of the Republic of Turkey with Mustafa Kemal as its founder and first president became a reality. Fearing a new wave of arrests and persecution, Armenian intellectuals left Constantinople,

²⁵ Der Yeghiayan, *My Patriarchal Memoirs* (2002), p. 240.

carrying with them the memory of the glorious city that had nurtured and inspired many of them and had been their only home. Vahan Tekeyan epitomized this feeling by eulogizing the beauty of the city, expressing the pain of separation and the longing for his hometown to which he had no hope to ever return:

How familiar, how near, how out of reach,
never to open again with my morning's eyes.
I am homesick for the sight of you,

city that opened my first light, at birth.
Must we remain strangers—I
With no right to be buried in your earth?²⁶

Armenian life in Constantinople slid into stagnation. The Armenian population, subjected to renewed discrimination and persecution, began a steady decline in numbers and in intellectual and institutional vitality. The city also lost its traditional role of patronizing and inspiring Armenians abroad and now further scattered throughout the world.

²⁶ Vahan Tekeyan, *Bolis* (Constantinople, 1924), in *Sacred Wrath: The Selected Poems of Vahan Tekeyan*, trans. Diana Der Hovanessian and Marzbed Margossian, with the original Armenian texts (New York: Ashod Press, 1982), p. 35. In another poem titled *Uskutar* (*Scutari*, 1925), *ibid.*, p. 37, Tekeyan pictured his hometown, a suburb on the Asian side of Constantinople, and with similar longing confessed that he had left his heart buried there.

Against assimilation: The beginning of a continuous struggle in the new Diaspora

A new and painful reality was in the making, a new kind of Diaspora and a new struggle to cling to the Armenian identity without the support of and the ties to the homeland and the former centers of Armenian intellect and culture. Did the struggle prove successful? Hagop Oshagan was pessimistic. Writing in the 1930s, he stated, "Paris, Cairo, Boston, Beirut, Aleppo, and Jerusalem are centers of destruction and assimilation." Curiously, however, he concluded his assessment with an unrealistic expectation of Armenian writers. He believed they could help if they dealt "with the question of assimilation honestly...."²⁷

The concept of Diaspora, of course, was not new to Armenians. Many were poets and writers who were engaged in literary activities away from the homeland, away but always near since the bridges had not yet been burned and the option to return was always open. The Diaspora was actually a window on the world-culture, new schools of thought, and new literary directions.

The Genocide of 1915 cancelled all existing conventions, meanings, and a priori assumptions attributed to the concept of Diaspora. Cut off from the homeland and deprived of a collective national existence, Diasporan Armenians struggled to survive and

²⁷ Hagop Oshagan, *Hamapatker arevmtahay grakanut'ian* (Panorama of Western Armenian Literature), vol. 2 (Jerusalem: St. James Press, 1953), p. 443 fn.

perpetuate themselves as a nation in exile, hence the new conceptualization of the Diaspora denoting an atmosphere and a meaning and imposing a structure different from the old. Diaspora became a predicament conducive of a particular literary milieu with particular social, political, and cultural determinants reacting on the artist's individuality, intellect, and creative mind.

The Genocide of 1915 made the loss of homeland a reality. Armenian survivors could not expect to return to their homes. The euphoria of revival in Constantinople died down. Moreover, the short-lived independence of Armenia in the easternmost corner of historic Armenia was no more, and an iron curtain separated Soviet Armenia from Armenians outside.²⁸ Soviet Armenia, this

²⁸ Many geopolitical factors, such as the collapse of Tsarist Russia, the defeat of the Ottomans, the favorable stance of the Allied Powers, the courageous defense and victory of Armenian troops in Russian Armenia (southern Caucasus) against the encroaching Turkish army, and the overall political situation in the Caucasus, offered an opportune moment for Armenians to declare independence. In fact, in May of 1918, the Georgians, the Caucasian Turks (Tatars), and the Armenians of the Caucasus declared independence; three republics, namely the Georgian, the Azerbaijani, and the Armenian, were established. The first two were Sovietized in the spring of 1920. The Republic of Armenia resisted longer but eventually crumbled under the Bolshevik-Kemalist conspiracy and joint military campaign. Its borders shrank and the remnant of the Republic of Armenia was Sovietized on December 2, 1920. The long decades of hope, aspiration, and relentless struggle ended in failure and frustration out of which the post-Genocide Diaspora was born.

Hagop Oshagan explained this sensation as "being so close to freedom, even having touched it, and yet finding ourselves thrown out of our land, abandoned out there to die." See Oshagan,

small vestige of the historic Armenian homeland where Armenian existence still carried on, could make a difference. She could keep the fire burning in the hearts of those who struggled to keep the Diasporan communities together and resist assimilation and the loss of ethnic identity. She did not. A different agenda was set for her by the Soviet leaders in Moscow.

Ruben Darbinian, the editor-in-chief of *Hairenik*²⁹ monthly, regarded the Soviet regime in Armenia as an evil imposing a totally anti-nationalistic ideology upon the Armenian people and deliberately severing their ties with Diasporan Armenians who did not share the Marxist ideology of internationalism. Despite all this, he advocated a normal relationship between the two for the sake of the development of Armenian culture and nationhood. That kind of relationship, he believed, would remedy the Diasporan Armenian intelligentsia's deprivation and yearning to see and feel Soviet Armenia as their homeland.²⁹ But that did not happen either.

Vkayut'iun mē (A testimony) (Aleppo: Nairi Press, 1946), p. 93. This piece was written on the occasion of Andranik Tsarukian's poem titled *T'ught' ar Erevan* (Letter to Yerevan), which in turn was written in response to a provocative poem by the Soviet Armenian poet, Gevorg Abov, titled *Menk' ch'enk' moṛats'el* (We have not forgotten). Both Tsarukian's and Abov's poems are included in Oshagan's *Vkayut'iun mē*. For further discussion of Tsarukian's *Letter*, see chapter 2 below, pp. 143-5 and n. 73.

²⁹ Darbinian's long article, titled *Hay k'aghak'akan mtk'i degerumner* (The quests of Armenian political thought), was published in twelve parts in *Hairenik*, vol. 1, nos. 1-12 (1922).

Hagop Oshagan and many other like-minded intellectuals were targeted by the Soviet Armenian literati for their outspoken criticism of Soviet treatment of the Armenian Diaspora and its leaders. The letter-article Oshagan sent to *Nor Kir* (*Nor Gir*), an Armenian periodical published in New York, explained:

Each Armenian outside of Armenia is a victim. It is a crime to keep an Armenian out of his homeland, for every Armenian outside of Armenia is lost to the nation. This is my bitterness against [Soviet] Armenian writers who in the ecstasy of their victory showed no sympathy for our misfortune. What did they do? They antagonized and even threatened to destroy a mass of at least a hundred thousand, whose sin was their love for their people. Dashnak, Hinchak, Ramkavar, or Communist, these are only names. Deep down an Armenian is always an Armenian.³⁰

A nation was driven out of its homeland and its ethnic characteristics were transported abroad. To what extent was it possible to adhere to those characteristics? Were they essential in the making of the new Armenian identity?

Levon Shant pondered this issue as early as 1922 when the danger of the assimilation of the Armenian Diasporan communities was beginning to press. This renowned Armenian writer, who happened to be in Europe during the Genocide, had returned to the newly

³⁰ This letter-article, dated April 23, 1947, was published in *Nor Kir* after Oshagan's death, under the title *Oshakani khosk'ē mahen heto* (Oshagan's words post mortem). See *Nor Kir*, no. 1 (37), 1948, p. 11.

established independent Republic of Armenia to play an important role in her political life. After the sovietization, he settled in Beirut and lived the rest of his life as a sought-after writer and educator.

As an astute observer, he saw the vulnerability of Western Armenian refugees. They were defenseless against the waves of assimilation into the mainstream societies of the host countries; less so in the Middle East, more so in the West. In an article titled *Inch' ē azgut'iunē* (What is nationhood), Shant engaged in a philosophical inquiry into the nature of nationalism and analyzed factors that lent each nation its unique character.³¹ He theorized the status of a nation driven from its homeland and noted that in this situation ethnic characteristics were transported abroad. With the passage of time, however, and because of mixed marriages and the unavoidable influences of the culture of the host country, these characteristics were defused. Shant believed that as long as mixed marriages occurred only occasionally, the ethnic group was segregated, and the host community viewed the group as outsiders or, at best, visitors, assimilation was minimal. Under these circumstances, if ethnic institutions remained immune from change and outside influence, the group was ghettoized, and the prospect of the community perpetuating on its own in a healthy process was dim. In normal situations, when racial or religious hatred or extreme prejudice was not an

³¹ Levon Shant, *Inch' ē azgut'iunē* (What is nationhood), serialized in *Hairenik* monthly, vol. 1, no. 2 (1922), to vol. 1, no. 4 (1923).

issue, mixed marriages became unavoidable; the more frequent their occurrence, the quicker the process of assimilation and loss of identity.

This analysis surely reflected the fear and anxiety of the Armenian intelligentsia in view of the sad reality enveloping Armenians in Diaspora. But whence should the solutions come, and what were the means to "correct the nation as a social organism" and find a happy medium? Shant had no practical suggestions. Nevertheless, he continued in an optimistic vein, advocating that multinationalism was the law of nature, and that the evolution of humanity was not leading toward one nation, one language, and one civilization. On the contrary, he believed that the trend was the multiplication of nations and mutual tolerance among a throng of nations, languages, and cultures in the world.³² The struggle was to find a healthy medium, and that was the only light at the end of the tunnel.

Post-1915 Armenian communities in the Diaspora varied significantly with respect to the degree of

³² For a broader discussion of this issue, see Rubina Perroomian, "Hairenik: A Periodical in the Heart of New England," in *The Armenians of New England*, ed. Marc A. Mamigonian (Belmont, Massachusetts: Armenian Heritage Press, 2004), pp. 114-36. The article highlights the important role *Hairenik* played, not just as another Armenian periodical in the Diaspora, but as an institution that undertook the difficult task of leading the struggle for the preservation and perpetuation of Armenian identity, culture, and national aspirations. Especially in the first decade after its inception in 1922, *Hairenik* opened its pages to articles discussing Armenian national concerns and reflected the birth pangs of the new Diaspora in the making.

importance attributed to ethnic identity vis-à-vis the mainstream society. Already established communities in Middle Eastern countries, with symbiotic minority-majority relationships (in terms of ethnicity, religion, language, culture, etc.) already in place, absorbed the newcomers, the survivors of the Genocide, and facilitated their return to normal life. This process was more difficult and more complex in Europe and America. Naturally, the intellectuals, themselves newcomers who needed help and solace to overcome their predicament, took the lead, and the periodicals, whether those continuing from the pre-1915 era or the new ones, became the agents of this uphill battle. They echoed the ongoing situation and deliberated strategies to reach the goal of effectively combating assimilation and keeping the fire of Armenianness going in the new generation.

Robert Park, author of *The Immigrant Press and Its Control*, pondered the purpose and the *raison d'être* of the immigrant press and concluded that it was "interesting from many points of view, but mainly from the light which its history and its contents throw upon the inner life of immigrant peoples and their efforts to adjust themselves to the new cultural environment."³³ With that premise, Bernard Cohen suggested that the Yiddish press in the United States generally did just that for the Jewish immigrant, that is, "accelerating his process of Americanization," constantly disseminating

³³ Robert E. Park, *The Immigrant Press and Its Control* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1922), p. xix.

love, appreciation, and esteem for his newly adopted land.³⁴ This undertaking, of course, did not preclude an emphasis on Jewish cultural life and the preservation of ethnic identity among Jewish immigrants. The Armenian press, especially in the Western world, did not aim to accelerate the process of acculturation and adaptation of the new Armenian settlers. On the contrary, it strengthened their bonds with the lost homeland and the memory of the traumatic past.

The year 1922—the same year that *Hairenik* monthly began publishing in Boston, Massachusetts—was significant as the close of a particularly turbulent era in Armenian history and the beginning of a new start for Diasporan Armenian communities. Meanwhile, a synthesis of all the efforts underway, especially in the Western Diaspora, could be either assimilation or ghettoization, with an ethnic identity either reconciled or in conflict with the mainstream. The role of *Hairenik* in reaching or rather shaping that individual or collective synthesis was undeniable. Yet, paradoxically, it pursued the goal of binding Diasporan Armenians to the past, to the Armenian homeland, which for many had become a vision, a source of pride and pain at the same time.

It should be noted that *Hairenik* was not bound to a locale but was distributed and read around the globe, reaching almost every Armenian community in the world. Its contributors, likewise, were not limited to

³⁴ Bernard Cohen, *Sociocultural Changes in American Jewish Life as Reflected in Selected Jewish Literature* (Rutherford, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1972), pp. 69–70.

American Armenians alone; intellectuals from all over the world had their articles, essays, poems, and memoirs published in *Hairenik*. A similar role was played by *Haratch*, a periodical published in Paris. Altogether, in the first decades after 1915, the Armenian press, especially in the U.S. and France, was most active in publishing worldwide responses to the recent catastrophe.³⁵

Attachment to the past was no doubt instrumental in perpetuating the sense of belonging to a spiritual Armenia and strengthening the emotional side of being an Armenian. Discussing the early Diasporan (post-Genocide) communities and cultural practice inside them, Lorne Shirinian points to "political clubs and their cultural organizations, the Armenian churches and their organizations, compatriotic societies, and Armenian schools" as the "sites of memory and cultural practice" and "symbolically the homeland for their members." He emphasizes the Armenian language as "the substitute for not having a country," and for that reason, having taken on "spiritual proportions." Narrowing his focus down to North America, he adds, "accompanying this model of North America has been a cult of nostalgia and lament...."³⁶ Here I would like to add that Armenian

³⁵ Literary and cultural activities in general picked up in French Armenian communities a decade after 1915. The revival of the Middle Eastern Armenian communities occurred later.

³⁶ Lorne Shirinian, *Writing Memory: The Search for Home in Armenian Diaspora Literature as Cultural Practice* (Kingston, Ontario: Blue Heron Press, 2000), pp. 171-2.

periodicals in most of the Armenian communities—in terms of both the literature they disseminated and the group discussions and intellectual deliberations that took place in their offices—served as multiple sites of memory and cultural practice which I demonstrate in this study to be important agents in shaping and reshaping the Diasporan Armenian identity, at least in the life of early Diasporan communities.

Emphasizing the good and the noble in the Armenian past encouraged pride in being an Armenian. In short, patriotism was instilled to stand as a bulwark against assimilation. Writings geared toward this objective consisted of accounts of heroic struggle against Turkish persecutions and massacres. *Vani ink'napashitpanut'iunē* (The self-defense of Van), by Onnik Mkhitar'arian, is one of the best examples.³⁷ Typically, at the end of the piece, the author expresses hope that in the current dire situation in Diasporan communities, reading about such heroic deeds will not only revive the memory of our loved ones, but also encourage those who have lost hope in the future and those who have lost faith in our people's spirit to

³⁷ Onnik Mkhitarian's eyewitness account of the defense of Van was published in installments in *Hairenik* from vol. 2 (1924), to vol. 3, no. 7 (1925). This long essay/memoir has an interesting history. Mkhitarian published parts of it in various periodicals in Armenia (Russian or Eastern Armenia) as early as 1916, and the last part in Baku in 1917. After the Baku massacres and the mass Armenian exodus of 1918, the manuscript was lost until Zapel Esayan found it in Baku and brought it out. It was several years later that Mkhitarian finally got hold of the manuscript and published it in toto in *Hairenik*.

persevere. There are many examples, long and short testimonies, some of which were later published as freestanding volumes, while others remain buried in the pages of old issues of *Hairenik*.³⁸

Biographical essays on important figures of the recent past, men such as Vramian, Aram, K'ristap'or Mik'aelian, Simon Zavarian, Serob Aghbiur, and others, were also published. These stories of dedication and heroism were likewise geared to inspire national pride and elevate the Armenian spirit in the new generation. To this category belong the memoirs of devotees of the Armenian national struggle, men like Ruben (Ruben Ter Minasian) in *Hay heghap'okhakani mē hishataknerē* (The memoirs of an Armenian revolutionary), which was published in *Hairenik* long before it appeared in a multi-volume book, or Ruben Khan-Azat, one of the founders of the Hnchak Party, in *Hay heghap'okhakani husherits'* (From the memoirs of an Armenian revolutionary).³⁹ These articles aimed to educate, transmit knowledge on issues of Armenian concern, teach the new generation about the historical events of the recent past, transfuse the

³⁸ Siruni, *Azatamarti serundē* (The generation of the struggle for freedom), in *Hairenik*, vol. 2, nos. 3–12 (1924) (with intervals), and Artashes Babalian, *Ējer Hayastani ankakhut'ian patmut'iunits'* (Pages from the history of Armenian independence) and *Mi tari gerut'ian mej* (One year in captivity), in *Hairenik*, vol. 1, nos. 8–9 (1923), and vol. 2, nos. 7–8 (1924), respectively, belong to this category.

³⁹ For Ruben Ter Minasian, see *Hairenik*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1922), to vol. 9, no. 11 (1931), with long intervals; and for Ruben Khan-Azat, see *Hairenik*, vol. 5, no. 8 (1927), to vol. 7, no. 7 (1929), also with intervals.

righteousness of the Armenian cause and national struggle, and finally and more importantly, help strengthen the element of Armenianness in the duality of the Diasporan Armenian identity.

Oshagan was well aware of the role of the periodical press. Asserting that literary movements are generally initiated by intellectuals gathered around a literary journal—as was the case of *Mehian* in Constantinople, *Menk'* in Paris, and *Ahekan* in Beirut—he contended that many others had been unable to perform that role. He expected them to reflect the community's literary taste or, more importantly, work toward refining that taste, giving direction to art, and developing new sets of critical and aesthetic values and standards. In a letter to the editors of *Nor Kir*, he characterized the journal as too modern and mundane. He blamed American cultural influences for dictating the journal's direction.⁴⁰

More than any other journal, however, Oshagan focused on *Hairenik*, with high expectations of the role it could assume. Especially during the 1920s and 30s, the period of the inception of the new Diasporan literature, *Hairenik* became the repository of memoirs and eye-witness accounts of the survivors. Oshagan considered these writings closer to documentation and lacking in literary quality. Observing from an aesthetic point of view and overlooking their value as elucidators of the history of the Armenian Genocide, he further asserted

⁴⁰ Beniamin Nourigian (Nurikian) cited this letter in an editorial he wrote on the occasion of the journal's fifth anniversary. See *Nor Kir*, no. 1 (21), 1944.

that such writings distort the formidable and heart-rending beauty of the awesome reality. He cited Andranik's memoir as an example of worthless literature marked by a lack of imagination. The author, he explained, had simply recorded an event instead of creating a work of art out of it.⁴¹

Oshagan's observation was to the point. The first stages in the inception of post-Genocide Diasporan literature are characterized by an indiscriminate outpouring of pathetic accounts and lamentations. However, this tendency can be regarded as the genuine urge to set the record straight on the years of turmoil and extreme suffering. This was perhaps the most feasible direction the literature of a nation of victims could take. The fact is that very few of these stories are read today. Obviously, the periodicals of the time caved into the demands and the mediocre tastes of their readers instead of trying to refine and elevate their judgment of art. The element of the reader's response which, based on Heidegger's phenomenology, was developed into a discipline in literary criticism and which tended to enrich the text by a multiplicity of interpretations, apparently had a different meaning for Armenians. For a variety of reasons, such as financial dependence and the quest for popularity, the average reader's views were lent such an exaggerated importance as to become a dictating force and an imposition on literature. Aesthetic judgment

acquired a Platonic concept of objective worth—in this case, objective worth was translated into the reader's convenience and priority to see his own image, his pains and anxieties, reflected in literature in the most simplistic way. There was a conscious effort to bring literature down to the level of the conceptual horizon of the average reader.

Articles frankly promoting nationalism and adherence to Armenian values, the past, and the image of a non-existent homeland could not be as effective as artistic literature indirectly and subtly communicating these ideas. Literature was regarded as a means, but in this domain, too, there were different approaches. First, the works of Armenian poets and writers who fell victim to the Genocide of 1915 were published in abundance together with introductions to their life and work. The aim of this strategy was twofold. On the one hand, it tended to sustain and strengthen ties with the Armenian past, and on the other hand, it kept alive that rich legacy from which new shoots could grow.

This approach, however, did not escape criticism. In an extended, three-part article titled *Tirojē aygiin mej* (In the proprietor's garden), Neshan Destegul argued against the fetishization of the old generation and the trend to try to emulate, in particular, those who had fallen victim to the Genocide or those who had survived and were now dominating the literary milieu in the

⁴¹ Hagop Oshagan, *Hamapatker arevmtahay grakanut'ian* (Panorama of Western Armenian Literature), vol. 6 (Beirut: Hamazkayin, 1968), pp. 321–2 fn.

Diaspora.⁴² The new generation, he stated, should feel the tempo of the cataclysmic changes in Armenian life, changes that were causing the huge flux and displacement of the survivors and bringing about the formation of a new concept of the Armenian Diaspora. Instead of glorifying our merits as a nation and exaggerating the genius of our ancestors, he wrote, we should realistically evaluate our strengths and weaknesses and probe our potentials.

To assist and encourage new literary expressions, Levon Shant made suggestions and discussed literary genres and themes, as well as structure, form, and content, and the interrelationship among them. With articles spanning every issue of *Hairenik* during 1927, he provided valuable insight for the potential artist and critic.

Fostering contemporary literature in the hope of encouraging young writers and assisting the birth of a new direction true to the new environment constituted a second strategy in the ongoing Diasporan struggle. Analyzing the merits of this literature, however, Destegul did not hesitate to criticize those who textualized and dramatized the past life of Armenia and created an overblown, fantastic, or picturesque recollection of that enviable past. In his view there were no new writers who had anything new to say, who were not repeating what

⁴² Neshan Destegul, *Tirojē aygiin mej*, in *Hairenik* monthly, vol. 3, nos. 9, 10, and 12 (1925). A noted intellectual of the time, Destegul was frequently published in *Hairenik* newspaper. He also served as the paper's editor for a period of time.

had been said before in the same form that had been used over and over before.

Destegul believed that human suffering is a unique source and potentially the richest source from which true art is born. And he was waiting for that true art to arise in response to the collective tragedy of the past, as a guiding light to survive and transcend the past.⁴³ Conversely, Ruben Darbinian, the first and longtime editor of *Hairenik*, blamed the enormity of that cataclysmic experience for the absence of true art.

Oshagan treated the subject from another angle. He thought pre-Genocide norms and traditions were unsustainable in post-Genocide literature. Mushegh Ishkhan's and Hamastegh's reminiscences of village life in the lost paradise could not be considered part of Diasporan literature, he explained, if they consisted of sentimental pathos and nostalgic exclamations. To prove his point, he exemplified his own lengthy descriptions and even entire novels dedicated to pre-Genocide Armenian life. Those pieces, he reasoned, had ethnologic and demographic value without sacrificing their literary quality. Discussing this specific subject matter, Oshagan wrote,

In 1920 no Armenian town or village existed anymore. A survivor-writer could easily make a name for himself by realistically fictionalizing the story of his survival. No one ventured to do that.... Hamastegh

⁴³ For the above discussion, see Peroomian, "Hairenik: A Periodical" (2004).

became famous with a few stories for he had put this intuition to work.⁴⁴

Many, like Vahram Sofian or Alexander Glchian, wrote nostalgic literature permeated with pathetic sentimentalism which, according to Oshagan, was degrading to literature and stemmed not from their yearning for the homeland but from the inferiority complex that some Armenian writers experienced in foreign, unfamiliar environments. These writers "tried to transform their sense of inferiority into another painful domain, that of sentimental yearning in literature, and from that point it is not difficult to pass on to the poetry of homesickness," which Oshagan considered a literary affliction.⁴⁵ He deemed romantic pathos, sentimentalism, and homesick outbursts to be simply non-conforming with the prevailing trends in world literature of the time.

Characteristically, Alan Mintz, an authority on Jewish Holocaust literature, would express similar thoughts four decades later:

A national literature that makes no discriminations and absorbs every negative event into the rhetoric of absolute catastrophe, that rushes to idealize and beatify what was destroyed, that takes off into the heavens of

⁴⁴ Hagop Oshagan, *Hamapatker arevmtahay grakanut'ian* (Panorama of Western Armenian Literature), vol. 10 (Antelias, Lebanon: Cilician Catholicosate Press, 1982), p. 151.

⁴⁵ Hagop Oshagan, *Sp'iuḡk'ē ev irav banasteghtsut'iunē, Vahan T'ek'eyani aṛit'ov* (The Diaspora and the true poetry, on the occasion of Vahan Tekeyan) (Jerusalem: St. James Press, 1945), p. 59.

inflated ornamental language—this is not a national literature that well serves the nation.⁴⁶

The literature of nostalgia, a recourse to the past, however, was the immediate response to the enormous shock that hindered the growth of a true national literature that could help forge the Armenian Diasporan identity and pave a salutary road to overcome the pains of the past. How to describe the literary milieu that supported that outlook? Vahan Tekeyan epitomized the situation in a poem titled *Spiurk* (Diaspora):

It wavers, moaning like a sea
or a forest being moved away.
Not tossed, nor bent by a wind merely,
But upheaved by terrible earthquakes.

One by one, blade by blade, like grass
pulled from its ancient fields, it dries.
Life is separated and departs.
Without its own soil it dies.

God of growing things, what request
shall I address to you? Should I pray
for painless life? For rest?
Otherwise, burning for vengeance the way

it does, it will burn and spread fire
looking backward, all the while.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Alan Mintz, *Hurban: Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 118.

⁴⁷ Tekeyan, *Spiurk* (Diaspora, 1923), in *Sacred Wrath* (1982), p. 8.

Somber metaphors sketch the dire situation. The nation is uprooted and thrown on the mercy of the threatening waves of assimilation. And the outcome is dim. Tekeyan saw two possibilities in the future. One was a "painless life," tantamount to a painless death for the nation, with her sons and daughters drifting away and living restful lives as full-fledged members of mainstream societies. The other option was no less painful and implied never attaining normalcy, never being able to overcome the psychological barrier that surrounds the survivors of a great catastrophe, and continuing to live in the past with unfulfilled yearnings and dreams, with bitterness toward mankind. Was it not plausible to reconcile the two possibilities and find a comfortable synthesis? Tekeyan did not think it was.

Who were the writers and poets who led the literary direction in the immediate aftermath of the Genocide?

Roughly speaking, for the sake of definition in the forthcoming discussion and not as a rigid categorization, the first generation of post-1915 survivor-writers falls within two groups: those who were established writers before 1915, the seniors in the field, such as Aram Antonian (1875-1951), Suren Partevian (1876-1921), Zapel Esayan (1878-1943), Vahan Tekeyan (1878-1945), Hagop Oshagan (1883-1948), Shahan Nat'alie (1884-1983), and Kostan Zarian (1885-1969); and the younger generation, mostly orphans of the desert, as they are called, who began writing after 1915, such as Hratch Zardarian (1892-1986), Benjamin Nourigian (1894-1987), Hamastegh (1895-1966), Shavarsh Narduni (1898-1968),

Vahé Hayg (Hayk, 1898-1983), Garo (Karo) Mehian (1898-1984), Aram Haykaz (Haygaz, 1900-86), Vazgen Shushanian (1903-41), Nikoghayos Sarafian (1902-72), Zareh Vorbuni (1902-80), Shahan Shahnur (1903-74), Andranik Andriasian (Antranig Antreassian, 1909-96), Garo P'oladian (Karo or Karapet P'olatian) (1911?-86), Andranik Tsarukian (1912-89), and Mushegh Ishkhan (1913-90). Of course, the list is incomplete and is only intended to give a sampling of the prominent names.

Outside of these two groups, there were also first-generation survivors, ordinary people who were not necessarily artists by craft but who had the urge to use their modest ability to write, to describe what they had seen, to vent their feelings in versified form, to pen their memories for posterity or at least for their children to read. The literature they produced, making no claim to artistry, may not withstand the scrutiny of aesthetic judgment, but it surely expressed the psychological effects of that traumatic experience and a helpless nostalgia for the lost homeland. Their literature also possesses historical value in its genuine and unembellished descriptions of people, places, and events. The work of these memoirists or poets of blood, tears, destruction, hatred, and revenge filled the pages of the newspapers and periodicals of the 1920s and 30s. It reflected the essence of Armenian life in Diaspora, with its umbilical cord still attached to the non-existent Old World. Minas T'ölölian called them "the first victims of

the Diasporan intellectual life."⁴⁸ Memoirs written years later in older age will be discussed in chapter 3 of this book.

The literature this group of men and women produced, obviously, did not become an influential factor in developing a new literary direction or good taste; however, it played a role equally influential as that of the literature of celebrated authors in linking the generation growing up in Diaspora to the Armenian past. It functioned as a source of knowledge and inspiration. This type of literature was far more abundant than works in the category of *belles-lettres*, discussed earlier, for the driving force and the strong compulsion behind it was a torrent of emotions without the overriding intention of seeing through all the difficulties to creating a work of art. Indeed, these writers did not necessarily experience the inadequacy of language vis-à-vis the task of describing the indescribable as a hindrance to production. A paralysis of language and a hesitance to venture into the difficult waters of artistic expression of the Catastrophe were obstacles experienced by the *belles-lettristes*.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Minas T'ölölian, *Dar më grakanut'iun* (A century of literature), vol. 2 (New York: Armenian Apostolic Church of America, Eastern Prelacy, 1980), p. 46.

⁴⁹ Zapel Esayan, for example, the pre-Genocide novelist and master of human psychology, came face to face with the difficulty of artistic expression when she was laboring to give birth to *Averaknerun mej* (Among the ruins), the echo of her experience with the massacres of 1909. Feeling dumbstruck, she exclaimed, "What I saw is beyond all imagination.... It is difficult for me to present the

The themes of nostalgia and lamentation over the loss of parents, siblings, the parental home, the native land, and the entire victimized nation, occur mostly in poetry. In some cases the loss is personified. In *Sug* (Mourning) by Phenix (a forgotten name today), the poet depicts the funeral of a loved one, with the sky, the clouds, the mountains, and the valleys all participating in the grief.⁵⁰ Most often, in repetition of traditional trends, a suffering mother personifies the lost homeland, and the theme revolves around *karot* (yearning). In a poem titled *Karot*, Armenak Melik'ian speaks to his dead mother of his loneliness in the alien world, far away from the

entire picture. Words are incapable of expressing the dreadful and unspeakable sights that my eyes witnessed" (quoted in Perroomian, *Literary Responses*, p. 94). Her response to the horrifying events of 1915 was silence or vague references to the Catastrophe, as discussed in *ibid.*

Suren Partevian lamented his inability to find "words accurate enough, dramatic and tragic enough, to describe the depressing, suffocating scenes of misery" (quoted in *ibid.*, p. 125). Partevian too was unable to forge a powerful response to the 1915 Catastrophe. His literary works in the genre did not surpass mediocrity. A quarter of a century after the Armenian Genocide, the writer and the poet of the Holocaust stood helpless in the struggle to find the means and the strength to create art out of the ashes of that cataclysmic event. Samuel Beckett's confession is most emblematic: "There is nothing to express, no power to express... together with the obligation to express" (quoted in Alvin H. Rosenfeld, *A Double Dying: Reflections on Holocaust Literature* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1980), p. 8).

⁵⁰ Phenix, *Sug*, in *Hairenik*, vol. 3, no. 1 (November 1924).

homeland where he lost her to Turkish atrocities. He wishes she had a grave on which he could lay flowers.⁵¹

Armenuhi Tigranian (another forgotten name) is tangled in the torturing memory of her mother who fell on the deportation route. She feels herself to be a lonely traveler in the world. In Berlin, Paris, or Boston she is an outcast, a stranger everywhere, because her profound yearning for her ancestral home has locked her in the past. She is in search of images of the Old World where her happy childhood is buried. These indomitable emotions are embedded in three simple, unembellished poems, *Otarut'iun* (Experience in an alien land), *Mors* (To my Mother), and a third, untitled.⁵²

Perchuhi is a name more frequently encountered in the pages of *Hairenik* monthly. She seems to be a more skilled versifier and her poems are more descriptive. In *Ep'ratě* (The Euphrates), she describes the river turned red from carrying the corpses of Armenian victims.⁵³ In *Erkunk'* (Childbirth), she depicts a woman giving birth during the deportation while the gendarmes watch, mocking, laughing at the scene, and sharpening their swords to cut up the woman and her newborn. Then they stand back in terror, stupefied; the woman has gone mad, making satanic movements and letting out dreadful screams.⁵⁴ The main thrust of Perchuhi's poetry, however, is again the profound yearning for a lost homeland

⁵¹ Armenak Melik'ian, *Karot*, in *Hairenik*, vol. 2, no. 6 (1924).

⁵² Armenuhi Tigranian, in *Hairenik*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1923).

⁵³ Perchuhi, *Ep'ratě*, in *Hairenik*, vol. 2, no. 5 (1924).

⁵⁴ Ibid., *Erkunk'*, in *Hairenik*, vol. 3, no. 8 (1925).

and her youthful dreams drowned in the blood and tears of her murdered people.⁵⁵

Poetic recreations of the lost homeland vary in mood and climactic finale. In some cases the leitmotif is the recreation of a small corner of the Old World, its nature, the people, and their habitat. Sos-Vani's *Haireni giugh* (Native village) is an example.⁵⁶ In other cases, recurring more frequently, the poem continues with a depiction of the present unhappy life and ends with the poet's bitter yearning for the homeland.

This literature, forgotten today and accessible only to the interested researcher, observably reflected the mood prevailing in the Diasporan communities of the time. These works were readily accepted and appreciated by their readers who shared the same predicament.⁵⁷

Another noticeable phenomenon in this thematic poetry is the relatively frequent occurrence of the names of women poets. Outside of this genre, the contributions of female intellectuals to Diasporan Armenian literature are rare if not almost non-existent. Were there social impediments to women's participation in that type of intellectual endeavor? Or was it a lack of ability? Did the smaller canvas of poetry and the confined scope of the

⁵⁵ Ibid., *K'nars anlar* (My lyre with no cords) and *Hairenik's* (My homeland), in *Hairenik*, vol. 1, no. 12 (1923), and vol. 2, no. 3 (1924), respectively, embody these themes.

⁵⁶ Sos-Vani, *Haireni giugh*, in *Hairenik*, vol. 2, no. 7 (1924).

⁵⁷ For a detailed discussion of this category of literature, see Peroomian, "Hairenik: A Periodical" (2004).

genre mark the limits of Armenian women's intellect? These are questions worth investigating.

To render meaning to the past experience

The poets and writers who had escaped the Turkish atrocities attempted to recapture in art the hell through which they themselves had lived. In the literature they produced echoed the traumatic experience of the entire people, the last cries of the victims in agony, and the reactions of the survivors trying to reconcile with their dreadful past.

The main thrust of these survivor-writers' literature was **describing the atrocities**, conceptualizing the suffering of the nation. Of course, the term "survivor" as used for these writers does not necessarily mean they were physically present in the midst of the turmoil. In fact, some survived because they happened to be away and thus avoided arrest and deportation. However, even if they were not there in the flames of the holocaust, their previous experience with pre-1915 massacres and their ample communication with eye-witnesses served as rich sources of information and inspiration for their response to the latest Catastrophe.

Shahan Nat'alie exemplifies the phenomenon.⁵⁸ He was only eleven when he witnessed the atrocities

⁵⁸ Shahan Nat'alie, né Hagop Der Hagopian (Hakob Ter Hakobian), was born in the village of Husenik in the province of Kharbert in 1884. He received his education at the Berberian Academy in Constantinople and after graduation returned to his native village where he taught at the village school for four years.

committed by the Turks during the 1894-96 massacres. The murder of his father and the scene of his mother mourning over his dead body made an everlasting impression on the young boy. He was in the United States when the 1915 Genocide took place. However, although he did not directly experience the horrors of 1915, his graphic descriptions of scenes of carnage and butchery, of starving orphans wandering in the streets, eating and sleeping with stray dogs, of women tortured, their breasts cut off, their bodies hung upside down from trees to bleed to death, speak to the profound impact of what he heard adding to what he himself experienced as a child.⁵⁹

In his Preface ("Word of Dedication") to *Book I* of *Vrezhi avetaran* (The gospel of revenge, 1918), Natalie mentioned four books that he would be offering to Armenians past and future. He dedicated these books to the "fighters who are gone and who will come to cleanse by way of revenge the reproach against Armenians." He also stated that what he was offering was not poetry but true stories of the Armenian massacres which he sketched dipping his pen in the blood shed by the Turks. The poems in the first two books available to me intensely describe gruesome scenes of atrocities committed against innocent men and women. In heaping up

Then, in 1904, he immigrated to the United States to pursue his career as a writer and poet. He dedicated his long life to Armenian culture and the Armenian cause. He died in 1983.

⁵⁹ See Shahan Nat'alie, *Vrezhi avetaran, Girk' a* (The gospel of revenge, Book I) (New York: Armenia, 1918).

such rage, curses, and reproach, I would conjecture, Natalie tended to challenge his readers, to make them see that these atrocities were a disgrace to the nation and that only revenge could wipe it away. If my conjecture is plausible, it could also explain the relationship, otherwise indistinct, between the title and the content of Natalie's work.

Kostan Zarian offers another example of a survivor's testimony without having been there. He was safe in Bulgaria in 1915, but scenes in the play he wrote, *Dzayner ekeghets'um* (Voices in the church), come across as the accounts of an eyewitness to people locked inside a burning church.⁶⁰ The piece is a complex cacophony of prayers, lamentations, storytelling, dreadful screams, trepidation, melancholic songs, and martyrs or their ghosts telling the ghastly story of their murder. These voices are interrupted every so often by those of the Mother of God, the saints, and the angels lamenting the dead, the fire that consumed the world, the blood that was shed with such savagery, and the great catastrophe that befell the Armenian nation.

Describing the horrors over and over, lamenting the loss and mourning the dead could prove to be cathartic and alleviate the pain, but the question of why it all

⁶⁰ Kostan Zarian, *Dzayner ekeghets'um*, in *Mek arar*, ed. Ovanessian (2001), vol. 2, pp. 11-27. Zarian wrote the play in Bulgaria in 1915 and published it years later in Vienna in 1931, in a volume titled *Erek' erg aselu hamar vishtē erkri ev vishtē erkni'i* (Three songs to tell the grief of the world and the grief of heaven). The play was never staged.

happened remained unanswered and continued to torment the mind. The writer of the Genocide was driven by the need to find an explanation. And this comes, as Mardi Jon Horowitz terms it, from a *completion tendency*. In fact, an important characteristic of Genocide literature is that it reflects the agonizing and often futile search for the meaning or at least an explanation of the unfathomably diabolical intent of the perpetrator. Searching for a meaning is a natural impetus in survivors of personal or collective trauma. Citing the findings of prominent psychologists, John A. Updegraff, Roxane Cohen Silver, and E. Alison Holman study the role of finding meaning in a traumatic experience in the adjustment process.⁶¹ According to these authors, Victor Frankl (in *Man's Search for Meaning*, 1963) was the first to theorize the role of finding meaning in a traumatic experience, drawing from his own personal experience as a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp. Meaning can be found, the authors maintain, by assigning responsibility for the event, or by interpreting the experience through one's philosophical or religious beliefs, which, I believe, served as the basis for a large part of the responses to the Armenian Genocide. The authors also concur that regardless of the particular form of meaning found, it is thought that making any kind of sense out of a loss or

⁶¹ John A. Updegraff et al., "Searching for and Finding Meaning in Collective Trauma," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 95, no. 3 (2008), pp. 709-22. The study is built upon interviews revealing the effects of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the U.S.

trauma attenuates its toll and facilitates long-term adaptation.

The search for an explanation led Armenian writers along different paths. Digging into the source of evil, they came face to face with the perpetrator, the Turk, and how personal gain, religious fanaticism, envy, and other factors contributed to the successful implementation of the government's plan for annihilation. Treading that path, Hagop Oshagan advanced a grave observation that may sound harsh and farfetched today, but he genuinely believed that the government's action against Armenians was an invitation to the centuries-old **Turkish instinct to kill**.⁶² In his unfinished monumental novel, *Mnats'ordats'* (The remnants), which he ventured to write only in the 1930s, Oshagan attempted an in-depth analysis of the Turkish character and genetic elements that generate the urge to loot and kill: "There exist not only criminal people but also criminal races," he concluded in a chapter on Aram Antonian.⁶³

Oshagan also emphasized the role of religion, or rather, that of **religious fanaticism** aroused, which made Muslims commit atrocities for the sake of Islam. This is manifested especially in the short story, *Vrdovvats*

⁶² Hagop Oshagan, *Hamapatker arevmtahay grakanut'ian* (Panorama of Western Armenian Literature), vol. 9 (Antelias, Lebanon: Cilician Catholicosate Press, 1980), p. 264. Nowadays it is considered unscholarly to generalize and accuse an entire nation of the deeds of a group. However, Oshagan spoke from his personal experience and his knowledge of history.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 279. For a discussion of Oshagan's characterization of the Turk, see Perroomian, *Literary Responses* (1993), pp. 187-204.

khghchmtank' (The agitated conscience), first published in 1920 and later included in his posthumous collection titled *Kayserakan hagh't'ergut'iun* (The imperial song of triumph, 1983). In this story, Oshagan demonstrated that what Armenians perceived as atrocities committed by the Turkish perpetrators, the Turks saw as a source of mystical gratification and the fulfillment of a sacred ritual.

In the same vein, Shahan Natalie, too, emphasized religion and the nature of the Turkish perpetrators. Unmistakably echoing in his descriptive poetry of blood, tears, mourning, and lamentation is the perpetrators' religious beliefs generating hatred and intolerance toward the non-Muslim. Natalie held this phenomenon to be the primary cause of the Catastrophe.

Suren Partevian advocated **armed resistance** against the perpetrators and glorified the resolve to stand up and fight in self-defense. He praised the spirit of heroism in that unequal battle. *Ariuni matianē* (The book of blood) is comprised of episodes of heroism during the massacres of 1894-96. However, since the stories were completed and published in 1915, the author's observations and interpretations were undoubtedly influenced by the ongoing tragic events. Partevian continued his exaltation of armed struggle in his dramatization of acts of resistance during the 1915 massacres and deportations in *Anmah bots'ē* (The undying flame), which he published in 1917. "Revolt, rebellion... 'eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth'.... Resistance.... An honorable triumph over death," the protagonist passionately exclaims, trying to convince

his conservative friend to see the reality, not to believe in the government's goodwill, and to take action to save himself and his family.⁶⁴

Shahan Natalie gave a different twist to this subject matter: he viewed Armenian armed defense not as resistance but as a heroic uprising against Turkish evil, and as an act of **vengeance**. This idea appears in the final poem in *Book II* of his *Gospel of Revenge*. Titled *Bagheshi gravumě* (The capture of Baghesh), it pictures the valiant deeds of Andranik's troop of *fedayees*, their hearts full of vengeance as they fight against the murderers, the executioners of the nation.⁶⁵ With this exemplification of

⁶⁴ For a discussion of the theme of armed resistance as a response to Catastrophe, see the chapter on Suren Partevian in Perroomian, *Literary Responses* (1993), pp. 117–50.

⁶⁵ Shahan Nat'alie, *Bagheshi gravumě*, in *Vrezhi avetaran, Girk' b.* (The gospel of revenge, Book II) (Boston: Hairenik, 1918), pp. 41–5. Compared to Natalie's "Word of Dedication" in *Book I*, his dedication in this second collection of poems of rage and revenge resonates with a slightly different and more concrete motif. Here the note clearly insinuates vengeance and brings to mind "Operation Nemesis," the project conceived by Armenian revolutionaries (namely, members of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation) and carried out by young men, most of them the sole survivors of their families during the Armenian Genocide. The project entailed gathering intelligence on and tracking down and assassinating the fugitive masterminds of the Genocide. These assassinations were the fulfillment of the punishment those murderers of the nation deserved, a punishment that the new postwar world order viewed with indifference.

However, it is significant that Natalie's *Gospel of Revenge* was published in 1918, and that Operation Nemesis, in which he was one of the organizers, coordinators, and suppliers of materiel, was brought up and decided at the ARF General Congress in 1919.

the act of vengeance, Natalie fulfilled his intention epitomized in the dedication: to "Armenian pilgrims of the Nemesis." He showed that revenge was the only way to restore the honor and integrity of the nation. Revenge was to punish those who were responsible for the catastrophe and who now walked free, enjoying the fruits of impunity.

Hagop Oshagan, too, praised the Armenian revolutionary spirit and called it "our mysticism." He extolled the ideology of freedom and glorified those men who were ready to sacrifice their lives for it. Mat'ik Melik'khanian, the young Armenian freedom fighter in Oshagan's *Mnats'ordats'*, is the embodiment of that devotion.

Vahan Tekeyan treated this theme in a poem titled *Ėmbostut'iun srbazan* (*Holy Rebellion*, 1919).⁶⁶ Unlike others who exemplified heroic deeds and praised resistance, Tekeyan extolled the idea of revolt and rebellion in an abstract setting. Here, the Armenian spirit is pictured as "dry / as dead leaves in scorching winds / of oppression." Spirits were reignited when the much

Perhaps the idea was already afloat in the minds of some leaders of the ARF, and the choice of the code name "Nemesis" for the operation was not a spur-of-the-moment decision in 1919. Or it may be that Nemesis, the goddess of divine retribution, was a naturally conceivable source of inspiration for Natalie in his poetry of vengeance, and not necessarily related to the organized revenge operations that later took place.

⁶⁶ Tekeyan, *Ėmbostut'iun srbazan* (*Holy Rebellion*), in *Sacred Wrath* (1982), pp. 30–1. Subsequent page numbers cited in parentheses refer to the same collection.

needed spark fell upon them to start the fire of resistance to repression. The flames of this "glorious blaze" had died down for a while, smoldering in only a few places, but now they "roared again... nourished / in the dark / by all the brave heroes / and the saints who had fallen and were buried there." The reference is to the acts of self-defense in a few places during the massacres of 1915. The poem was written in 1919 when a newly born republic in eastern Armenia was making its faltering first steps in the postwar world still caught up in political and military conflicts. Tekeyan knew that the present situation was volatile, that freedom was not final, and especially that the small area of land called Armenia was not the realization of the Armenian dream. Armenians still needed that spirit of revolt, "Sacred Revolt." His poem ends with a plea for the spirit of revolt to impregnate the Armenian soul:

Stay. We need you still.
Live in our intellect and memory;
relight the furnace....
....
solidify us into the hard
purpose of righteousness,
Sacred Revolt. (31)

This poem reverberates with an older poem titled *Sourb barkut'iuně* (*Sacred Wrath*, 1903), another abstract and metaphoric tableau epitomizing the birth of Armenian resistance to oppressive Ottoman rule. The creation of the poem coincided with the activities of the revolutionary

troops of *fedayees* who took up arms to defend helpless Armenian villagers against Turkish and Kurdish assaults. It begins by declaring an end to the nation's servitude: "The patience of the lambs was exhausted. / Even the time to remain lamb must terminate." It ends by proclaiming the beginning of a new era in the history of the Armenian people:

Indignant, just, ancient saints rebelled
crying: Enough of kissing the executioner's hand.
It is our turn to execute. (36)

In the years immediately following the Genocide of 1915, and even as it was still going on, Tekeyan experienced a state of vacillation between optimism and pessimism regarding the fate and future of the nation. He tried to explain the situation and prophesy the coming. He turned to God. His poetic responses to the Genocide mostly involved **God, addressed in protest and defiance and for an explanation.** God was responsible for the calamity: "An enemy God, of course, who was watching from His hiding place / Poured out upon it's [the Armenian people's] head all the evil in the world."⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Tekeyan, *Ahavor ban mē aintegh* (Something horrible there, 1916), in *Hayergut'iun ev hatēntir k'ert'vatsner* (Armenian songs and selected poems) (Beirut: Etvan, 1958), p. 44. For a broader discussion of "God vis-à-vis the Catastrophe," see the section under that heading in Rubina Perroomian, "Armenian Literary Responses to Genocide: The Artistic Struggle To Comprehend and Survive," in *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), pp. 222-49.

The uncertainty shrouding the Armenian reality tormented Tekeyan. The vision of a bright and happy Armenian life could only come to him in dreams. And, indeed, he dreamed such a vision when after a moment of near extinction, when everything seemed to have worked to bring about the end of the Armenian nation, suddenly a gate was opened and he saw Armenians living happily, like lambs in green fields, in *Eraz (Dream, 1917)*. Life continued for Armenians, with, "In the distance, muzzle bent, / a wolf slinking off, surprised, to see his victims again" (50). The dream did not last long. Now faced with the dark reality and once again submerged in sadness and rage, Tekeyan spoke to the victims of the great crime, but his intended hearer was still God, as in *Piti ěsenk' Astutso (We Shall Say to God, 1917)*. He initiated a challenge to God which then became a trend in his future artistic expressions, according to his mood and intent.

Should it happen we do not endure
 this uneven fight and drained
 of strength and agonized
 we fall on death's ground, not to rise
 and the great crime ends
 with the last Armenian eyes
 closing without seeing a victorious day,
 let us swear that when we find
 God in his paradise offering comfort
 to make amends for our pain,
 let us swear that we will refuse
 saying No, send us to hell again.
 We choose hell. You made us know it well.

Keep your paradise for the Turk. (10)

A year later, in *Piti momank' (We Shall Forget, 1918)*, he entertained the idea of reconciliation with the tragedy of the past, even though he knew that it was still "too soon. And fate still an enemy." But his wish for the Armenian survivors, that they "shall forget this awesome wound and pain, / forget insult, injury and grief," was preconditioned by their return to their ancestral lands:

We shall forget the terror and outrage,
 and this unmeasurable⁶⁸ hate that razed our souls
 when our fevered eyes, and steps
 can reach and touch our mother soil. (43)

God is present as a player in this poem, an accomplice of the Turkish executioners, a power that committed evil: "The evil done to us by man and by you, God." At the same time, God is also the power that can bring the dawn, "but, Lord, let that day rise soon / when we can bless you unreservedly" (43). Significantly, nearly a century ago, Tekeyan was laying down the terms of reconciliation.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ I have used the word "unmeasurable" as it appears in the translation. However, it should read "immeasurable."

⁶⁹ I would like to believe that Tekeyan did not mean simply to be granted permission by the Turkish government to go and live under its authority, but to see it relinquish the lands to the true proprietors, the Armenians. On the other hand, perhaps he meant merely having the freedom to go and live in Turkey. Wasn't there a similar thought in Hrant Dink's speech at Bilgi University months before his assassination? "We want this land, not to take it away but to lie under it."

Then, in 1919, he was optimistic again, praising the spirit of revolution, "Holy Rebellion, Sacred Revolt" (30), that stirred the nation to rise from the ashes of the holocaust.

Turning to God in search of a meaning or an interpretation of the calamity became an easy path for survivor-writers. Indeed, failure to explain the magnitude of the catastrophe ruled out for many the possibility of an earthly cause. In their last moments of agony, victims turned to God, asking "for which sins of ours you subject us to such harsh punishment," or they exclaimed in distress, "O God.... Where is God," "Mother of God! Come to our rescue.... Jesus... show your power." These were common responses based on understandings that had been handed down through Judeo-Christian teachings.⁷⁰

The literati, in their turn, resonated with the traditional responses to historical tragedies, viewing the calamity as a twist in the relationship between man and God, or at worst, a breach of the Covenant. They even defied God and cast doubt on His existence or His oneness. Shahan Natalie's *Vrezhi avetaran* (Gospel of revenge) epitomizes this reaction. In this collection of poems the author turned to God in protest, his words charged with grievance and rage. He described the carnage at the hands of the Turks and called it the nation's Golgotha. Evoking the crucifixion of Jesus

⁷⁰ I have discussed this type of responses that were commonly expressed, especially by the survivors of the 1909 massacres in Adana, in *Literary Responses* (1993).

Christ, he reminded God that His Son was crucified only once and granted immortality in Heaven, while "my nation was crucified for the sake of the crucifix seven times seven, but the crucified Jesus did not even smile upon them." He continued describing the atrocities of the Turks and, in a torrent of angry remonstrance, asked God, "Which one of these men did you create in your image?"⁷¹ He questioned God's justice and benevolence. If God is the righteous judge, where was He to see the indescribable acts of torture and murder? "Their God had forgotten them, forgotten and denied them seven times," when these wretched Armenians had refused the offer to deny their God and had accepted martyrdom. Who knows where this road of blood and suffering ends? "God does not know.... Allah knows."⁷² With this heavily loaded statement, the author was suggesting the idea of **the duality of God**. The God to whom Armenians pray could not be the same as Allah, the God of Islam.

In fact, the duality of God is presumed in *Book I* of Natalie's *Gospel of Revenge*. Allah, the God of Islam, is there in all six poems, dictating, inspiring, and encouraging the carnage. Allah himself devises all the diabolical deeds, the profusion of sacrificial bloodshed that has turned his eyes blood-red. "Allah's eyes have always burned red, from the day / when the Armenian God went blind."⁷³ Structured in six poems, numbered

⁷¹ Natalie, *Verjin aghot'k'* (Last prayer), in *Vrezhi avetaran*, *Girk' b* (1918), pp. 19–24 (quotation from p. 21).

⁷² Ibid., *Hay vorbut'iun* (Armenian orphanhood), pp. 13–15.

⁷³ Ibid., poem no. V, in *Vrezhi avetaran*, *Girk' a* (1918), p. 30.

"I" through "VI," in thirty-nine pages, Natalie's poetic narration of scenes of barbaric savagery can be considered one of the most poignant and graphic descriptions of Turkish butchery.

All six poems are addressed to Allah, the God of Islam. The Turkish executioner begs Allah to accept the shedding of the blood of the *giavur* (infidel) Armenians as a token of his piety. He proves his devotion to Islam and his hatred and intolerance of the infidels by constantly excelling in his savagery. In the first poem, he kills the husband in front of the young wife and, outraged by her cries and her mourning, he screams, "Bride of a *giavur*, infidel dog, / You still have the breath to ruin Allah's feast."⁷⁴ Blinded by the blood, turned into a ferocious beast, he forces her to throw her week-old twin boys into a pot of boiling water. The woman has already lost her mind, the torture and murder of her husband, the screams of her babies as they plunged into the boiling water having blocked her senses and killed everything human in her. But the atrocity is not yet complete. The Turk orders her to eat the babies in a tray on the table. Now she too is a beast, devouring her beloved children. "See, the Armenian mother eats her Armenian child."⁷⁵

Such scenes of sadistic brutality are not infrequent in post-1915 literature. Siamanto's powerful responses to the massacres of 1909 set the precedent and gave the

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 10.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 13.

example to emulate. We remember Aram Antonian depicting instances of cannibalism in the desert, of starving women eating their dead children's flesh. But again, it seems that incidents of ultimate torture such as forcing a mother to devour her baby did have their occurrences.

Strangely enough, the theme was resurrected nearly a century later in *Red Dog Howls*, the work of Alexander Dinelaris, a third-generation Armenian playwright. In this stunning story the memory of a similar experience haunts the protagonist and turns her into a cold and callous human being as she continues to live in the freedom of the outside world. She reveals her deeply held secret only in the last moments of her life, and the last scene of the play, for that matter, when she begs her grandson to help her commit suicide and put an end to the torturous life she can no longer bear to continue.⁷⁶

The second poem in Natalie's *Gospel of Revenge, Book I*, portrays a caravan of women and children moving along a road that has turned into a landscape of death and dying. The caravan moves toward an unknown grave,

⁷⁶ Dinelaris's play, *Red Dog Howls*, had its world premiere in Los Angeles in May 2008. In a review of the play, Laura Hitchcock wrote, "The terrible power of Alexander Dinelaris's play comes not only from its devastating witness account of what one family endured during the Armenian genocide which was the first in the 20th century though, as we know to our sorrow, not the last. It is the pervading miasma of these unspoken memories that almost destroys Michael (Matthew Rauch [the actor]) whose self-absorption and hot temper are about to end his marriage." See Hitchcock's review, *Los Angeles Times*, May 19, 2008.

the Armenians toward their Golgotha. And again it is Allah who articulates the orders: "Strike them with your whips! Let the caravan move on...."⁷⁷ The pregnant women moan, and plead with the gendarmes to have mercy and let them lie down to give birth. And Allah dares the Turk to lay four pregnant women down on the ground and gallop his horse across them so that each of the horse's four legs can come crushing down on one woman and burst her belly open.

The third poem is a ritualistic prayer to Allah, the killing and cutting up of seven children before their mother's eyes. Each murder surpasses the one before in savagery and unspeakable detail. The fourteen-year-old girl is raped, her breasts are cut off, and she is left to bleed to death. And so the poem continues, describing the "creative" execution of each child. For the last one, a seven-month-old infant, the murderer is physically exhausted but his satanic mind devises yet another diabolical scheme. He makes the woman cut her hair, braid it, twist it round the baby's neck and choke him to death.

Significantly, as in the last poem of *Book II*, the last poem of *Book I* describes the suicidal burnt offering of the imprisoned Armenian *fedayees* on the altar of the Armenian God as a gesture of defiance toward the Turkish executioners. And here, once again, it evokes the duality of God: "And let the world see / The slave

⁷⁷ Natalie, poem no. II, in *Vrezhi avetaran*, Girk' a (1918), p. 14.

Armenian God and the Turkish Allah burning in this fire."⁷⁸

The idea of the duality of God found an unusual manifestation in Oshagan's responses to the 1915 massacres. Depicting a morbid scene of slaughter, he predicated that the God to whom Armenians pray and offer their lives cannot be the God of Islam who watches with approval and satisfaction as the Turks loot and murder and who accepts the human sacrifice they offer to Him.⁷⁹ Armenians forget His injustice after every carnage, and they are ready to be slaughtered again and again for the sake of His love and their faith in Him. Turks are taught to sacrifice others, to shed the blood of infidels, as the ultimate glorification of God's name.

Suren Partevian treated the theme with another twist: doubt in God's oneness. "If my God is also the God of these unbelievers, these ferocious beasts, I don't believe in God." This outburst of protest against God, significantly, comes from a priest, one of the few survivors of a massacred Armenian village.⁸⁰

The search for a convincing or a satisfactory explanation was never successful, and in despair of ever finding one, the survivor of the cataclysm turned to **self-criticism and internalizing the calamity**, that is, blaming

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 39.

⁷⁹ Oshagan, *Vrdovvats Khghchmtank'ë* (The agitated conscience), in *Kayserakan*, ed. Snapien (1983), pp. 19-32.

⁸⁰ Suren Partevian, *Kilikian arhavirk'ë* (The Cilician catastrophe) (Constantinople: Nshan Papikian, 1909), p. 169, from an episode titled *Hairapet*, after the village priest.

the victims for what befell them.⁸¹ The victimizer was little to blame, or not even important at all. Kostan Zarian portrayed Armenian subservience "in the shadow of the Sublime Porte" and observed that "Death awaits the nation that degrades itself and sells its soul."⁸² The victims failed to maintain their integrity. In their struggle to survive, they debased themselves and revealed the ugliest facets of their psyche. Partevian painted the situation in the darkest colors: "Faced with the national tragedy, I wish we could at least have the solace of witnessing a trace of vitality, moral beauty, and collective self-consciousness. But, alas, national disasters have always unveiled our internal corruption and impotence."⁸³ With anger and contempt, he laid bare the treachery of those Armenians who had collaborated with the enemy to save their own skin. On another occasion, referring to the massacres of 1915, he wrote, "This is what our negligence and dereliction have brought upon us.... We made mistakes out of weakness...."⁸⁴

⁸¹ I have analyzed the recurrence of this theme in the literature of four major writers, Zapel Esayan, Suren Partevian, Aram Antonian, and Hagop Oshagan, in *Literary Responses* (1993). Here I offer a cursory survey of material discussed there as well as of literature not discussed in that volume.

⁸² Zarian, *Traveller & His Road* (1981), pp. 12-13.

⁸³ Partevian, *Kilikian arhavirke* (1909), p. 84.

⁸⁴ Partevian, Preface to Arsen Erkat', *Anapatin hushardzanē* (The memorial monument of the desert), quoted in *Hay nor grakanut'ian patmut'iun* (The history of modern Armenian literature), vol. 5, ed. Sergey Sarinian et al. (Yerevan: Armenian SSR Academy of Sciences, 1979), p. 753.

Oshagan's *Mnatsordats* also provides evidence of a harsh and profound critique of Armenian secular and religious leaders and evinces disapproval of the Armenian perception of cultural and traditional values and the reactions of the masses to persecutions and massacres.⁸⁵

However, all of these various responses are in essence nothing more than evidence of the psychological effects of violence. The victimizers not only intended the physical destruction of their victims, but they also purposely dehumanized them before killing them. From the point of view of the perpetrators, it is easy to see the logic: yes, it is easy to kill the non-human; creatures that under intolerable hardship have lost the physical and behavioral attributes of human beings. Looking back on what we can call survival techniques of the wretched deportees, the survivor-writer sought to explain them through internalization, without perceiving the complex process of the victimizers' dehumanization of their victims.

The catastrophe destroyed the social order, moral standards, and accepted patterns of behavior. Antonian's depiction of life in the concentration camp at Meskené (el-Maskana) delineates the degradation of human character: "After the first few months [the gendarmes] were all convinced that the best way to torture

⁸⁵ For Oshagan's handling of this theme, see chapter 7 devoted to the author in Perroomian, *Literary Responses* (1993).

Armenians was through Armenians themselves."⁸⁶ Who was to blame? Antonian pointed to the victims. Why should Armenian nightwatchmen torture their fellow inmates in return for small favors they received from Turkish gendarmes? Why did Armenian men not object, and even put out a hand to accept compensation, when nightwatchmen dragged away their wives and daughters to stoke up the orgies of Turkish officers?⁸⁷ This is, as Lawrence Langer puts it, "the ultimate degradation of the human image under the conditions of atrocity."⁸⁸

Vahan Tekeyan, too, took the Armenians to task. His poem, *Ptukē* (*The Clay Vessel*, 1928), allegorically depicts the deplorable state of Armenian survivors in the Diaspora, with no dreams, no goals, without a spark of hope, and holds them responsible for bringing calamity down upon their own heads:

...We squandered our wealth,
and horrible to say, consumed
our own flesh.⁸⁹

The generation who lived through the hell of the Turkish massacres tried to fathom the true nature of the murderers, the perpetrators of the Armenian Genocide,

⁸⁶ Aram Antonian, from the episode titled *Jur... jur* (Water... water), in *Ayn sev orerun* (In those dark days) (Boston: Hairenik, 1919), p. 84.

⁸⁷ Ibid., the same episode.

⁸⁸ Lawrence Langer, *The Age of Atrocity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), p. 205.

⁸⁹ Tekeyan, *Ptukē*, in *Sacred Wrath* (1982), p. 15.

and to find an answer to the question of Why in their intuitive drive to understand. Whether he was physically present in their literature or even when he went unmentioned, the Turk was there as a threatening ghost, a sensation, a mood-conditioning agent, and the impropriator of the fate of the Armenian nation. In their futile search for an answer or for the meaning of what happened, they turned to God, prayed, catechized, anatomized, defied, and expressed doubt in His oneness or even in His very existence. These writers became introspective, seeking the source of the calamity in the Armenian psyche whose flaws and weaknesses they pinpointed as they internalized the tragedy. In a state of utter frustration, they preached vengeance. Exhaling armed self-defense, they poured out their anger by picturing acts of vengeance, albeit by way of the artistic imagination expressed in literature. It is interesting to see how the theme of self-criticism and internalizing the tragedy persisted in the works of the orphan generation and beyond.

In a recent study, Jack Danielian explains this phenomenon in terms of an inherent effect of the perpetrator's barbaric and inhumane conduct: "Through accumulative violent exploitation of a victim, the victim begins to take on the shameful responsibility of the perpetrator."⁹⁰ Danielian suggests that the victim begins to believe that, since no human being can be this evil, it

⁹⁰ Jack Danielian, "A Century of Silence: Terror and the Armenian Genocide," *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, vol. 70, no. 3 (2010), p. 247.

therefore must be that I have brought out the worst in him. Thus responsibility is reversed, to the extent that the perpetrator feels himself to be the victim and vice versa.

The generation of Armenian writers who lived through the hell of the Turkish massacres did not succeed in finding an answer, a soothing explanation to pass down to the younger generation that was already growing up with the pangs of victimhood in their hearts and souls.

2

The Orphan Generation

Writers and poets who survived the Genocide and took refuge outside Turkey generally continued in the literary tradition of the pre-1915 era. Their literary responses to the most recent tragedy did not diverge significantly in form, style, or even content from literary responses to the massacres of 1894-96 and the Cilician massacres of 1909. Socioeconomic, geographic, and political factors in their diversity and multiplicity, as well as literary influences and impressions from the mainstream cultures of the adopted countries, as varied as they were, manifested themselves in the literature of the younger generation. They were, by and large, orphans of the desert who began their adult life in Diaspora. William Saroyan described them as "Armenian children of [the] war years

who fooled the enemy and didn't die."¹ Others left an ailing mother in the Old Country and fled the threat of renewed persecutions by the Kemalist forces. In all cases, forcibly uprooted from their homeland and dispersed in an array of unfamiliar environments—from the Balkans, Greece, Aleppo, Damascus, and Beirut, to France, England, the United States, and South America—this generation responded to its predicament in different ways, whence the complexity and diversity of the literature they produced. Despite this diversity, however, their literature rose from a common ground. It emanated from direct or indirect experience during 1915 and subsequent years. It carried the pain, the sufferings, the deprivations, and the psychological effects of Genocide. Levon Boyajian and Haigaz Grigorian called this phenomenon the "psychosocial sequelae of the Armenian Genocide."²

A new Diasporan literature was in the making that had at its core the Genocide as a terminus and a beginning. The Genocide had brought about an end to all conventions, to 3,000 years of Armenian life and culture

¹ William Saroyan, Introduction to Leon Z. Surmelian, *I Ask You, Ladies and Gentlemen* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1945), p. 9. Surmelian's autobiography was translated into many languages, including Armenian in 1980.

² Levon Boyajian and Haigaz Grigorian, "Psychosocial Sequelae of the Armenian Genocide," in *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1986), pp. 177–85. This short article was one of the first attempts at a psychological analysis of the impact of the Armenian Genocide on the survivor generation.

in its homeland, and that end had to be acknowledged, comprehended, and confronted. A new set of values had to be devised or discovered so that the new beginning would be possible, so that the nation would survive the enormous effects of the catastrophe, so that literature would survive the shocks of the catastrophe and the rupture of the old paradigms.

The natural evolution of Armenian literature had been halted. The heathen temples erected by Siamanto and Varuzhan, upon which the future achievements of Armenian literature were to flourish, had lost their firm ground. The foundations were washed away and the pillars were left meaninglessly dangling in the air. To understand the literature of this generation or the literature of the new Diaspora, it is important to understand the Genocide with regard to its tremendous psychological and sociopolitical impact.

Why do Shahan Shahnur's characters attack and blaspheme Armenian spiritual monuments with such cynical bitterness? Why do Garo P'oladian's protagonists shun everything Armenian and resign from the Armenian nation with such anger and frustration? Why is it that Vazgen Shushanian was never able to recover from and outgrow the afflictive mental state of an orphan? Why did Michael Arlen, Sr., in a moment of defiance and protest, shout out to the world, "To hell with suffering patiently.... To hell with resignation"?³

³ Michael Arlen, "I Knew Dr. Goebbels," *The Tatler* (January 17, 1940), quoted in Leo Hamalian, "The Armenian Genocide and the Literary Imagination," in *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective*, ed.

These and many similar questions arise in the mind of the student of Armenian Genocide literature. Pondering on these questions, I began to think that hidden in the peculiar behavior of these writers were different aspects of the impact of the Genocide and its shock waves that continue to reverberate in the everyday life, the worldview, the sociopolitical activities, and the creative imagination of Armenians in the Diaspora. And I started searching for the answer to my questions in the folds of these writers' literary expressions.

As the orphan generation took its first steps in the realm of Diasporan Armenian literature, a gradual change was introduced. In terms of form and content, the literature of the Diaspora changed course and deviated from the legacy of pre-Genocide Armenian literature.

Levon Zaven Surmelian's first poems, written in 1922-23 in Constantinople, exemplify this metamorphosis. Born in 1907 in Trebizond, he and his family went through the dreadful experience of deportation, an experience that he eternalized much later in his autobiography, *I Ask You, Ladies and Gentlemen*. He began to write poetry when he was trudging through life with forty other orphan boys like himself at the Esayan Orphanage in Constantinople and attending the *Kedronakan Varzharan* (Central School) to catch up with his interrupted education. Vahan Tekeyan took notice of his talent and published his first poems in his paper,

Hovannisian (1986), p. 155. See *ibid*, pp. 155-6, for a brief discussion of Arlen's work.

Zhoghovurdi dzayn (People's voice).⁴ These first poems mainly express the personal sentiments that could have been very well acknowledged as those of a dying boy in love with life and the girl of his dreams. A little *Metsarents'*, a little *Dourian* in their hopeless tone, they speak, however, of a collective death, that of all Armenians. The rich metaphors representing elements of life and nature in his native town and village, now bygone, are deathly, doleful, macabre. It was the burden of the past that he could not abandon: "Hey boy, don't remember the old anymore / Fill your emptied heart with new life."⁵ The poems also express yearning for his happy childhood environment and mourn its extinction. Even the poet's boyish dreams, his desires and longings for the opposite sex are veiled in anguish and morbid darkness. Gradually he breaks away from abstract melancholy and focuses on the loss of his parents and his

⁴ Vahan Tekeyan recounts that Hagop Oshagan, Zaven's teacher at *Kedronakan Varzharan*, showed him one of the youth's poems as a fine example of the work of a novice. Tekeyan liked it very much and published it in his paper. It was later that he met the young poet and took him under his wing. See Vahan Tekeyan and Leon Z. Surmelian, *Vahan T'ek'eyani namaknerē Levon Zaven Surmelianin, Luys Zvart' grets' Levon Zaven Surmelian b. Tpagrut'iun* (Vahan Tekeyan's letters to Levon Zaven Surmelian; Joyful light, written by Levon Zaven Surmelian) (New York: Nor Kir, 1950), p. 87. *Luys Zvart*, the collection of Surmelian's poems, was originally published in 1924 and then incorporated into this volume.

⁵ Levon Zaven Surmelian, *Zarmats'um* (Amazement), in *ibid.*, p. 94. The poem was written in 1922.

home (homeland).⁶ *Tunis hishatakē* (The memory of my home) is a pathetic recollection of his murdered parents and his happy childhood home from which he was brutally routed:

I search singing, my home – a memory,
But its intimate image is fading day by day.

I remember my father's picture like the head of Jesus,
My mother, sad and kind, was still a lovely maiden.⁷

In Surmelian's poetry, the Genocide looms as an awesome barrier in time and space separating him from his loved ones. *Asats'vatsk' lut'ian* (A saying about silence) pictures his mental horizon overshadowed by the image of his dead mother. Unable to overcome the persistent pangs of orphanhood, he tries to drown himself in silence:

O silence,

⁶ *Luys Zvart'* (Joyful light), Surmelian's first and only collection of poetry was published in France in 1924 when he was already in the United States (Kansas), where he stopped writing in Armenian. His two major works, *I Ask You, Ladies and Gentlemen* (1945) and *98.6°* (1950), are based on his own life experience. He continued producing literature in English. He translated the Armenian national epic (*Daredevils of Sasun*, 1965) and Armenian legends and folklore (*Apples of Immortality: Folktales of Armenia*, 1968). He authored *Techniques of Fiction Writing: Measure and Madness*, which is his contribution to literary theory and criticism. He died in 1995 in Los Angeles.

⁷ Surmelian, *Tunis hishatakē*, in *Vahan T'ek'eyani namaknerē* (1950), p. 107.

Descend, descend,
And cover me
Like my mother's soul.
My lovely, my tender mama.

While the literature this generation produced always remained deeply rooted in the terrors of the massacres, the memories of the murdered loved ones, and the sorrow of orphanhood, the mode of expression and the authors' perceptions of life underwent the influence of the postwar modern world, its ideology and psychology that they came to experience. The sacred ethics, the longing for justice, the idealistic and romantic outcries of the pre-Genocide literature gave way to down-to-earth practicality, rational understanding of life. The old taboos were obliterated, particularly in French Armenian literature, the traditional bounds and limits were trespassed, and human life with all its pleasant and unpleasant aspects, feelings of passion and lust in their naked truth found their most realistic literary reflections.

childhood reminiscences

In many cases, the Event did not emerge as a leitmotif in the literature of the orphan generation, except in references to the milieu of their childhood memories.⁸ In

⁸ Curiously, this phenomenon holds true more for the French Armenian writers. Memoirs depicting scenes of atrocities or fiction based on an event or a life story during the Genocide mostly come from the Middle East and from emigrants to the United States from the Middle East.

fact, not very many among the orphans of the desert, or *anapati serund* (the desert generation), attempted to describe or fictionalize the Catastrophe. It was not addressed directly as a literary theme in their works, but it was tacitly acknowledged. The Catastrophe was there in their lives, at the center of their childhood reminiscences, most often epitomized by particular words, images, scenes, or even smells that would startle them once in a while in their dreams or their waking hours. Such ineffaceable memories left a lasting imprint on the lives of many.

Childhood memories were a constant presence in Vazgen Shushanian's life. He shunned the extravagance and the artificial luxury of French society and the life around him and yearned for the simple and earnest life of his village. He drew a line of comparison between the

It should be noted here that the parts of this chapter dealing with French Armenian writers are an elaboration and expansion of two published research articles, "A Cursory Survey of Shahan Shahnur's Literary Creations," *Hromkla Yearbook* (Los Angeles: Armenian Apostolic Church of America, Western Prelacy, 1982), pp. 157-64, and *Eghernē veraprogħ vorbats'ats serndi hetk'erov, Vazgen Shushaniani het* (Tracing the orphaned generation who survived the Catastrophe: the case of Vazgen Shushanian), *Asbarez* (April 20-22, 1985), and a research paper titled "A Study of the Impact of the Genocide upon Armenian Literature," submitted as the final paper to fulfill the requirements of the course, Armenian 596, at UCLA in Spring quarter, 1983. I was honored to receive the positive comments of Professor R. G. Hovannisian and an "'A' Excellent paper" from course instructor Professor Avedis K. Sanjian. I am also indebted to a series of lectures by Marc Nichanian and Grigor (K'rik'or) Beledian, guest lecturers at UCLA in 1986, for increasing my insight on the writers of the *Menk* movement in Paris.

two and showed why he had been happy in his hometown.

Because, when I was a young boy with big eyes, in the heart of a lush green garden, in our luminous, green, and beautiful village, life was not like this. The days were brighter and the morning light was warm on our backs. There, the boys and girls were not so worn-out before sunset. Their hands and their mouths were warm and gentle; their young and restless bodies were not cowardly and ill-bred like this. Their happiness was big and pure and their light was simple and rural. They loved flowers and songs, and the thirst for adventure and love intoxicated them.⁹

Vazgen (Onnik) Shushanian was born in 1903 to an affluent family in Rodosto (modern Tekirdag), a small town on the European coast of the Sea of Marmara. He had just graduated elementary school when the deportations began, and the family set out on a long and tortuous journey from Konya to Constantinople, Bulante (Polanti), Tarson (Tarsus), Katma (el-Qatma), Aleppo, and finally Deir el-Zor. At the end of the road, he was the sole survivor of his family, destined to drag out a wretched existence until his death in 1941.¹⁰

⁹ Vazgen Shushanian, *Erkir hishatakats'* (Land of memories) (Yerevan: Hayastan, 1966), p. 20. Subsequent page numbers cited in parentheses refer to this book.

¹⁰ Shushanian returned to Rodosto after the war to find his home plundered and empty. No member of the family had returned. He began another difficult journey that took him to Constantinople, Yerevan, Bayazed, Gharakilisa, Tbilisi, Batumi, and Constantinople again, then to New York, and back to Constantinople and Izmir. As

It is natural to recall memories of one's childhood, but these memories, whether sad or sweet and pleasant as they could be, do not usually play a significant role in the life of a happy and well-adjusted person. For the generation of the war orphans and particularly for Vazgen Shushanian, childhood memories remained indelible, that is, he and other orphans of the desert did not attempt to process the trauma they had experienced in their childhood for the sake of some degree of healing to occur. On the contrary, they resorted to their childhood memories as the only happy time in their lives and actually turned them into ideal refuge from reality. In his short life in "exile," Shushanian was never able to get over his homesickness. He admitted that his childhood reminiscences were "insignificant memories that a happy person would have forgotten long ago. But they visit me everyday. They pile up in my mind, and I return to my playful ancestral home" (341). These wistful longings for the irrecoverable past are a common trait in Shushanian's literary creations. *Erkir hishatakats'* (Land of memories) is replete with testimonies such as "memories are our only refuge" (359), and "Behold, I am here, but I walk with my hair to the wind, my arms free, my heart to the victory of Spring, through the roads of my native

an orphan, he recounts, he spent his days searching for menial jobs to earn a piece of bread, and he usually spent the night on a street corner like a stray dog. In 1922, he reached France and settled there to begin the final stage of his unhappy life, succumbing to financial and psychological misery, or as he describes it, "a chain of continuous deprivations."

village now a memory" (360). He lived in many places, but none was home to him:

I love our lost home, like a village boy would feel for his first love. When I gaze into the haze of the past and the ruins of our home, my eyes dampen and a heavy pain pressures my chest. Our home... our home.... Who wouldn't know how happy it is to have a warm corner of your own? (248)

He likened himself to a blind man living his whole life in memories of the past. In other instances, he was a homeless man wandering in search of his home: "I don't know where to stop when the evil and insidious night falls on my road" (250).

Shushanian's life story is indeed a template for the life of most of the boys who lost their parents to Turkish atrocities and wandered under unfriendly and inhospitable skies, never able to develop a sense of belonging anywhere.

In Aleppo, I cursed God and his earthly messengers. In Paris, I chewed on dried-out bread and revolution for weeks on end, like Babeuf.¹¹ In Tbilisi, Georgians despised me. In Yerevan, I felt I was a Western

¹¹ François-Noël Babeuf, born in 1760 at St. Nicaise in Picardy, lived in Paris most of his life. As a revolutionary political activist he was constantly persecuted by the authorities and ultimately guillotined in 1797.

Armenian. In the dark lanes of Marseilles, I was ashamed for the entire Armenian people.¹²

Mushegh Ishkhan (né Jenderjian) was more generous in leaving a detailed account of his memories of his childhood. But it was only decades after the Genocide that he managed to overcome the emotional barrier in order to be able to pen his memories, that is, to relive in detail every moment of the past. Embedded in his memories were two terrifying words, *seferberlik* and *sevkiyat*,¹³ euphemisms the Turkish government coined and popularized as benign references to driving Armenians out of their homes and deporting them to unknown destinations. These two words epitomized the unthinkable misery of Mushegh Ishkhan's family through the years of massacres and deportation. They continued to terrorize him all his life and awaken in him the scenes of his horror-ridden childhood. "Dear God, you protect us, lest the Turks find our hiding place. Save us from *sevkiyat*. Amen."¹⁴ This was the only prayer little Mushegh knew and repeated, even when the family was back in their hometown. These two words, so central in

¹² Vazgen Shushanian, *Dzon tarabakht Vazgeni Hishatakin, mahvan 1 tarelits'in art'iv ir barekamnerun koghmé* (Vazgen Shushanian: Tribute to the memory of the ill-fated Vazgen from his friends, on the occasion of the first anniversary of his death) (Paris: Araxes, 1942), p. 75.

¹³ *Seferberlik* is the Turkish word for war-time mobilization, and *sevkiyat* means sending off or out.

¹⁴ Mushegh Ishkhan, *Mnas barov mankut'iun* (Farewell childhood) (Beirut: Hamazkayin, 1974), p. 15.

Mushegh Ishkhan's recollections of the past, are the signifiers of a whole array of horrible images indelibly imprinted in his mind.

Writing his life story only some thirty years after the deportations, Leon Zaven Surmelian experienced the same fearsome sensation as when he saw for the first time a woman's nude body in the river, her hair floating, one of her breasts severed, then other bodies, then a human arm caught in the roots of a tree. Looking at the river again, he saw "a long, long band of frothy blood clinging to its banks," an unforgettable scene that returned to him now and then. "It is impossible to describe the impression that ghastly scene made upon me, although I can see it now as if it were before my eyes."¹⁵

In the case of other survivors, specific scenes, albeit those having no particular significance in normal life, can play that role and bring to the fore the memory of a range of tragic scenes remotely related to those in the present. Boyajian and Grigorian call this phenomenon the psychic vulnerability of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide. Speaking about the "iconic image" that a traumatic experience produces, Marian MacCurdy explains: "While these images are non-cognitive, they have deep emotional presence although they are not easily accessible. They pop up sometimes unbidden when we smell, hear, see, or touch something that takes us back to the time the traumatic event occurred." She attributes this inaccessibility to the fact that these mental pictures

¹⁵ Surmelian, *I Ask You* (1945), p. 104.

are stored and retained deep within the brain, and "the body reacts to them even when the conscious mind is not aware of the cause of such reactions."¹⁶

Mushegh Ishkhan was only one year old when the family of the two brothers, his father and uncle, took to the road. After four years of wandering on the routes of deportation, of which he retained no concrete recollection, the family returned to their native town of Sivrihisar to find their house permanently appropriated by the Turkish military physician to whom the family had entrusted all of their wealth before leaving. Now he refused to return their possessions and explicitly chastised them for having stayed alive and come back.

The family now consisted of Mushegh's mother, his younger brother and sister, his uncle, and his uncle's wife who was also his adoptive mother. His father had been murdered. Despite the considerable wealth they had left behind before the *seferberlik*, the family now lived within the bare walls of an abandoned Armenian house whose owners had not survived. Living there, Mushegh heard the horrible stories of survivors, the remnants of once-thriving Armenian Sivrihisar. "Before learning my alphabet, I already knew about the world, the different kinds of criminal tools, the degrees of suffering, the boundless brutality of man turned into a beast, when he

¹⁶ Marian M. MacCurdy, "From Trauma to Writing," in *Writing and Healing: Toward an Informed Practice*, ed. Charles M. Anderson and Marian M. MacCurdy (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 2000), p. 162.

is called a Turk and his victim is the Armenian...."¹⁷ Fragmented scenes of blood, torture, murder, and rape visited him in his dreams: "O miserable childhood, even your dreams were nightmares full of bloody scenes. There were no sweet lullabies to dissipate the horrors" (18). And let us not forget that he was one of the lucky ones to have at least one parent by his side. Nightmares kept recurring, and he remembered how he would jump up in his sleep, screaming, "The Turks, mother, Turks are coming to kill!" (25).

Mushegh's ordeal did not end in Sivrihisar. Aggravated by news of the approaching Greek army, local Turks attacked, robbed, and killed Armenians. After Mushegh's uncle was taken out and tortured and killed, the family fled to escape new massacres. Bursa, then under Greek occupation, was a temporary haven for Armenian remnants until its take-over by the Kemalist forces; then another wave of massacres drove the Armenian refugees away. Packed along the sea shore, the refugees hopelessly awaited a ship to take them to safety. It was during the escape from Bursa to Constantinople that Mushegh came face to face with scattered bodies of murdered men and women, streams of water running blood, women gone mad, piles of corpses floating in the sea, landing on the shore at the port of Mudanya. And these scenes remained imprinted in his mind, to surface in any medium of expression that Mushegh was capable

¹⁷ Ishkhan, *Mnas barov* (1974), p. 18. Subsequent page numbers cited in parentheses refer to this work.

of using. At first, it was paper and colored pencils in his kindergarten class in Constantinople, a drawing to make his *Polsets'i* classmates shudder: corpses and human limbs caught in the waves of the sea with ships in the distance. He had seen how the refugees threw themselves into the water, to the mercy of the waves, in their futile effort to reach the ship that had broken the promise to take them to safety and was now sailing away. The picture he drew was an outpouring from his bewildered mind and a mirror image of his young tormented soul.

A Greek ship had taken the refugees to Constantinople, and that was how Mushegh's family had settled there for a short while, only to be driven away again. Refugee families who could find the means left Constantinople before the Kemalist army captured the city. Scenes of people drowning in the sea at Mudanya, of swollen corpses floating over the waves, came alive again in his mind during the journey aboard a small ship to the eastern Mediterranean, en route to Damascus. Mushegh grew frightened and delirious and shouted to his friend, "Onnik, they're taking us to throw us into the sea" (123). But his *Polsetsi* friend had no recollection of such outrageous experiences. Onnik tried to calm him down, saying, "You're crazy," but the poor child had lost his trust in human kindness. He could not even enjoy the food served in abundance on board the ship. He thought they were being fed like cattle to be slaughtered later. Indeed, Mushegh Ishkhan's childhood, in his own words, was "like a shadow that slipped through the roads of

deportation." He often had to squeeze into the darkness of deep cellars, trembling with fear. When he opened his eyes, he saw blood and fire above (244).

Now, more than half a century later, as Mushegh Ishkhan sat down to record his childhood memories, he could explain the psychological roots of his behavior: "No child of a happy nation can understand this sentiment. In those days, we had not only lost our happiness but also the purity of the child-like soul to be able to experience the sensation of happiness" (125-6).

Aram Haykaz (Haygaz) dedicated his *Childhood Memories* (*Mankut'ian hishatakner*) to his mother and to all mothers "whose boundless religious devotion did not save them from the raging waves of the Euphrates."¹⁸ Born in Shapin Garahisar in 1900, Aram Ch'ek'emian was old enough to participate in the heroic resistance of his townfolk to the besieging Turkish army in 1915. That was a hopeless battle of 5,000 Armenian men, women, and children against a huge army battalion. The Armenians took refuge in the famous fortress overlooking the town during their resistance, which lasted eighteen days. There was no food, water, or ammunition to keep fighting. They had to surrender. Aram and a few fighters escaped while the entire population was put to the sword. Later in life, Aram Haykaz recorded the details of that daring resistance and its tragic ending in his *Shapin Garahisar u ir herosamartē* (Shapin Garahisar and its heroic battle). In a

¹⁸ Aram Haykaz, *Mankut'ian hishatakner* (Childhood memories), *Hairenik*, vol. 3, no. 2 (1924).

brief preface to the book he wrote, "There are many glorious defeats in our history, and that of Garahisar was one of them. Glory to the defeated!"¹⁹

Aram spent four dreadful years among Turks and Kurds in the mountains of Kurdistan, an experience he recorded in *Ch'ors tari K'iurdistani lemerun mej* (Four years in the mountains of Kurdistan, 1972). After the war he escaped and reached Constantinople, and from there he went to the United States where he began his writing career. He wrote this autobiographical novel when he was already a well-known writer of short stories. The work is composed of stories that can stand alone but are linked together by a common theme, that is, the pain, the joy, the love, and the adventures of a sixteen-year-old boy who feigned conversion to Islam and adopted Kurdish identity in order to stay alive. His predicament was that of thousands like him, and his stories were those of many like him. The novel can thus be considered an important tribute to those who somehow reached the outside world and regain their Armenian identity, but also to those who stayed behind and continued the painful life of the convert.

Haykaz's first work, *Mghdzavanjē* (The nightmare), an account of the calamitous events of December 1915, was published in *Hairenik* monthly.²⁰ From then on, he was

¹⁹ Haykaz, *Shapin Garahisar u ir herosamartē* (Shapin Garahisar and its heroic battle) (Beirut: Mshak Press, 1957), quotation from *Erku khosk'* (Two words), n.p.

²⁰ In a speech at a ceremony honoring his forty years of literary activities, Aram Haykaz confided that he had submitted this piece,

published frequently in Diasporan Armenian periodicals. Later his works were collected and published in separate volumes, among them *Ts'eghin dzaynē* (The voice of the race), a collection of short stories in two volumes (1949 and 1954), mostly detailed descriptions of his hometown and the thriving Armenian life before the calamitous year of 1915, and also including the horrors of 1915; *Shapin Garahisar u ir herosamartē* (Shapin Garahisar and its heroic battle, 1957); *Ch'ors ashkharh* (Four worlds, 1962); *Pandok* (Hotel, 1967); *Karot* (Yearning, 1971); *Ch'ors tari Kiurdistani lemerun mej* (Four years in the mountains of Kurdistan, 1973), and *Erjankut'iun* (Happiness, 1978). Many of these works had multiple editions. The main characteristic of Aram Haykaz's literary responses to the Armenian tragedy is that they are never monotonous repetitions of lamentation over the great loss. An everlasting gloomy mood does not hover throughout, even when he describes bloody scenes of murder and death. The will to resist the atrocities, to avenge them albeit in insignificant measures, optimism even in the

originally titled *Ējer oragres* (Pages from my diary), under the name Aram Haykaz which he had just made up, taking the name of his older brother, Haykaz, as his surname (Haykaz had fallen victim to Turkish atrocities). He deliberately submitted the piece under this name so that he would remain unrecognized if it were rejected. It was, in fact, accepted, but the editor changed the title to make it more dramatic. From then on he chose to publish under the name Aram Haykaz which became his pen name. See Aram Haykaz, *kiank'n u gortsē* (Aram Haykaz, his life and work) (New York: Haygrakanut'ian barekamneru miut'iun; printed in Beirut: Mshak Press, 1962), pp. 23–8. See also his autobiographical notes in Tölölian, *Dar mē grakanut'iun* (1980), p. 204.

most trying moments, and finally, the unembellished, realistic description of places and events are traits that have made Aram Haykaz's literature unique. Here, what is important is not only the genetic make-up of his personality which gave him a brighter outlook and a more optimistic view of things, but his circumstances matter as well. It was easier to get by in the U.S.A., a haven for immigrants and refugees. There was less prejudice, discrimination, and intolerance toward the newcomers than anywhere in Europe, especially France.

The relaxed mood in describing the past and the determination to vanquish all evil and get ahead are also prevalent in Leon Zaven Surmelian's account of his life. Like other writers of the orphan generation, he took up writing his life story later in life. In his autobiographical account of the thriving and highly cultured Armenian community in his beloved hometown of Trebizond, their social, political, and cultural activities and their relations with the Greeks and the Turks before the war come alive in the most vivid colors. He remembered his uncle's funeral when he was seven years old (the year was 1914) and the sympathy he saw in the conduct of their Turkish neighbors. His uncle was an erudite man, a poet, he found out later, respected by all. "[E]ven the Turks looked grave and respectful. On the faces of all, irrespective of their religion, was reflected man's brotherhood and humility in death."²¹ But things began

²¹ Surmelian, *I Ask You* (1945), p. 21. Subsequent page numbers cited in parentheses refer to this work.

to change. Tension grew among the Armenians and their Turkish neighbors and increased when Russian warships began to bombard the city. The Surmelian family, like many others, Turks, Armenians, and Greeks, fled to nearby villages. The Surmelians went to their large estate at Zefanoz, only to find it occupied by Remzi Sami Bey, a high-ranking Turkish official, and his high-society family. Remzi's wife was kind enough to let them take the smaller house. The Surmelians squeezed in there, leaving the spacious, well-furnished house to the Turks. Zaven and his older brother Onnik played with Remzi's two sons, Shukri and Mahmut, and even became good friends with them. Zaven remembered these months as the best time, when all they did was play from morning to night: "We had no idea Turks could be so nice" (72).

Their first real encounter with the evil Turk came during one of their usual games which the three sons of the Turkish governor-general, guests of the Remzi family, had joined. That was when Zaven first learned about the intensity of the contempt and hatred that Turks held against Armenians. The three young boys treated Zaven and his brother contemptuously and cheated to win, and when he protested, the youngest boy shouted at him, "*Giaour* dog, you can't talk to me like that! You don't have many more days to live anyhow. We will cut your throats. We will massacre all of you. We will not leave a single Armenian alive!" Shukri and Mahmut said not a word. Zaven and his brother were stunned. "We had been playing together all these months, we had become almost like brothers, while they knew all the time

our days were numbered" (75-6). The dreadful secret had spilled out, and events started rolling, each one worse than the other. Surmelian recorded the first reactions: fear, incredulity, helplessness, revolt, readiness to resort to armed resistance to the last breath. He remembered his family leaving the house at Zefanoz without locking the door when they returned to Trebizond.

Turkish peasants sensing the rich booty in store for them, had already gathered like vultures around the village. Since we were forbidden to sell anything and had to travel to Mesopotamia on foot our possessions were of no earthly use to us anyhow. We were not so naive as to believe the government would keep them under seal, in spite of Remzi Sami Bey's assurance. (85)

But Surmelian also wrote of ordinary Turks, kind and concerned, watching a caravan of deportees as if saying, "Why should such things happen? Isn't there room enough for all of us to live in peace? You have done us no harm, and we wish you no harm. Allah be with you" (86). He described the agony of his entire clan gathered in the house of a relative in the Turkish quarter of Trebizond, which was supposed to be safer then, knowing that "the Ittihad party or the government—it was the same thing—was seeking the extermination of our race by a systematic plan, the deportation order as a military necessity being merely a ruse and a camouflage" (93).

Surmelian's autobiography is a valuable and detailed eyewitness account of the events before, during, and after the deportations and massacres of 1915: the torturous confiscation of arms from Armenians; the liquidation of Russian Armenians at the outset in Trebizond; the alarming and at the same time humiliating proclamation of the governor-general accusing Armenians of treason and revolt; his announcement of the deportation of Armenians to special districts in the interior as extreme measures for the defense of the fatherland. Surmelian remembered the governor-general's warning of punishment by hanging for anyone who hid an Armenian or helped them in any way (80-1). From then on, it was the agonizing preparations for deportation, hiding, arrest, the escape of Zaven's revered pharmacist father, his mother taking him to the American mission and kissing him goodbye forever. Dr. Crawford of the Mission had gotten permission to shelter young Armenian boys in his school.

In a few seconds I underwent one of those profound inner changes which close one chapter of our lives and open another.... I realized that my happy childhood had ended and I stood on the threshold of a new life, in a changed world.... I felt as if I had grown up, become a man at once. (95)

Shortly thereafter, the government ordered the Armenian children out of the school. They were placed in a makeshift Turkish orphanage in a vacant Armenian house, to be deported later. The efforts of a Greek friend

of the family to adopt him and his two sisters did not bear fruit. The government was adamant in its plans, and the eight-year-old "man" would pass through the dangerous roads of deportation (*surgun*), walking along in the death marches: "There are sorrows too deep for words or tears" (99).

The threatening shadow of death showed its face in the nude body of a woman with one breast cut off, floating in the river, then the body of a man, then a human arm (104). Death became a coveted respite that could save the wretched deportees from witnessing the horrible sights of murder and rape, the cries of a struggling woman to save her honor, the moans of a violated girl. At one desperate moment, the remnants of Zaven's family awaiting execution in a death camp decided to commit suicide before the gendarmes got to them. They took the poison that his father had given his aunt as a precaution against being captured alive by the Turks. But the dosage was only for one person and not enough for the family. The suicide attempt failed (105-7).

Soon the boys were segregated and sold, as in a slave market. The gendarmes killed those who were not sold. This time Zaven lived the agony of an imminent death when no Turk or Kurd or Laz adopted him. He begged a Turkish *cheta* to adopt him, and the *cheta* agreed. Zaven's name was changed to Jamal; this he accepted, but he could not bear the humiliation of circumcision as a sign of complete Turkification, and he fled. He spent the days wandering around and the nights sleeping with other companion boys who had found a shelter with their

Turkish "guardians." It was a miracle that he survived the hazards of a long journey back to Trebizond on foot. He took refuge in the house of a Greek family friend, but they too were afraid to keep him. The punishment for sheltering Armenians was severe (chaps. 8-9).

Zaven recalled the day when Russians seized the city, and he was running free in Trebizond. He remembered how he entered his family's house, "as if I had entered a large tomb" (147). The house had been looted and swept clean down to the bare walls. After a few days of desperate searching for relatives or a surviving acquaintance, he boarded a Russian ship to cross the Black Sea. After a few months he returned to Russian-occupied Trebizond and reunited with his brother and two sisters in the house of their Greek benefactor. Dr. Metaxas had sheltered Zaven's older brother Onnik from the beginning, and had helped the two sisters to run away from the house of a Turkish woman who had picked them up from the *meidan* where they had been displayed along with other orphans for Turkish townfolk, peasants, and traders to pick whomever they chose as a wife, a concubine, or a young helper. Now the siblings were back together and they knew they were orphans. "Our deepest sorrows lay buried in our hearts, wounds that would never heal..." (172).

He was already eleven years and holding up as the Armenian Zaven, the Turkish Jemal, and the Greek Yanko. The short period of respite, however, was ended by the Russian revolution and the retreat of the Russian army. Armenians had to flee before the Turks occupied

Trebizond again. Zaven found himself in Batumi, then after Enver's attack he fled to Tbilisi, then Vladikavkaz, Rostov, and back to Constantinople, Armash, then he returned to free and independent Armenia by way of Batumi and Tbilisi. Now their group of boys led by their teacher was in Alexandropol (Giumri) to witness the horrible devastation caused by the Turkish invaders.

Churches had been robbed of their valuables and transformed into stables for army horses or latrines for the warring Anatolian peasantry. In many villages the Turks had seized the entire female population for a mass raping, not even sparing young girls of six or seven, nor old women. (213-14)

Zaven's ordeal did not end when he settled in Yerevan where he attended an agricultural school. The Kemalist army was threatening the newly born Armenian Republic, and the Soviets were pushing for the sovietization of Armenia in return for their promise to defend the small republic against a new Turkish massacre.

Zaven lived in Soviet Armenia for a while and even earned a living working as an assistant secretary in the Commissariat of the Interior of the Armenian SSR, thanks to his knowledge of the Armenian language which the Armenian communists lacked. Then he managed to get permission to travel out of Soviet Armenia and reached Batumi. There he feigned Italian citizenship and stowed away on an Italian ship bound for Constantinople via Trebizond (chaps. 17-18). It is amazing how this teenage

boy was able to survive all alone during this tumultuous period, frequently changing locations, avoiding incarceration or being killed. Evidently, the situation aged him quickly and made a tough person out of him.

Another important autobiographical novel comes from Hagop Asadourian, and interestingly, he too ventured to write about his horror-stricken childhood only after he had been living in the United States for twenty-two years.²² In the first part of *Hovakimi t'omerē* (Joachim's grandchildren) (Hovakim or Joachim being the author's grandfather), dedicated to a detailed description of his native village, the narrator comes across as a happy child, proud of his village, the most beautiful, the sunniest in the world, and proud of his mother, the best in the world.²³ Ch'omakhlu was

²² Asadourian was born in 1903 in the village of Ch'omakhlu in the Cappadocia region. After passing through the hell of deportations, he reached Jerusalem in 1918 and was temporarily sheltered in the AGBU orphanage. In 1920 he settled in the U.S. where he established a successful rug business in 1933, but he also dedicated himself to Armenian culture, music, and literature. A self-taught man of letters, he joined *Nor Kir* in 1936 and regularly contributed poetry, creative prose, and literary criticism to that paper and to others such as *Bayk'ar* (*Payk'ar*) and *Arev*. He visited Soviet Armenia many times, beginning in 1965, and was recognized and honored in literary circles and by the government. He died in 2003 in New York.

²³ Asadourian's *Hovakimi t'omerē* won first prize in the creative writing contest organized by *T'ek'eyan Mshakut'ayin Miut'iun* (Tekeyan Cultural Society) on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide and was published by that organization (Beirut: Atlas Press, 1965). Subsequent page numbers cited in parentheses refer to this work.

basically an Armenian village with only nine Turkish families who spoke Armenian. There were two churches, one Apostolic and one Protestant, for the Armenian population of 1,500, and there was a mosque for the nine Turkish families.

In 1915, the young men of the village were drafted into the Turkish Army, and the older men were assigned to labor battalions. The rest of the population, mostly women and children and sick or elderly men, was deported. The deportation order came suddenly. Early one day before dawn, when the village was still asleep, the town crier announced the order, allowing the townfolk three hours to get started on the journey.

Curiously, Asadourian begins the second part when the survivors from the village have already reached Aleppo (or Cham, an older name of the city, as the refugees called it). There are no details about how they reached Aleppo. Asadourian depicts the pitiful life of the refugees there, with thefts, murders, and girls raped or dragged away by local Turks and Arabs. Harut'iun's²⁴ beautiful sister Srбуhi was bought by an old Turkish Pasha for two gold coins. His mother, coming to her senses the next morning, awakened Harut'iun and together they went in search of Srбуhi. They found her in

²⁴ Harut'iun is the name of the narrator of this autobiographical novel. Perhaps this was how the author was called in his village. Or it may be that by giving the narrator a different name from his own, Hagop Asadourian was allowing himself some leeway to fictionalize some aspects of his life and set his work apart from a mere record of memories.

the Pasha's house, crying her heart out. The Pasha's jealous and outraged wife helped them get her back. Harut'iun's mother made sure to return the gold coins.

Then they were driven to Boseyra, an Arab village in the middle of the desert. The road from Aleppo to Boseyra was rough and full of hardship. The cruel *zaptiehs* (gendarmes) showed no pity for the fallen. The refugees walked with difficulty, praying to God all along, as if in a religious procession. The shocking outcry of a woman disrupted this religious fervor as she harshly disparaged God, a resonance of the response paradigm of the first-generation survivor-writers, never found anywhere else in the memoirs of the younger or orphan generation. The woman was desperate, shouting like crazy: "After fooling us and lulling us with a blunt quill and scroll, you pulled the *Koran* out of a belligerent bull's horn and gave it to Mohamed. Instead of the quill you put the sword in his hand. Then you went up, and now you laugh at us, resting comfortably on your throne...." The other women, bewildered, told her to ask for mercy and forgiveness, but she carried on (224).

In Boseyra, stripped of their money and their meager belongings, the refugees were unable to purchase even a piece of bread from the Arabs who themselves were living in extreme poverty. A scanty spring was the only source of water in that appalling village. That too was sometimes blocked by vicious Arab girls who would not allow the refugees to come near (358).

Only 331 deportees survived to reach Boseyra, and during about a year in that hell, all but twenty-nine died

of starvation, one by one (373). In the beginning, the boys, including Harutian, took charge of digging the graves. But they grew weary and weak. Now the graves were shallow and scavenger birds and beasts dug the bodies out, devoured them, and left the bones scattered around. Harutian remembers two old women digging their own grave with their last bit of strength, digging as deep as they could so that scavengers would not get to them after they were dead and buried (298-300).

As the number of dead increased, digging their graves became an arduous and impossible task. The village *mukhtar* thought of a clever way of getting rid of the bodies. He found an abyss over the hill behind the village. It was easier to dump the bodies there and forget about them. In their haste to get rid of the dead, the boys sometimes even dragged away some who were still alive (321-3). Harutian's mother held on until her two daughters, Berchuhi and Srбуhi, died, then she too died of starvation. She just gave up, especially when in her simple mind she came to the conclusion that Jesus did not speak Armenian and therefore did not understand her supplications. She refused to eat her share of the bread that Harutian occasionally brought home as his wage when he was lucky enough to do a small job for an Arab. When she died, friends helped him drag her body to the pit. He could never forget the scene, he keeps repeating, now decades after the incident. Her head twice hit the boulders at the edge of the mass grave. Imagine this scene revisiting you now and then; unforgettable, a dreadful memory that would never fade.

Harutian was now an orphan, and his only hope was his married oldest sister, Aghavni, who had lost her husband and children and was living with the remnants of her brother-in-law's family. They managed to leave Boleyra and go to Tfilé, another Arab town with better living conditions, and Harutian followed them. The third part of the book depicts the miserable life of the refugees in Tfilé. During the frenzy of an Arab mob attacking the refugees, Harutian lost Aghavni. Now he was all alone, the only survivor of their big happy family in Chomakhlu.

Hagop Asadourian's cool and realistic depictions, Aram Haykaz's optimism and light humor, and Leon Zaven Surmelian's soldier-like strong will and determination (all three residents of the U.S.) are almost non-existent in French Armenian literary responses. In a series of literary sketches, Shavarsh Narduni (né Ayvazian) pours out his nostalgic sentiments while making references to his happy childhood in Armash.²⁵ Narduni practiced medicine in Paris, but occasionally he also wrote literary pieces. He never wrote a novel; he did not care for the genre. His style had some rhetorical tendencies, but he could certainly draw life-like images

²⁵ Shavarsh Ayvazian was born in Armash in 1898. In 1918 he was drafted in the Turkish army. After the war he studied medicine in Constantinople and then in Paris, graduating in 1927. A prominent intellectual, he left a small body of valuable literary creations, essays on literary criticism, and articles analyzing social, cultural, and political issues pertaining to Armenians in the Diaspora. He died in Paris in 1968.

of reality in a few strokes. *Ov Kaghand* (O New Year's Eve) is an abstract autobiography, depicting a visit to his native village, but of course, in a dream.²⁶

Narduni's childhood reminiscences continue in *Vo tayr indz ztsukhn tskhani* (Who would give me the smoke of the chimney).²⁷ In this piece, his father is drafted into the army and his mother and younger brothers, together with a group of refugees, somehow escape deportation and wander for months through Turkish villages on the Black Sea coast. There are no details as to how he is separated from his mother and brothers. We see him in Adabazar with two other boys. They sleep in the plundered and half-ruined houses of deported Armenians, and sometimes even find a crust of bread or a piece of fruit that Turkish settlers missed when looting the house. Every morning they roam the streets of the Greek quarter in search of work as woodcutters. The loud voice of one of the boys, confidently shouting "*Odun kisser*," fills the streets. He doesn't like Shavarsh's gloomy voice, likening his call to singing a *sharakan* (hymn). When they find a job, the two boys, both ex-shepherds, cut the wood, and Shavarsh carries it to the customer's house. That is all he can do. The boys mock him and call him *tirats'u* (deacon) because he has had some schooling. Soon the boys encounter a young Armenian soldier in the area. They take him into their group and fire Shavarsh; the soldier is stronger and more

²⁶ Shavarsh Narduni, *Ov Kaghand* (O New Year's Eve), in *Grakan ts'olk'er* (Literary reflections) (Beirut: Hamazkayin, 1975), pp. 36-48.

²⁷ *Vo tayr indz ztsukhn tskhani*, in *ibid.*, pp. 158-64.

useful. Shavarsh is left to wander, hungry and homeless, yearning for a home of his own.

Images of the past, memories of his childhood come as flashbacks in the sketch (repetitive memories, psychologists would call them). Narduni is a grown man in Paris still yearning for a home. It is New Year's Eve, just like the one in Adabazar, when he sat on a street corner, shivering from the cold and dreaming of a warm home. Now he longs again for a home, and this time home has a collective meaning. His pain is that of being deprived of a homeland. "Give us a home. Give us back our home."

Childhood memories pop up in his mind in unexpected situations. He confesses that the smell of watermelon causes in him an inexplicable sensation that transports him to his village and tangles him up in childhood memories, pleasant but painful.²⁸ In another instance, walking in the Armenian quarters of Marseilles, he praises his legs that have become young again to carry him through his journey.²⁹ He remembers his village where he was a young boy and his legs were young and strong, and they would fly him away fast when he was caught with his friends stealing eggs from an old woman. Now he begs his legs to take him back to his village life. He is ready to discard the cloak of civilization and become the peasant Shavarsh again.

²⁸ *I khorots' srté* (From the bottom of my heart), in *ibid.*, pp. 102-8.

²⁹ *Orhneal ëllak' vodk'ers* (Blessed be my legs), in *ibid.*, pp. 155-7.

In another sketch, he succeeds in running away from his city life and taking the imaginary road to his native village. Having reached a tree at the gates of his village, he sits in its shade and ponders the deplorable fate of his people. Unlike the tree, the bush, the drop of water, all protected with soil, he writes, Armenians were driven out and denied that soil beneath their feet to grow and prosper. He offers a somber prayer and wishes to become a tree, "to spread my shade and my sweet fragrance upon the martyrs of my race."³⁰

In this context of childhood memories and references to the Catastrophe, where to put Garo P'oladian's novels, *Artsivnerē anapatin mej* (The eagles in the desert, 1958) and its sequel, *Kraké shapikē* (The shirt of fire, 1966)? He was too young to remember his hometown in Cilicia, and he made no claim to have written an autobiographical novel. However, intense research, reading, listening to eyewitness accounts, a bit of memory, and strong imagination gave him enough ammunition to write novels, essays, and poems that deal directly with the calamitous Armenian experience during the Genocide.³¹

³⁰ *Aghot'k' tsari mē tak* (Prayer under a tree), in *ibid.*, pp. 190-2.

³¹ Garo Poladian (Karo, or Karapet, Polatian) was born in Marash and may have been one year or four years old in 1915, according to different sources. He survived the massacres and reached Deir el-Zor and Aleppo. He lived in Aleppo, 1921-29, and then went to Addis Ababa to work as a teacher. In 1931 he was in Marseilles to pursue his education and his career as an Armenian writer and intellectual.

Cilicia and the Cilician Armenians come alive in *Eagles in the Desert*.³² The author as narrator skillfully depicts the natural beauty of the mountainous village that rests majestically below Red Hill, known to be the sanctuary of brave eagles, the guardians of the village. Armen, the protagonist,³³ hails his fellow villagers as free and as brave as eagles, different from those Armenians who chose to come down from the mountains and live by the sandy shore.

The narrator describes pre-WWI village life in detail. Then comes ominous news of the war breaking out, and soon a decree is signed by the governor and by the Armenian Catholicos, summoning all men to present themselves at the governor's office in three days. Interesting is the account of opposing views among the villagers: whether to trust the government's promise of safety and obey the order, as the Catholicos himself advises, or to disregard the order and take up arms to defend themselves, their families, and their village. The argument against the latter option is that it would give the government a pretext to persecute thousands of innocent people. But before the villagers can reach a consensus, the deportation order comes to override the first. A few young men, along with Shaké, the revolution-

³² Poladian, *Artsivnerē anapatin mej* (The eagles in the desert) (Paris: Araxes, 1958). Subsequent page numbers cited in parentheses refer to this work.

³³ If the novel is read as a fictionalized and embellished autobiography, the character of Armen should be regarded as inspired by the author's father.

ary woman of the village, take their weapons and retreat into the mountains in order to avoid deportation and prepare to fight the Turkish army. The rest of villagers are driven out on the road. Their supplies of food and water are gradually depleted and death begins to spread its horrifying wings over the caravan (321-352).

After weeks of walking, they are deep in the desert, and as the caravan makes its usual stop for the night, Chechens show up. They are the most ferocious tribe in the Syrian Desert. They start looting and killing under the indifferent gaze of the gendarmes. They snatch children, kidnap women, defile them, and leave them to die. Armen's sweetheart Shushan, who had become mute when as a child she witnessed the murder of her parents by the Turks, is one of the victims. His first reaction is to turn against God. He targets Hayr Sourb, the religious leader of the flock, who is trying to console the deportees and pray for the dead. "Why do you say God is almighty? Where is his power? Let him show it.... Why do you still believe in that God of yours..." (348). He finds Shushan some distance from the camp, unconscious, naked, blood running from her loins and her severed breasts; he takes her back to the camp and looks after her.

The next morning, the caravan moves on, leaving behind the dead and the dying. The refugees are told that they are being taken to Mosul where they will live in comfort until the war is over. But who would believe that? Four days later they reach Ghat'ma (K'at'ma, el-Qatma), near Aleppo, but are denied permission to enter

the city. Their caravan is one of hundreds camping there. (358).

The next day, Palm Sunday of 1916, with the Chechens tracking along behind them, the refugees in their tens of thousands are put on the road to Deir el-Zor, the station of final liquidation. But total liquidation becomes problematic, as Poladian puts it, because the gendarmes do not have adequate means to get rid of all the deportees on the road. The attacks by Chechens and by Turkish and Kurdish villagers, the looting, the killing, the snatching of children and young women have not sufficed. Starvation, thirst, and disease have not finished the job (483). While other desert populations are not too enthusiastic about carrying out the government's programs, Poladian tells us, the newly appointed governor, "the bestial Ahmed Bey," dispatched from Constantinople, devises the means. He recruits the Chechens, promises them booty, distributes rifles, and puts them in charge of the final liquidation. Riding horseback with rifles in hand, they crush people underfoot and randomly shoot, killing some and injuring others. It is the Thursday before Easter, and as Hayr Sourb attempts to perform the rites of *Votnalva*, his chest is cut open by a Chechen's sword. With his last breath, he cries out a prayer that is more like a protest, accusing God of indifference, or conniving with the enemy. "How can I make these people believe in you anymore?" (487).

Significant in this pandemonium is Shushan's extraordinary act of rage and revenge after she gives birth. The seed of the savage Chechen assailant has

grown in the womb of the suffering mute girl, and now that the child is born, Shushan turns into a beast. Armen is unable to stop her as she crushes underfoot the small bloody bundle of flesh, the result of the abhorrent rape (451). The innocent creature has become the symbol of the crime and must be destroyed as a substitute for the real criminal.³⁴

In a rare coincidence, Armen finds Shaké among the arriving caravans. She has left the mountains and joined a caravan of deportees in order to search for Armen whom she has loved all along, despite his inclination for Shushan. Dirty and dressed in rags, Shaké looks like an old woman. She is only recognizable by her agile movements and her indomitable will to struggle and survive. Things had become difficult for the fighters in the mountains. They had run out of food and ammunition and the Turks had discovered their hideout. They were on the run, always followed by the Turkish army. But worst of all was the disenchantment that devastated the fighters and broke their will to resist. In

³⁴ Suren Partevian recounts a similar reaction in his book devoted to the Armenian women victims of the 1894-96 massacres, *Haiuhin* (The Armenian woman) (Constantinople: P. Palents Bookstore, 1911): Saik'o kills her newborn because it was conceived during her forced conjugal life with her Kurdish kidnapper. See Perroomian, *Literary Responses* (1993), pp. 129-30. Could this rare occurrence recorded by Partevian have inspired Poladian to recreate it in Shushan's unusual reaction? Or it may be that this was an occurrence not so unusual for the victims of rape during the Genocide.

this desperate situation, Shaké, the brave warrior of the village, left the group (490-2).

The joy of reunion is tarnished by an uproar of screams and cries. A big fire is in sight. Chechens are burning alive the children they collected. The gendarmes' random shooting quiets the screams. More people fall dead. Then the few survivors of the carnage are lined up. The process is horrendous. Two Chechens carry those in line, one by one, and deliver them to the gendarmes who search the victims for "valuables" and put the takings in a basket guarded by Ahmed Bey himself. Then the victims are turned over to a group of Chechens who strip them of their clothes. The chieftain selects the better ones. The Chechens then drag the victim to the edge of a large pit, and holding them by the neck or hair, cut the head off with a playful swing of the sword and push the body into the pit. Shushan is among these victims. Armen almost goes mad watching her beheaded body go down the pit, involuntarily quivering. When his turn comes, Manuk Agha, the Islamized Armenian standing next to him, pushes him down into the pit before the Chechen has a chance to behead him. Next, Manuk Agha's headless body is thrown into the pit. Ahmed Bey didn't believe his story of being a Muslim convert and having aided the Turkish army (509).

When the process ends, the murderers walk away and things quiet down in the pit. Shaké and Armen, the only two miraculously still alive, find each other. The rest is a story of survival, the struggle to go on living to avenge the crime by telling the world about it. They

climb out of the pit and begin walking hand in hand in the desert. It is Easter Sunday, 1916. "To live is a duty for us now... because thousands live in each one of us," says Shaké (517).

After a year of wandering in the desert they finally reach Aleppo under British control. Their child, born in the desert, they have named Vrezh ("Revenge"). The act of revenge is completed when they learn that Ahmed Bey and his assistant Hassan Agha, disguised in women's clothes, are attempting to escape by train. Shaké, dressed as a missionary woman, and Armen, as a Maronite priest, enter their train compartment and kill the two murderers of the Armenian people (356-7).

After the war, Armen and Shaké, together with their newborn son and other survivors, return to their village in British-controlled Cilicia to find it looted and rased to the ground. They begin to rebuild their houses. But the period of respite is short. The French, who replace the British forces, are not ready to stand against the Turkish national army. The Armenians are left alone to defend their towns and villages and Shaké and Armen are on the ramparts again. Here the novel ends, to be continued in *Kraké shapikë* (The shirt of fire), in which Vrezh, the young survivor of the Genocide, grows up in France to experience all the contradictory emotions and struggles of the generation that came after the one that was known as the "Paris boys."

The pain of orphanhood

Autobiographical novels, each telling a unique story of survival, also depict an aspect of the Great Crime. One can go on discussing these pieces at length and never reach the end, because no matter how vastly the landscape of the killing fields is extended, it still cannot encompass the entire reality of the atrocities committed or convey the scope of the fire that scorched the erstwhile thriving life on the Armenian land. What was left after the flames of the inferno died down was nothing but a host of spiritually and socially dead survivors and multitudes of orphans scattered in the world or continuing to live on the ruins of their homeland with their identities changed, hidden, or silenced, at best.

Indeed, traumatic experience during the Genocide resulted in a psychological affliction, an inner tumult symptomized by the pain of orphanhood. Innocent and carefree childhood was denied to these orphans. After their parents' tragic death, they were left to wander, living in the streets, barefoot, half-naked, always hungry, begging or stealing food to stay alive, shivering in the winter cold, and burning under the scorching summer sun. They bore the indifference or harassment of passers-by or the cold-heartedness of relatives. They slept with the street dogs in dirty gutters. This is the image that rolls before the mind's eye when one reads Vazgen Shushanian's *Vasn patranat'ap' mankut'ian ev mnayun aghk'atut'ian* (On account of a disillusioned childhood and lasting poverty), Andranik Tsarukian's *Mankutiun ch'unets'ogh mardik* (Men without childhood), Mushegh

Ishkhan's *Hats'i ev luysi hamar* (For bread and light), Leon Surmelian's *I Ask You, Ladies and Gentlemen*, Aram Haykaz's *Ts'eghin dzaynē* (The voice of the race), and all the other autobiographical writings discussed earlier.

The predicament of the orphan remained an important component of their psyche, and thus their personality, lasting all their lives. The formation of *Ch'ap'ahas Vorberi Miut'iun* (Union of Adult Orphans) in Paris was a symptomatic manifestation of this predicament. Besides being a spiritual refuge for the orphan generation, the Union was also a charity organization that served the needs of the orphans, the helpless, and the homeless. Above all, it worked to collect documents.

A notable exception is Hagop Asadourian's alter ego in his autobiographical novel. Harutian rejects the orphan's predicament. The title of the last chapter, "I Don't Want to Be an Orphan," is emblematic. On a September morning in 1918, a small caravan of orphans in the most deplorable state arrives at the Monastery of St. James (*Sourb Hakoba Vank'*) in Jerusalem. The Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) welcomes them and sends the older ones to refugee camp and the younger ones to the orphanage. It is at this moment, Harutian confesses, that, "for the first time in three years, I realize my being an orphan." He protests against the label. He refuses to go to the orphanage. "No, Mr. 'Benevolent,' I don't want to be an orphan."³⁵

³⁵ Asadourian, *Hovakimi tornere* (1965), p. 432.

Shavarsh Narduni made scant reference to his life as a homeless orphan in Adabazar. In *Vo tayr indz ztsukhs tskhani*, he sketched his longing for a home and a warm bed where he would wake up in the morning to the sweet voice of his mother. "Hunger and the fear of Turks could not wreck me as much as my longing for a home."³⁶

The orphanages set up in Aleppo, Damascus, and Constantinople, despite all their shortcomings, were a haven for some of these wretched creatures who somehow found their way to them. But there too, nightmares did not let go of them. The terrifying, debilitating images of their parents being tortured and murdered, their sisters being raped or dragged away, visited them at night, and they jumped up screaming in horror. But at least they were sheltered, and their stomachs were at least always half-full. Orphanages were also a refuge for adults, many of whom were the sole survivors of their families. Orphanages offered them work and a place to live.

Andranik Tsarukian, born in Gurun in 1912, spent three years in orphanages in Aleppo. His mother, homeless and wandering about, finally found him and they began a life together in poverty and deprivation. Nearly thirty years after he left the orphanage as a ten-year-old boy, Tsarukian reminisced in *Men without*

³⁶ Narduni, *Vo tayr indz ztsukhn tskhani*, in *Grakan tsolker* (1975), pp. 161-2.

Childhood (1949).³⁷ He remembered the kind and nice *Mayriks* and *Hayriks* (Mothers and Fathers, i.e. female caretakers and male guards at the facility). But he also remembered those who treated the orphans with utter cruelty and subjected them to harsh punishment for their childish mischief. They stole from the meager budget of the orphanage; they stole the food from the children's mouths. The Turkish atrocities had turned these otherwise humble, gentle, ordinary men and women into egocentric creatures who were capable of doing anything to survive. These were the type of survivors who would enter normal society later in life carrying a burden of guilt. Surveys and studies of survivors of collective tragedies with similar experiences show that in order to suppress their sense of guilt, they justify their past acts and continue on the same path which has become second-nature to them, a pattern of behavior. Others suffer all their lives with a feeling of guilt, perhaps trying to compensate for it through excessive charity.

Lying, cheating, stealing, and beating the weaker ones was the name of the game of survival for children in the orphanage. "Love was a word with no meaning to us, and friendship, an unfamiliar feeling. Bread was the

³⁷ Andranik Tsarukian was already an accomplished writer and poet when he wrote this account of his miserable childhood. He lived most of his life in Aleppo and Beirut, and moved to Paris in 1983 where he died in 1989.

friend, the kin, the love."³⁸ They had lost their innocence and their trust in the goodness of humankind.

Vazgen Shushanian lost his parents and family during the massacres and grew up in the streets of a few Middle Eastern cities before reaching Paris. He always remained conscious of being an orphan: "When others grew up in their warm and cozy beds with their mothers' loving care, I tasted the danger of an unbridled adolescence on filthy street corners. I grew up with other street boys, and our best friends were the leprous and hungry dogs."³⁹

Mushegh Ishkhan became an orphan twice, first at the age of one when his father was murdered during the

³⁸ Andranik Tsarukian, *Mankut'iun Ch'unets'ogh Mardik* (Men without childhood) (reprint, Beirut: G. Donigian & fils, 1980), p. 8. This memoir was first published as a feuilleton in *Nairi* (the periodical he himself edited and published) in nos. 1-7 (1949). It was then published as a book in 1952 in Beirut, and then again in 1963 in Yerevan. The Russian translation appeared in 1964 in Moscow; the French in 1977 in Paris.

Nairi was Tsarukian's second ego, his self-image, and at the same time his brain child for which he cared so much that he sacrifice his time and effort at the cost of the creative literature he might have produced. He even contributed the modest income he received as a teacher at times when the periodical was in dire straits. It is not possible to separate the writer, the poet, and the memoirist from the periodical he edited and published single-handedly for forty years. *Nairi* was the voice of an era, when the Armenian survivors and the orphan generation had established themselves and a cultural, economic, and social revival was underway.

³⁹ Vazgen Shushanian, *Vasn patranat'ap' mankut'ian ev mnayun aghk'atut'ian* (On account of a disillusioned childhood and lasting poverty), unpublished, quoted in *Vazgen Shushanian*, ed. Gegham Sevan (Yerevan: Armenian SSR Academy of Sciences, 1968), p. 45.

deportation, and then again at the age of five when his uncle and adoptive father was tortured and exiled. He carried the wound of orphanhood all along, looking with envy upon boys who still had their fathers. "Galust is lucky," he wrote of his childhood friend. "Of the boys and girls I know he is the only one who has a father. A father who is not slaughtered, not hanged, not dead, not exiled...."⁴⁰

Ishkhan's autobiographical novel, *Hats'i ev luysi hamar* (For bread and light), is another portrayal of the desolation of orphanhood.⁴¹ The novel tells the story of orphan boys in their painful struggle for survival in the harsh conditions of the streets of Damascus. In the beginning, Setrak (Sedrak), the author's protagonist and alter ego, still has his mother and his uncle.⁴² He even attends school and he's a good student. But the continuing hardships, from the deportation routes to the battle for survival in Damascus, prove disastrous for the family. His mother falls ill and is unable to continue her strenuous work as a washing lady in the homes of other refugees. His uncle, frustrated by not finding a job or a source of scant income suffers a stroke and becomes

⁴⁰ Ishkhan, *Mnas barov* (1974), p. 52.

⁴¹ Ishkhan, *Hats'i ev luysi hamar* (Beirut: Hamazkayin, 1951). Subsequent page numbers cited in parentheses refer to this work.

⁴² A comparison between this novel and Ishkhan's memoir, *Mnas barov mankutian*, indicates that the character of Setrak, despite being the author's alter ego, exhibits traits, elements, and details different from his own. Setrak is actually a collective image, the embodiment of many orphan boys, the conceptualization and symbolization of those who shared the same fate in the streets of Damascus.

bedridden for the rest of his life. Setrak is the family's only hope. He has to leave school at the age of fourteen, to bury his dreams of a bright future and work as a shoeshine boy.⁴³ (5-6)

Setrak roams the streets from dawn to dusk, many days on an empty stomach, to be able to take a few coins home to his sick mother and disabled uncle. These remnants of what was once a large family, before the Genocide, live in a shack on the outskirts of town, in abject poverty, dragging out their existence without a hope for the future.

Setrak has to fight against other shoeshine boys for his right "to do business" in the streets. There are rules in the street: territories are established and trespassing is brutally punished. These boys are tough on the outside, but they are like injured animals; each one has his own heart-rending story of family members murdered or dying of hunger, thirst, and disease.

Vahan, the youngest of all, was six or seven years old when the deportations began. His father had been killed months before. His younger sister died of starvation. His older sister was kidnapped and taken away. Only he and his mother were able to reach Deir el-Zor. There the gendarmes separated the children from their mothers, beating those who would not let go of each other's hands. Vahan never saw his mother again. It is easy to say that children were separated from their mothers. It

⁴³ According to his memoir, Mushegh Ishkhan finished elementary school before he took to the streets and earned his living as an apprentice in a shoemaker's shop.

takes imagination and human empathy to feel the agony. "Run! Run away! Don't wait," his mother had shouted, and he ran. It was a miracle that the gendarmes did not notice him. He ran to the river, the Euphrates, "a moving haven for escape," Vahan recounts, and "at the same time, the grave of thousands of Armenians; nevertheless, a source of scant hope for my hopeless eyes" (66). Alone and scared, he spent his first night hiding in the bushes on the riverbank, and then two more days watching the bodies floating along the river. Gradually he got used to the horrifying sight. He even played games with it, betting on which one of the bodies floating in groups would be the first to reach this or that spot (69).

Vahan's experience, similar to those of many others in similar circumstances, is a vivid example of what psychiatrists Levon Boyajian and Haigaz Grigorian describe as "the frequent sense of detachment from the horrifying events occurring around them." Characteristically, however, although "the events are witnessed with an absence of affect... they are indelibly imprinted, never to be forgotten, frequently to be recalled, and often accompanied by persistent nightmares."⁴⁴ Boyajian and Grigorian call this phenomenon "hypermnesia," the abnormally strong memory of the past, a common trait among survivors of the Armenian Genocide, and one that we will see

⁴⁴ Boyajian and Grigorian, "Psychosocial Sequelae," in *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective* (1986), p. 179.

exemplified in the memoirists who wrote a detailed account of their memories decades after the experience.

In a groundbreaking study,⁴⁵ Mardi Jon Horowitz expounds on this phenomenon, and her findings are useful here because flashbacks, nightmares, and unexpected and unwarranted thoughts of a destructive nature were common occurrences among all the survivors whose life stories are brought to bear in this book as examples to demonstrate a widely experienced psychological state. In the cognitive processing of information following a traumatic experience, Horowitz maintains, there is a phase in which the victim tries, mostly subconsciously, to reconcile the thoughts, images, and memories associated with the traumatic experience with his existing cognitive-world models of schemata. In this phase, psychological defense mechanisms go to work to keep these thoughts, images, and memories, that is, the traumatic information, deep in the unconscious. However, this trauma-related information is capable of breaking through the victim's defenses and intruding into consciousness in the form of flashbacks, nightmares, and unwanted thoughts. It is presumed that a professional Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder therapist can help to bring this information to the active memory and make the reconciliation possible. For many Armenian survivors, who never had access to psychological therapy or sought outside help, this phase of cognitive processing

⁴⁵ Mardi Jon Horowitz, *Stress Response Syndromes* (2nd ed., New York: Jason Aronson, 1986).

of information never reached completion and conscious or subconscious reconciliation was not achieved.

In Ishkhan's novel, Vahan's game turns ugly when the bodies floating on the river come straight at him and hit him on the river bank, tangling around his feet. Scared to death, he can no longer stay there; he has to run away. After walking a distance, hungry and thirsty, he comes across an Arab Bedouin who is kind enough to feed him and take him home to his "wife," Mariam, a young Armenian woman whose life he had "saved." After a while, Vahan and Mariam escape to Aleppo. Vahan begins his life in the streets of Damascus, miserable but free.⁴⁶

Setrak, Avetis, Arsen, and Vahan belong to the generation of orphans who were thrown into the streets to fight the battle of survival alone. They are dreamers without the hope of ever seeing their dreams come true. These shoeshine boys gradually adjust themselves to the exigencies of survival in the streets. To curse, to steal, and to run away fast if caught in the act, these are the tools of their everyday struggle to survive. Setrak is changed too. The lowly life his friends lead no longer shocks him. Their dirty deeds and the dirty words they use no longer seem sacrilegious to him as they did before. He too becomes a true adventurer, who also smokes and uses alcohol. He and his friends are a bunch of juvenile scamps. The cruel life in the streets has made them tough and unforgiving. They have had to fight the

⁴⁶ Ishkhan, *Hatsi ev luysi* (1951), pp. 66-72.

fight that was not always a just one. They have learned "the law of nature" that always goes against the poor and the unprotected. Indeed, the profound psychological trauma these orphans experienced at a young age has made them move away from traditional, honest ways in their struggle to survive in the cruel world. The dishonest and filthy struggle calls for weapons of the same kind. In the words of Shushanian, "snatch, steal, plunder, rob, these are the slogans of a harsh and vulgar fight."⁴⁷ Not surprisingly, we encounter such behavioral pattern in the characters portrayed by other young post-Genocide writers like Shahan Shahnur, Zareh Vorbuni, and Garo Mehian.

Arsen, the toughest of all in Setrak's gang, justifies his petty thefts by comparing them to the great injustice committed against his people: "Can you tell me why they slaughtered your father, your mother, your sisters and brothers? Why did they drive us out of our homes and our homeland? What was our sin? For what sin of ours were we punished, and the Turk was never punished?"⁴⁸

But the most difficult and painful act of stealing that Arsen commits is when he has to secretly take the soccer ball away from Vahan, who is in charge of keeping it safe. Vahan is the "treasurer" of the soccer team the shoeshine orphans have formed. Now he is terribly ill. This always weak, ill-looking, pale-faced boy is losing his battle with tuberculosis. The boys have to sell the ball,

⁴⁷ Quoted in Gegham Sevan, ed., *Vazgen Shushanian* (Yerevan: Armenian SSR Academy of Sciences, 1968), p. 105.

⁴⁸ Ishkhan, *Hatsi ev luysi* (1951), p. 202.

which they had purchased only with great hardship, in order to pay for a doctor's visit. Vahan, all alone, spitting blood, burning with fever, cuddled under a pile of rags in the dark corner at the bottom of a stairwell that he calls home, is dreaming of his imminent reunion with his mother in heaven. A subtle smile on his lips reflects an inner joy of deliverance from all the suffering the little boy has endured in his short and miserable life. Too late, the doctor says, tuberculosis has done its fatal damage. But Setrak's paralyzed uncle has a better explanation: the damage was done at Deir el-Zor.⁴⁹

Hundreds of orphans spent their childhood years homeless and alone, or passed through orphanages carrying bittersweet memories and an unhealed wound, the life-long psychic imprint of their tragic childhood experience. After the war the survivors began to wander around in search of other members of their family or kin who might have survived. Avetis, Arsen, Vahan, and other characters in Ishkhan's autobiographical novel, a collective representation of all the street boys in Damascus and Aleppo, continue their daily struggle without hope of finding a parent or other kin, or any kind of support. Andranik Tsarukian was luckier. One day his mother appeared at the door of the orphanage to claim her son.

What became of the others, good boys and bad boys, the young children of three to nine years of age who populate Tsarukian's *Men without Childhood*? Khach'ik,

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 228.

an orphan boy whom Andranik loved and admired, knew he had no choice but to stay; he had no option other than the orphanage. He had seen his father and mother murdered in front of his eyes, his mother holding Khach'ik's newborn sister tight in her arms while breathing her last breath. What happened to this poor, hopeless boy, an intimidating, belligerent bully on the outside with a tender heart on the inside? What ever became of Khoren, the nine-year-old leader of the gang of petty thieves at school? Harutian died young, consumed by tuberculosis. The cold, damp barracks of the orphanage had planted the deadly disease in his fragile, weak, and malnourished body. Gevorg committed suicide. He was not equipped to cope with the cruelty of life outside the orphanage. Andranik Tsarukian became a writer, publicist, and educator, yet with psychological hang-ups manifesting in the most unexpected ways in his literature and always interfering in his social life.

Orphanhood became a lasting predicament from which this generation never recovered and always remained motherless children who found some gratification in a beyond-the-grave relationship or a long-lasting dream. There is profound meaning in the way this generation identified itself as *ch'ap'ahas vorber* (adult orphans), signifying an array of feelings, mental states, outlook, and life style. The literature this generation produced is a reflection of that predicament.

The pain of orphanhood is an underlying leitmotif in Levon Zaven Surmelian's collection of poems, *Luys Zvart* (Joyful light), especially those written in 1924. In these

later poems he espouses a more realistic approach, moving away from the abstract melancholy prevailing in his earlier poems. He longs for his home which has become a memory. He misses his mother who perished during the 1915 massacres and left her seven-year-old boy an orphan for life. He wishes she could see him now, with his manly manners and his flaming eyes, could hear how he suffered, how he was often beaten by grown men.⁵⁰ There are myriads of poems dedicated to murdered mothers; among them, Surmelian's *Mayrikis* (To my Mother) stands out for its imagery, the flight of imagination, and the intensity, but also the nobility of his emotions.

When Zaven's parents were about to be deported after they were discovered hiding in the house of a Greek friend, his mother entrusted a few valuables to the friend, to be given to her four children if they stayed alive. Years later, when the children, two girls and two boys, were briefly reunited, their mother's memorabilia was distributed to them. Zaven received his mother's wedding ring, and he wore it on his little finger. That may have been a factor influencing the deranged, beyond-the-grave relationship that developed in him. "You, my marble lover.... / Tell me / How to find, how to find / My dead."⁵¹

⁵⁰ Surmelian, *Tunis hishatake* (The memory of my home), in Tekeyan and Surmelian, *Vahan Tekeyani namaknere... Luys Zvart* (1950), p. 107.

⁵¹ Ibid., *Mayrikis* (To my Mother), pp. 112-13.

In *Anunner* (Names), he fills his heart with the sacred memory of the dead, the massacred, the perished. Through his poems as spiritual memorials, he grants them the Christian burial they never had: "I planted this tree as a cross for my dead."⁵² Like Shushanian and other orphans of the desert, Surmelian too carried the burden of his dead upon his young but strong shoulders. Indeed, the vivid memory of those who perished and the spiritual relationship these young survivors developed with the world of the dead isolated them from the reality of life around them.

Surmelian's *Luys Zvart*, and each and every poem therein, is eloquent evidence of the symptomatic expression of separation anxiety. The traumatic separation from his mother, their brief farewell which had no meaning or depth at the time, only sank in later to become an everlasting memory. Each one of the young survivors of the Armenian Genocide somehow experienced the traumatizing separation from a mother, a loved one, or someone to whom the child felt a strong attachment. And the injured child lived on in the survivor's psyche, shaping their behavior. This is the answer to the baffling question of why these orphans of the desert, who were forcibly separated from their mothers, who stood helplessly watching their mothers being raped or murdered, could never recover, forget, or at least subdue the impact of their traumatic separation.

⁵² Ibid., *Asats'vatsk' tsar tnkelu masin* (A saying about planting a tree), p. 100.

They suffered a harrowing experience that produced a lasting psychological condition, the pathological fear of separation from a loved one, with nightmares re-staging the moment of the initial separation. This is what is known today as separation anxiety disorder.⁵³

Before closing Surmelian's thin little pamphlet of twenty-one poems, one question remains unanswered. Why did this sixteen-year-old poet choose the title *Luys Zvart'* for his collection of poems? Did he intend an association with or a reminder of the *sharakan* (religious song) of the same title? That could very well be. But *Zvart'* was also the name of his mother. Perhaps he intended a dual meaning.

Surmelian's honesty toward his art and his self-criticism remained with him all his life. "I decided to pass myself off as a poet" at the age of sixteen, he confesses, with no intention of ever becoming one. At the height of his popularity as a poet, with his schoolmates looking up to him, he felt himself to be a hypocrite, a deceitful person who wrote poetry to attract attention.

⁵³ Separation anxiety is an explicit psychological condition of post-traumatic stress disorder, still in the initial stages of diagnostic and causal investigations. The disorder is ordinarily detected among children and is expected to disappear with or without treatment and therapy, in later life, even before the age of eighteen. When adults are diagnosed with the disorder, it is more serious and threatening. See Joan Arehart-Treichel, "Adult Separation Anxiety: Often Overlooked Diagnosis," *Psychiatric News*, vol. 41, no. 13 (July 7, 2006), p. 10. The author refers to the extensive study on this topic by Dr. Katherine Sheer, Professor of Psychiatry at Columbia University.

"I am not a poet, this whole thing is a mistake," I wanted to tell them, but could not.... I plagiarized from paintings, for I saw a poem in almost every picture. This bothered my conscience most of all. It wasn't honest, even if others did not see what I saw.... Certainly this wasn't the way real poets wrote.⁵⁴

He wanted to go to America to study agriculture, by means of which, he thought, he could help build a powerful Armenia. He wanted to get "away from the evils of the old world, to start my life anew."⁵⁵ Although he was harsh and unforgiving toward himself, he knew how to get ahead and achieve his goal at all cost. Was he committing evil? He thought he was.

Good and evil sparring for dominance

The presence of good and evil sparring with each other for dominance emerged in the lives of many among the orphan generation. The filth and the poverty of life in the streets influenced the delicate souls of these orphan boys, creating in them a clashing dual personality. On the one hand, there was the good: what their murdered or long-lost mothers had strived to bring up in them. On the other hand, there was also the evil, the urge to become an evil person and commit evil deeds in protest and revenge against the unjust world. Aram Haykaz exemplifies this strange phenomenon. He described how his mother used to cultivate religious fervor and human values in her

⁵⁴ Surmelian, *I Ask You* (1945), pp. 258, 262.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 265.

children, and how everything changed in one day in 1915. In one of his sketches, he addressed his mother: "Everything has collapsed in your cunning and shattered boy.... Since then, mother, years have passed, and I have lived without hope, without faith, and without God whom you tried to teach us to love."⁵⁶

Turning against God, the embodiment of the Good, and resorting to evil in disillusionment and vengeance is a recurring theme in the literature of the orphan generation. It is a reverberation of the theme in the literary responses of the older generation, but taken to the extreme. In the innocence of their childhood, this generation of orphans experienced the tyranny of injustice and waited in vain for the mercy of the Almighty.

In a long passage in *Vasn patranat'ap' mankut'ian...* (On account of a disillusioned childhood...), Shushanian talked about how he was brought up to believe in the goodness of mankind and in God's mercy falling equally on every creature. He called all that a disgusting lie because, as an orphan child begging for man's benevolence and God's mercy, he had seen the naked truth. He had hoped for God's intervention when he was sick, hungry, and helpless, but he had seen only the presence of one god and that was Money. He came to the conclusion that if there were a God, the Creator, Jehovah,

⁵⁶ Aram Haykaz, from a piece titled *Kaghandi gisher* (New Year's Eve), in *Aprek' erekhek'* (Live, children!) (Beirut: Hamazkayin, 1977), pp. 71-4 (quotation from p. 72).

He served only the wealthy, the ruffians, and the swindlers who prayed to Him to pile up more wealth.⁵⁷

The good and the evil were always in conflict, and Shushanian wondered,

Why is it that there are two beings living inside us?
One is the vulgar, the impudent, the mediocre, and the savage; the other trembles with the first sensation of love. Often they disrupt each other, kicking and cursing. The fight between that scoundrel and that gentle boy is fascinating.⁵⁸

His mood, his outlook, and his view of mankind depended on which of these opposing personalities were dominating his spirit. That is how he perceived himself, as a person who could be gentle and goodhearted at times but who could easily turn into the rudest and the most obscene man in the street.

The good and the noble in the hearts of these orphan boys stretched beyond the narrow limits of their personal experience of Turkish injustice and the traumatic days of the great terror to reach the universal. It became the outcry of Parisian streetwalkers who sold their body for a piece of bread, the cry of the vagabonds and the homeless who slept on the benches in public parks. It reflected the yearnings of mankind for happiness, for

⁵⁷ Vazgen Shushanian, *Vasn patranat'ap' mankut'ian ev mnayun aghk'atut'ian* (On account of a disillusioned childhood and lasting poverty), in *Vazgen Shushanian*, ed. Gegham Sevan (1968), p. 10.

⁵⁸ Ibid., *Siro ev arkatsi tghak'ë* (The boys of love and adventure) (Beirut: Etvan, no. 33, 1957), p. 42.

spiritual bliss which, as Shushanian believed, could only be achieved through altruism and unrestrained giving:

To give, to give everything to these blind, deaf, and mute wretched men who surround us: bread and wine to the poor, respect and importance to the despised, to yield, to yield. Life is too short and too worthless to snatch another's rights. To grant a tiny bit of happiness to a crying child, to smile at an unsightly and sad girl, to know how to always give and never accept compensation, give with no return, give unreservedly, give without haggling, and remain silent.⁵⁹

Their survival tools were absolutely not effective enough to protect them from the invading waves of everyday qualms in the new world. And the battle between the old and familiar and the new and unfamiliar, added to the inner conflict between good and evil, seared their souls, dragged them into smoke-filled taverns, and pushed them into the arms of prostitutes. Carnal pleasures did not alleviate their pain but sullied their conscience, and they suffered for having betrayed their sacred dreams and memories. Speaking through his mother's voice, Shushanian wrote:

I gave birth to you a pure, small, and handsome boy; I gave birth to you with beautiful, warm, and sweet eyes.... Now your eyes are telling lies, your ears are full of deceitful, mediocre, and lustful voices.... You

⁵⁹ Ibid., *Garnanayin, Siro hez namakner* (Of spring: Humble love letters) (Beirut: Etvan, no. 23, 1956), p. 31.

fight now; your voice is cold, wicked, fierce, and spiteful and pierces others' heart.⁶⁰

In order to end the pain, they tried to stifle the voice of conscience and turn a deaf ear to the caressing words—"anushik ch'ochukhs imin" (sweet child of mine)⁶¹—which came to them now and then in sporadic letters, or in memories and dreams when they were in despair and on the verge of breakdown. Uncertainty about the future, resentment about going along with the present, and unwilling withdrawal from the illusive world of dreams, what was left to live for? For Shushanian, hope was dark and wingless. There were no illusions for this generation. Their love affairs were vile, pale, and unhappy, like their hearts. They had forgotten how to sing, and their words were cold and empty.⁶²

Yearning for the lost homeland

The agonizing sensation of being away and cut off from the homeland echoes in the literary output of the orphan generation. Even in the happiest moments of their lives something painful pulls them out of the reality around them and generates a piercing *yearning for the lost homeland*.

It is New Year's Eve and Aram Haykaz remembers his village in minute detail. Once again, he is the

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 94.

⁶¹ Shahan Shahnur, *Nahanjē aṛants' ergi* (Retreat without song) (4th printing, Beirut: Sevan, 1981). These words recur especially in the letters that Petros's mother writes to him. See pp. 88 and 161.

⁶² Shushanian, *Erkir hishatakats* (Land of memories) (1966), p. 19.

miserable exile, sick with yearning for his native land where everything was familiar, where he enjoyed the happiness of his childhood years. He remembers his mother and, like a young orphan boy, he longs for her caress and endearing words. Here in America he feels like an exile, living "under the foreign sky, like an unwanted guest."⁶³

For a lonely man, there is something magical about New Year's Eve, and at the same time, sad and gloomy, even for someone like Leon Surmelian, a well-adjusted American citizen. "It's a great privilege to be an American," he asserts. "But tonight is New Year's Eve, and I remember my father...." In a dramatic finale to his childhood memories, Surmelian is caught up in the joy and grief that New Year's Eve brings to the lonely exile. To the drum beat of his repeated question, "I ask you, ladies and gentlemen, what can one do on New Year's Eve in America...," he describes the imposition of his memories of the past, especially on such a magical night:

I ask you, what can you do on New Year's Eve in free and happy America, when your playmates and schoolmates, the kids you grew up with, your companions in grief and joy, in hunger and misery, fellow dreamers during your dream age, are gone, lost.... When the pretty girls you loved in kindergarten and grade school are dead and their bones lie

⁶³ Haykaz, *Kaghandi gisher in Aprek erekhik* (1977), p. 74.

unburied, or they are in captivity, forgotten by their own nation?⁶⁴

Characteristically for these orphans, the sense of yearning for the lost native land is most often interchangeably represented by the longing for a lost mother, one whom they saw expire on the road of deportation, or from whom they were tragically separated at a moment of crisis in 1915. The association is not strange or farfetched. The memory of a loving, caring, nurturing and protecting mother can very well represent that of the homeland and the childhood home which is equally a world of beauty and innocence where they were happy and protected. Furthermore, the extinction of both mother and homeland was caused by conceptually similar violence; thus, the pain of separation from both is interchangeable.

Shavarsh Narduni was envious of nations who could be proud of their homeland: He was envious of the foreign youth in France who could look back on the country they came from and boast about it. Among them he was an orphan without a homeland. Inspired by the German national anthem, "Deutschland über alles," he turned to God in protest, then in supplication, asking Him to help the Armenian people to have a homeland, to have their own *über alles* to be proud of.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Surmelian, *I Ask You* (1945), pp. 305-11.

⁶⁵ Narduni, *...Amen bané ver* (...Above everything), in *Grakan tsolker* (1975), pp. 57-60.

We encounter a similar reaction to the celebration of another nation in Nikoghayos Sarafian's series of poems titled *14*, first published in Paris in 1933.⁶⁶ These fourteen poems, titled 1 through 14, were inspired by the festive

⁶⁶ Nikoghayos Sarafian's *14* can be found in his *Ch'ap'atso erker* (Works in verse), ed. with Preface and informative Introduction (Addendum) for each series of his poems by Harut'iun K'iurk'chian (Antelias, Lebanon: Georg Melidinet's'i Literary Award, no. 17, 1982), pp. 47-77.

An important name among French Armenian writers, Sarafian was not an orphan but was thrown into the alien environment of Paris at an early age and lived all the deprivations and hardships of his generation. He was born in 1905 on a ship en route to Varna from Constantinople as his parents were returning from a visit to the latter. During the massacres of 1896, they had escaped to Bulgaria from the village of Lich (meaning "lake" in Armenian) in the region of Aken, and Sarafian was raised in Varna. He began attending the Catholic School of Saint Michael in 1917, with Hagop Oshagan and Vahan Tekeyan as his teachers. He came to Constantinople in 1919 to study in the then-famous Central School, where he wrote poetry and was published in Tekeyan's *Zhoghovurdi dzayn*. Like many young and old intellectuals, he too fled to Paris (via Bulgaria, Rumania, and Marseilles) before Mustafa Kemal's capture of Constantinople. Sarafian's literary legacy of poetic and prose works illustrates the author's profound insight into the philosophical and psychological aspects of human life. He was capable of absorbing French literary trends and giving expression to his talent in the modern style. Nevertheless, he was unable to free himself of the psychology of an exile. He lived with all the predicaments of that identity, with no hope of returning to his native land, yet with the obligation of adapting himself to the exigencies of the New World. He died of an untreatable disease in 1972 in Vincent, France.

The above short discussion of a sampling of his poetic work is an attempt to bring Sarafian into the scope of this study. For further discussion and analysis of his life and work, see works by Harut'iun K'iurk'chian, Marc Nichanian, and K'rik'or Beledian.

celebrations of Bastille Day (July 14). They were not, however, written in praise of the occasion; rather, they encapsulate Sarafian's emotional outburst of envy, yearning, protest, and bitterness as images of past and present alternate. It is while he watches the festive parades of thousands of proud and blissful French folk, the army marching, the artillery on display, the soaring planes in the sky, and sees the lights and the flags, and hears the music and the songs that he has come to witness in the streets of Paris and especially around the Arc de Triomphe, that successive images of his own nation's past rush into his mind and populate his fourteen poems: the macabre shedding of the nation's blood in the lost homeland, and the masses going to their death (1), the rivers with the naked bodies of virgins floating in them, and children cast in the sea like refuse or ballast expelled from a ship (6).

There is an immense irony in these happy songs,
in this humid summer weather,
in the music that weeps,
blows in the wind,
sobs deliberately, deliberately,
as if to torture me more. (3)

The rapid succession of hope and disappointment is replaced by irony as he watches "the boundless enthusiasm of this boundless people, / upon which gaze the cock-eyed, the diabolic / monsters from the top of Notre Dame" (4).

The joy of the crowd today enervates me.

This was a longing sad and strong
 I wanted to stand up and scream,
 to the heads by the thousands,
 with all our dead without a grave before me. (5)

And significantly, a single sentence printed in bold capital letters begins each of the fourteen poems: "IT IS NOT POSSIBLE, IT IS NOT POSSIBLE NOT TO REMEMBER YOU, O ~ BLOOD." Indeed, how is it possible that the world so quickly forgot the catastrophe that befell a nation whose only sin was to believe in the lights that shine today in this national celebration? (7).

And finally, with the fourteenth and last poem (14), Sarafian directly addressed THE BLOOD, which will guard, will protect, and will finally give birth to a revival whose beginning he feels in his heart. This ambiguous but firm belief in the future, however, was not conditioned by the existence of Armenia (the eastern corner of the historic Armenian lands then under Soviet rule), but was significantly stipulated (6) in the birth of a hero among the orphans who will rise to protest, to demand. This is very much reminiscent of Daniel Varuzhan's vision of the approaching footsteps of victory in *Jardē* (The carnage).

It is obvious that Shavarsh Narduni did not consider Soviet Armenia the homeland of all Armenians either. For him, Western Armenia was the irreplaceable Hayastan.⁶⁷ He dreamed of the homeland from which the

⁶⁷ See Narduni's sketch titled *...Amen bane ver*, in *Grakan tsolker* (1975), pp. 57-60.

Armenians had been driven away. He imagined the plush gardens, the orchards full of fruit, the lakes, the mountains, all waiting for their sons and daughters to return. "Hayastan, Hayastan, my stolen land, I miss you very much." And he posed the question that tormented many Armenians in the Diaspora: "Will there be an end to all this wandering from one country to another? Will we have the chance to enjoy our country?" He swore solemnly, "Let my tongue stick to my palate if I forget you Hayastan."⁶⁸

Shahan Shahnur typically did not hesitate to express his resentment of Soviet Armenia and of "Russian Armenians" altogether. In one such instance, he accused the Soviet regime of constraining and limiting the creative mind. "In Soviet Armenia, where a new world is being built, everything, including literature, is a tool in the service of this reconstruction. Literature is subjected to suppression, and this will prevent its natural evolution."⁶⁹

Andranik Tsarukian's *T'ught' ar Erevan* (Letter to Yerevan, 1945) is an eloquent testimonial to the pain of losing a homeland and the trauma of surviving a humongous catastrophe.⁷⁰ Hagop Oshagan considered it

⁶⁸ Ibid., from the short story, *Erazis mej tesa Hayastanē* (I saw Hayastan in my dream), pp. 148-50.

⁶⁹ Shahan Shahnur, *Krakē koghk'is* (The fire on my side) (Paris: Haratch, 1973), p. 96.

⁷⁰ Andranik Tsarukian, *T'ught' ar Erevan*, in Hagop Oshagan, *Vkayut'iun mē* (A Testimony) (Aleppo: Nairi Press, 1946), pp. 135-85. The poem was first published in *Nairi* (1945).

to be indicative of the lingering, unmitigated pain characteristic of the psychology of the survivors of the great Catastrophe living in the Diaspora in the 1940s. "Not only a cruel, true, and heart-rending testimony," he wrote, "but also an accomplished work in the lyrical literature of the Diaspora."⁷¹ This long poem of fifty pages was Tsarukian's response to an antagonistic poem by the Soviet Armenian poet Gevorg Abov in which the latter attacked the Dashnaks (i.e. members of Dashnaks'ut'iun, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation or ARF).⁷² Abov claimed that during the two-year period of Armenian independence (1918-20), the Dashnaks had pillaged and ruined Armenia and killed innocent people.⁷³

In his polemical poem, Tsarukian pictures the pre-1918 Armenian tragedy. With emotional pathos he paints the most gruesome images and despicable scenes. The testimony is personalized. The poet is there as an orphan who has lost everything and everyone to the Turkish murderers. The pain of survival and dispersion, the loss of the homeland, and the instability of living conditions outside are an ever-present source of psychological

⁷¹ Oshagan, *Vkayutiun me* (1946), pp. 19, 123.

⁷² Gevorg Abov, *Menk' ch'enk' moqats'el* (We have not forgotten), in *Karmir martiki gradaran t'iv 7* (Library of the red fighter, no. 7) (Yerevan: Haypethrat, 1944).

⁷³ Oshagan's *Vkayutiun me* (1946) constitutes a polemical exchange amongst himself, Abov, and Tsarukian, including Oshagan's remarks, pp. 5-127, Abov's *Menk' ch'enk' moqats'el*, pp. 133-4, and Tsarukian's *T'ught' ar Erevan* (here appearing in print for the third time), pp. 135-85.

affliction in his own life and in the lives of his generation. He begs the Soviet regime not to shut out the Armenians in Diaspora, but to call them home to the land of all Armenians, to give a tiny piece of land to those who are still wandering in the world:

Be it small, be it a wasteland,
Be it a dark grave,
Give a morsel of land,
So that in cold and alien soil
The souls of our dead will not shiver.
Give a morsel of land,
So that on the lips of our little children
Our ancient language will not freeze
Like a flower petal on the snow....⁷⁴

In this testimonial to the unabated memory of the Genocide, life is nothing more than "a burden of anguish,"

And at the crossroads of fate,
Life for us
Is a bloodless battle, a silent consumption.
....
The present for us is a sea of agony
The past, a dagger piercing our hearts,
And the future, cold, dark, and unknown,
A new crucifix of suffering
Erected atop Golgotha.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Tsarukian, *Tught ar Erevan*, in Oshagan, *Vkayutiun me* (1946), p. 171.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

As Oshagan put it, this was the generation "released from the orphanages directly into life outside, only to become orphans once more among life's deprivations."⁷⁶ And these deprivations were strongly associated with the reality of lives full of fear and apprehension about the present and uncertainty about the future in a foreign land. Indeed, the loss of Western Armenia, the demise of a short-lived Armenian independence (1918–20), and the rigid policies of the Soviet regime, dropping an iron curtain and locking out the Diaspora, had become a source of anguish for this generation, as it had for the older generation.⁷⁷

Shahan Shahnur offered a peculiar interpretation of this phenomenon in a story titled *Zanosté* (the name of a sanatorium outside Paris), in which the narrator, Michel, is a young Armenian dragging out his miserable life in the sanatorium, fighting against tuberculosis. He meets an Armenian woman who has been completely cured of the disease but is cast out by her family and brought back to the sanatorium because her husband and her sister-in-law do not believe that she can be completely cured and therefore fear that she may endanger their health. In a state of feverish delirium, Michel visualizes the outcast

⁷⁶ Oshagan, *Vkayutiun me* (1946), p. 36.

⁷⁷ For many years, until the era of Gorbachev's *Perestroika*, Armenian intellectuals unsympathetic to the regime were not granted permission to visit Armenia. For these intellectuals, the theme of lamenting the loss of the historical Armenian homeland (Western Armenia) was coupled with a yearning to see the present Armenia, if only to take a peek at Ararat from Yerevan.

woman as the embodiment of the Armenian Diaspora and shouts out loud,

If you were healthy, you Armenians of Diaspora, we would call you home. We would open the doors of Armenia for you. But you are ill. You Diasporan Armenians, you are contaminated with the poison of Dashnaktsutiun. And we let you remain in foreign countries until the day....⁷⁸

Shahnur's symbolization of the sick woman as the contaminated and unhealthy Diaspora is further evidence of his harsh and exaggerated criticism of Diasporan Armenians. This passage from *Zanosté* stands out as one of the few expressions of the author's political slant in *Haralezneru davachanut'iuně* (The treason of the spirits), his collection of stories notably subtitled as the second volume of *The Illustrated History of the Armenian People*. These expressions also reflect the author's antagonism toward Dashnaktsutiun and his intolerance of the Eastern Armenian language and literature.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Shahan Shahnur, *Zanosté*, in *Haralezneru davachanut'iuně* (The treason of the spirits) (Paris: Haratch, 1971), p. 211.

⁷⁹ The following is another contemptuous remark that occurs in the same story: "I am a foolish person who, instead of thinking of serious matters such as philosophy or old and new theories, speaks Russian Armenian down to his toes" (ibid., p. 182). Shahnur made similar statements in some of the articles collected in *Bats' tomar* (Open calendar) (Paris: Haratch, 1971). In an article titled *Voski kshi* (Golden scale), dedicated to Vahan Tekeyan, he concurred with the latter in his criticism of Eastern Armenian, saying, "Russian Armenian is still a gypsy language" (p. 62). In still another article,

Vahé Hayg unequivocally supported the idea of Soviet Armenia as the homeland of all Armenians, where Armenian refugees scattered to the four corners of the world could find solace. A few of his short stories entertain this theme, one example being *Erkir drakhtavayr* (Land of earthly paradise).⁸⁰ Arsen/Ali is an orphan who

speaking about Avetis Aharonian, he wrote, "Unfortunately, the language, that is, Russian-Armenian, is a provincial dialect" (p. 82).

Shahnur's disdainful bias went beyond the language and extended to the Eastern Armenians and their political parties, especially Dashnaktsutun, whose Eastern Armenian field workers, he believed, came to the Ottoman Empire and engaged in revolutionary activities. Discussing Ruben Zardarian's short story, *Gamp'ŕ* (the name of a species of huge canine used as a watchdog by shepherds), he associated the typification of the *Gamp'ŕ* with Yervand Otian's *Ėnker P'anjuni* (Comrade Panjuni), a sarcastic sketch of Armenian revolutionaries. Picking up on Zardarian's call to the dog, "Go back to your own land. Stay in your own environment," he remarked, "We too think that Russian Armenian leaders should have stayed in their villages in the Caucasus. They would have been very useful as clerks, teachers, and priests, but not as the politicians and diplomats who tried to lead a revolution in Turkish Armenia." See Shahnur, *T'ert'is kiraknoris t'ivě* (The Sunday edition of my paper) (Beirut: K'rik'or K'eoseian, 1959), p. 99.

The purpose of stressing this issue here is to show the deep divide that existed between Western and Eastern Armenians in the Diaspora, on top of the rivalry and disagreements among political parties and the disparity of views vis-à-vis Soviet Armenia. The Diaspora was, and to some extent still is, a divided, fragmented, unharmonious milieu. The attributes that brought this huge mass of people under one rubric, the Diaspora, were insignificant in view of the elements and factors that set them apart.

⁸⁰ Vahé Hayg, *Erkir drakhtavayr* (Land of earthly paradise), in *Sp'iuŕk'ahay patmvatsk'ě* (The Diasporan Armenian short story), collected by Gegham Sevan, ed. and with Preface by Vazgen Gabrielian (Yerevan: Yerevan University Press, 1984), pp. 271-82.

does not remember how or when his father was murdered or his mother, succumbing to the hardship of deportation, was left half-dead on the roadside. All he has is a sweet recollection of them visiting him in his dreams. Somehow he reaches Deir el-Zor where he is picked up by an Arab who cleans him up, feeds him, and attends to the wounds covering his feet and legs. Years pass and he forgets his mother tongue and his religion. He is Ali, a shepherd boy in a nomadic Arab tribe, until one day he meets two young girls who speak a strange but familiar language. He begins to remember his past and his roots and eventually agrees to go with the people who come to rescue children like him.⁸¹ He is taken to an

Vahé Hayg (né Dinjian) was born in Kharbert in 1896. He went to Constantinople in 1915 to continue his studies and was caught up in the turmoil of persecutions that specially targeted Armenians coming from the eastern provinces. He managed to evade arrest by using a false passport with the name Hayg, whence his later pen name. After the war he remained in Turkey, serving as a translator for the Americans. He immigrated to the U.S. in 1920 when he had already made his career as a writer in Constantinople. He continued to write and his work was published in many different periodicals. His short stories of life in the Old Country were published in five volumes under the title *Haireni tsokhan* (Paternal hearth, 1941-46). He also wrote essays on historical events, the massacres of Yozgat, and the Armenian community in Fresno, California. He died in 1983.

⁸¹ After the Armistice, groups of Armenian volunteers traveled throughout the interior of the Ottoman Empire, searching for and trying to retrieve Armenian orphans and women in Muslim households. Many were brought out this way, but there were many who preferred to stay. The very young ones had long forgotten their roots and grown accustomed to their life; they would not have wanted to leave and go with strangers; others were afraid to leave; still others were never even discovered. Some of the young women

Armenian orphanage in Constantinople and, as Arsen, he grows up to become a good artisan and a decent young man.

Up to this point, Arsen's story is one shared by thousands, but from here on Hayg's political stance and his empathy with the Soviet regime in Armenia take over and turn the story into propaganda. He enthusiastically describes the fanfare of the years of repatriation (1944-46), rhetorically declaring, "The homeland is calling her wandering sons back home again." Encouraged and exhilarated, Arsen goes to Soviet Armenia and, in a strange coincidence, finds the two sisters he met in the desert. He marries the younger sister and everything is great. His dead parents give their blessing to the newlyweds and whisper, "Glory be to you Hayastan, land of earthly paradise, glory to you a thousand times.... Now our unburied bones can rest in the distant valleys and unknown caves of the deserts...."

The French Armenian poet Mari At'majian was another enthusiast who exalted Soviet Armenia for calling Diasporan Armenians home. Her collection of poems, *Goghgot'ayi Shushanner* (Lilies of Golgotha, 1947), opens with a long poem titled *Hayastan*, celebrating the 27th anniversary of the sovietization of Armenia.⁸² Here,

preferred to stay, perhaps to bury their secret of having converted and become a concubine in order to stay alive; others, especially those with children born of their captors, simply could not leave their children behind, their own blood and soul, and escape.

⁸² Mari At'majian, *Hayastan*, collected in *Haverzhakan ughinerov* (Through eternal roads) (Beirut: G. Donigian & fils, 1974), pp. 19-

she writes, she sets aside for a day her lamentations for the Armenian past and her martyred father and brother in order to sing of her resurrected homeland. Other poems in the collection, such as *Nergaght'* (Repatriation) and *Depi erkir* (Toward homeland),⁸³ clearly show the author's political orientation and her firm conviction that Soviet Armenia was the only haven where Diasporan Armenians could live and perpetuate.

The American Armenian writer Beniamin Nourigian also sympathized with Soviet Armenia's encouragement of mass repatriation. In a diary-like piece he wrote in 1946 at the peak of the repatriation campaign, he expressed envy of those who would spend their last days in Armenia and finally close their eyes on the eternal image of Ararat. He wished to spend his old age in Armenia, and if luck was not with him and he died in a foreign land, he wanted his remains taken back and buried in the heart of his homeland. Curiously, after living in the United States for fifty-five years, he came back to the diary in 1969 and reiterated his wish to return to the homeland, emphasizing that even if the path of return was full of difficulties, it was still the right path for

21. The poem is dated October 1947. At'majian was born in 1907 in Bafra, a town on the Black Sea coast. Her father was murdered on the road of deportation. Her mother endured the hardships of exile and managed to reach Paris with her two orphaned children.

⁸³ Atmajian, *Nergaght'* and *Depi erkir*, in *ibid.*, pp. 60-1 and 62-3.

the masses of Armenians scattered about the world and in danger of assimilation.⁸⁴

The excitement of repatriation was contagious, with its vision of a bright future in Soviet Armenia holding out the promise of ameliorating the pain of statelessness and assuaging the longing for the lost Western Armenia. The Syrian Armenian intellectual Simon Simonian was under the spell too. In a short story titled *Asttsu amrn ē* (It is God's command), we have Martik, a young intellectual and herald of the good news about Soviet Armenia.⁸⁵ He preaches about the good life there, and how women are free and equal in their endeavors. He insists that the atmosphere in Soviet Armenia can cure the pain of poverty and deprivation and cultivate a sense of belonging to a state and a nation. He encourages his neighbor Art'in, who has just had his seventh daughter and is on the verge of killing himself, to take his family

⁸⁴ Beniamin Nourigian, *Pandukhti mē oragirē* (The Diary of an exile), in *Spiurkahay patmvatske*, ed. Gabrielian (1984), p. 327. Nourigian, born in Kharbert in 1894, immigrated to America before 1915. There he continued writing in the tradition of pre-Genocide Western Armenian literature. His short stories and novels portray life in the Old Country and embody his unabated yearning for that life. His work was published in *Nor Kir*, the periodical he founded and edited (1936–54), and in several volumes: *Aigekut'k'* (Harvest, 1937), *Pandukht hoginer* (Migrant souls, 1959), and *Karot hayreni* (Yearning for the homeland, 1978).

⁸⁵ Simon Simonian, *Asttsu amrn ē*, in *Spiurkahay patmvatske*, ed. Gabrielian (1984), pp. 474–81. Born in Aintab in 1914, Simonian was a member of a family of refugees from Sasun who reached Aleppo in 1921. He was an important figure in the cultural, educational, and intellectual life of Aleppo. He died in 1986.

and repatriate to Armenia. He even inspires Artin with the hope that his wife will bear many sons there. Artin is a brave and hard-working son of Sasun living in an all-Sasunts'i neighborhood of Aleppo, where the worst disgrace is failing to produce a son. Now he is convinced that it is God's command that he go to Soviet Armenia, and who knows, maybe there he will produce a son.⁸⁶

In citing these stories, my intention is to show that those survivors who viewed Soviet Armenia as their homeland, as a substitute for Western Armenia from which they had been brutally ejected, experienced the pain of deprivation and nostalgic reminiscence less intensely. They were cured of at least one symptom of their predicament.

The scene of a ship slowly moving out from the port of Marseilles, carrying 3,000 repatriates home to Armenia, becomes the grand finale in Garo Poladian's novel, *Kē hrazharim hayut'ené* (I resign from Armenianness).⁸⁷ Andranik is repatriating. A loner among his seven friends, he is the least adapted to life in France. He has been living in the past, dreaming day and night of his

⁸⁶ Most of these pieces in praise of Soviet Armenia are taken from the above-cited volume, *Spiurkahay patmvatske*, collected by Gegham Sevan and edited by Vazgen Gabrielian. It is obvious that the selection of pieces in this anthology not only depended upon the personal taste and political convictions of the collector and the editor, but also aimed to pay lip service to the censors in order to secure permission to publish the anthology.

⁸⁷ Garo Poladian, *Kē hrazharim hayut'ené* (I resign from Armenianness) (Beirut: Hamazkayin, 1978). The novel was first published in 1949 in Paris.

native village, his family, their home, and even the cattle he lost. With a joyous fanfare on the quay, Armenians bid farewell to those fortunate enough to have their papers ready and to leave. On board there is one enthusiastic repatriate whose documents were not ready in time, but that hasn't stopped him. He will be traveling secretly, disguised as freight in a large wooden box. He is nineteen-year-old Babken, a hero of the French Resistance to the Nazi occupation of France. They call him "le Petit arménien."⁸⁸

Stories like this, in addition to propaganda articles, were plentiful in Armenian papers, especially in the Middle East, building up a utopia which unfortunately did not exist. But that is another discussion.⁸⁹

Mushegh Ishkhan viewed Soviet Armenia from a different vantage point. Being a member of Dashnaktsutun, in opposition to the Soviet regime, like many in his

⁸⁸ At the end of the novel it is revealed that Babken, or "le Petit arménien," is the son of Babken, the novel's protagonist who in his youth in the 1920s ran away from everything Armenian, unknowingly leaving his girlfriend pregnant with his child.

⁸⁹ Diasporan scholars have for many years focused on the topic of repatriation, its motives and processes, its after-effects on Diasporan communities, and its impact on Soviet Armenian society. Significantly, a pan-Armenian conference was organized by the Republic of Armenia Ministry of Diaspora in 2008 to study this historical event from every angle. The proceedings were published in a volume titled *1946–1948, Hayrenadardzut'iunē ev dra daserē, Hayrenadardzut'ian himnakhndirn aysor* (The 1946–1948 repatriation and its lessons: The issue of repatriation today), Ashot Melk'onian et al eds. (Yerevan: Limoush, 2009). See my conference presentation, pp. 195–202.

situation he never contemplated repatriation, but he dreamed of Armenia.⁹⁰ In a poem written in 1936 and dedicated to his brother in Soviet Armenia and to all the workers there who were involved in rebuilding the country, Ishkhan expressed his grief at being apart and away:

From the mountains of Lebanon
I hear the song of your victorious hammers,
And my soul weeps here bitterly,
[I am] a stranger away and apart.⁹¹

Resort to the world of dreams

By Ishkhan's own admission, the years of hardship during the deportations had taken their toll on his health. He was not only affected psychologically but he also suffered from poor health and lacked the strength and stamina to cope with the difficulties of daily life. He always felt older than his age. He was never able to leave behind the horrors of his childhood and live a normal,

⁹⁰ The committees in charge of repatriation required that members of Dashnaktsutun registering to repatriate sign a statement denouncing the party. Rather than formally resign from the party, many chose not to register. But many did sign up, having been assured that their resignation would be kept secret. In spite of this promise, however, and out of malice toward Dashnaktsutun, the committees published the resignations in local papers, which created a strong reaction. Contemporaries tell of one person who committed suicide, unable to bear the ignominy.

⁹¹ Mushegh Ishkhan, from a poem titled *Hayastani banvornnerun* (To the workers of Armenia), in *Miayn 1500 toghov* (In only 1500 lines) (Paris: Ereboundi, 1970), pp. 9–10.

happy life, even though the circumstances of his adulthood in Beirut and his career as an educator, political activist, and revered writer and publicist, as well as his modest, ordinary family life really could have provided a happy environment. Minas Tölölian, his biographer, attests to his being a lonely man, unable to mingle in society, seeking seclusion, avoiding fanfare and the limelight. It is not difficult to detect the traces of pessimism and melancholy in Ishkhan's writing. The only way out for him and for others in the same predicament was to resort to the world of dreams, which even in his waking hours could lead him to live his life submerged in memories of the past, to live in the past.

This was where Ishkhan found his safe haven. For him the line between life and dream was fluid, hard to define. His collection of poems titled *Kiank' u eraz* (Life and dream, 1949) is a genuine reflection of his psyche. In dreams he found solace. Outside the world of dreams there was pain and suffering. "Dream became the cure for all my wounds."⁹² *K'iank'n eraz mē eghav* (His life became a dream), a poem in the same collection, clearly shows the line being crossed, back and forth, a dream in which even death could not make a dent:

When the angel of death entered under his open roof,
It was not life that he abandoned; he had abandoned it
long ago,
But from one dream he passed to another,

⁹² Ishkhan, *Kiank' u eraz* (Beirut: Onibar, 1949), p. 1.

an eternal one.⁹³

Dream for Ishkhan was "the final stage" of a life lived without hope of happiness.⁹⁴ Looking back on his life, he transmuted his childhood into a dream. Addressing his childhood as a persona, he wrote,

You grew up with a dream, and you smiled at that dream. In spite of all the hardship, the bitterness, the deprivations with which you lived. You became a golden dream yourself, smiling at me from the distant past and filling my soul with boundless charm. Farewell my sweet, my brave childhood.⁹⁵

When the present life offers nothing inviting and nothing to care for, when there is no hope for a better future, a natural response would be to run away from it all, to build an imaginary bastion, to denounce the world and the reality surrounding oneself and to keep dreaming of memories of the past locked up safe in that bastion. Vazgen Shushanian asserted, "Indeed, from early times, my soul has known two pleasures and my body two manna, memory and dream."⁹⁶ And he dreamt: "I often dream with my eyes open, my eyelashes damp with tears, silent, deaf, inundated with emotions in the midst of the ruins of my memories."⁹⁷

⁹³ *K'iank'n eraz mē eghav*, in *ibid.*, p. 8.

⁹⁴ *Mrgahasi lut'iun* (The silence of ripeness), in *ibid.*, pp. 74-5.

⁹⁵ Ishkhan, *Mnas barov* (1974), p. 244.

⁹⁶ Shushanian, *Alekots tariner* (Tumultuous years), quoted in Sevan, *Vazgen Shushanian* (1968), p. 33.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, *Erkir hishatakats* (Land of memories) (1966), p. 218.

For this outcast generation it was easier to dream of a wonderful future—in spite of its intangibility and unfeasibility—and to await the return of the past and the old world order, than to cope with the difficulty of adapting to the new life: “To delight with dreams, to nourish with impossible delusions... until the indispensable return of the old and eternal values.”⁹⁸ In this love letter to Astghik, Shushanian looked forward to the return of the old days when love was heathen, sacred, and superior. It had not yet been defiled with the eroticism of the brothel. Shushanian chose to live with his cherished memories, subconsciously selecting his tool for self-defense against an alien civilization that despised and ridiculed his ethnic origin, culture, and traditions. Why is it that this generation of young immigrants in the New World was unable to embrace the new life and all it could offer, without remorse, without looking back?

Despair leading to psychological collapse

Most of Shahan Shahnur's characters, although each from a different walk of life, with a different profession and a different lifestyle, have something in common. They are immigrants to the new world, and what is important, they do not want or are unable to adapt to the new environment and cope with their new predicament. The result is despair and disappointment, leading to pessimism and psychological collapse, revealed in different ways.

⁹⁸ Ibid., *Garnanayin* (Of spring) (1956), p. 49.

In his novel, *Nahanjē aṛants' ergi* (Retreat without song), written in the late 1920s, Zareh—so sweet and soft-hearted that his friends call him Lokhum (Turkish delight)—has never liked Parisian life. This sensitive boy has been crushed under the wheels of modernism. He finally decides to leave everything and return to his homeland, to his mother still living in Turkey, no matter how oppressed the Armenians are there. But the Turkish officials laugh at him and say, “What homeland? You don't have a homeland.” He had tried Soviet Armenia. There, at least, he could breathe the air of Mount Ararat. But that remnant of historic Armenia did not have the freedom to shelter her own sons.

In his story titled *Derdzak mē ev erku hiurer* (A tailor and two guests), Tages Agha Balabanian is a well-respected elderly man who represents the embodiment of the old values, traditions, and customs.⁹⁹ He tries hard to carry on the lifestyle he left behind in the Old Country. He is enraged when he sees his daughter embracing the “vices” of the New World. He feels that his firm belief in tradition and his pride as a male, as an Armenian male, are being ridiculed. He protests. He locks himself out of the outside world and suffers from being deserted and betrayed by that world and by those around him. He clearly represents the intransigence of the old generation in refusing to adapt to the new environment and the new lifestyle. But this elderly gentleman is an exception

⁹⁹ Shahan Shahnur, *Derdzak mē ev erku hiurer*, collected in *Haralezneru davachanutiunc* (1971).

among Shahnur's characters, who are otherwise all young and orphans of the Desert.

In *Pchegh me anush sirt* (A little bit of warm heart), Norayr Karapetian is a nice young man who is unable to mix with the new society.¹⁰⁰ He feels lonely; there is no one to understand him, to console him, to soothe his pain. He is another victim of the New World.

Shahnur describes their predicament, but the solution he suggests is far from an optimistic one. Lokhum buries himself in the hallucination of narcotics and ends up in a mental hospital. The efforts of his friends and his wretched mother who comes to Paris to save her son from his terrible pitfall are to no avail. Tages Agha desperately surrenders to the sweeping currents of the New World, buries his pride, his manhood, and everything he has fought for in his life. Norayr commits suicide.

Shahan Shahnur (né K'ereestechian) sounded the alarm of the impossibility of Armenian life in the Diaspora. This promising young intellectual, born in 1903 in Scutari, a suburb of Constantinople, fled to France in 1922 under the threat of the approaching Kemalist forces. He began his life of constant struggle against poor health, miserable living conditions, and the onslaught of the Parisian environment engulfing him as a young man and as an Armenian.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Shahnur, *Pchegh me anush sirt*, in *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Shahnur earned his living from photography and retouching photographs, two trades he had learned back home. (These skills gave him the technical knowledge to create the background for his

Despair and frustration seemed to persist unmitigated as time went by and as the Armenian community in France tended to find equilibrium in culture and lifestyle. Garo Poladian's *Ke hrazharim*, first published in 1949, is populated with characters who, even in the late 1940s, were deeply submerged in the anxiety of being Armenian in a society that was the exact opposite in terms of values, traditions, common history, and national belonging. The solution that Poladian offered was less than optimistic. Condemned to inaction, Babken denounces his Armenianness and runs away. Neshan commits suicide, leaving a note for his friends asking them to vow before his hanging corpse to do something to perpetuate the nation.¹⁰²

novel, *Nahanje arants ergi*, and develop its main character, Petros.) He also wrote for various papers, receiving scant honoraria. He forged his own way into the Armenian literary milieu, especially with *Nahanje* which was first published serially in the Paris-based Armenian paper *Haratch* from May 28 to September 3, 1929, after which it was published in book form.

Being the nephew, on his mother's side, of the famous Armenian writer Teodik, and on his father's side, of Onnik K'ereestechian, an enthusiast of Armenian literature, Shahnur spent his childhood in a literary and cultural environment and attempted creative writing, translations, and sketches of famous Armenian literary figures when he was in high school. His uncle Onnik gave him the name Shahnur after his own favorite writer, Matt'eos Mamurian (Shahnur). Shahnur did not come into close contact with the massacres and deportations of 1915. The impact of these events on his personal life was felt only through his contact with survivors, and also when the Turkish government confiscated the Semerechian School where he was a student. He graduated from Berberian High School in 1921.

¹⁰² Poladian, *Ke hrazharim hayutene* (1978), p. 257.

The dilemma continues in Poladian's other novel set in Paris, *Kraké shapikē* (The shirt of fire), which depicts the generation that arrived in France as young children.¹⁰³ On the one hand, they grew up experiencing the contradiction between the openness of French culture and society and the Armenian traditional upbringing where moral taboos were still dominant. On the other hand, their parents' dreadful memories of massacres and deportation filled their childhood imagination. Peeking out from their closed cultural environment, they admired the freedom and ample opportunities of the outside world and embraced them unconditionally: they opened up to the "morally corrupt European society" (236). This is how Poladian explained the downfall of Armenian youth and their mental and moral destruction (293). But there were also those young men and women who did not choose or were unable to cast off the shirt of fire, the

¹⁰³ Ibid., *Kraké shapikē* (The shirt of fire) (Beirut: Sevan Press, 1966), p. 236. Subsequent page numbers cited in parentheses refer to this edition. The novel was a sequel to *Artsivnere anapatin mej* (Eagles in the desert, 1958) and was subtitled after the latter.

While *Kraké shapikē* deals with similar themes and milieux as *Ke hrazharim hayutené*, it is not as well written. Hastily devised plots, unlikely coincidences, and lengthy conversations diminish the pleasure of reading the novel. Its merit lies in the honest description of different mindsets within the French Armenian community before World War II and in its immediate aftermath. Poladian treats the theme of the struggle of generations of survivors in France, their dreams, disillusion, and alienations, in other works such as *Luyserē* (The lights, 1964), a collection of three short stories, and *Ardarut'ian Aspetner* (Knights of justice, 1982), a play in which the protagonists of the *Eagles in the Desert* series have the principal roles.

author's metaphor for Armenianness, "which is glued to their shoulders and chest, and it burns their flesh and soul until death" (333).

Vazgen Shushanian offered no fictional characters to personify his perception of the plight of the nation. He wrote of his own melancholy and depression, and it is sad to see a person with such great talent and creativity, and at the height of his youth and fame, wish to end his life without remorse: "There is nothing irreplaceable in my life now, nothing that would have been difficult or impossible to part with. And this is tragic."¹⁰⁴ Indeed, Shushanian's whole life was a struggle to overcome glumness. He tried to live and enjoy a normal life, to aspire to noble ideals, but the shadows of the past were always following him. In an essay he wrote during the last months of his life, he bared his soul, and put himself under the scrutiny of self-analysis:

I am always in conversation with myself. Sometimes there are several people conversing with me. And constantly, another person, someone who has lived long and prematurely grown old, looks at me in the body of those men with an ugly, toothless, distorted smile. And we are all forced to live in the same body with all our vices, our pains, and our wounds: I with my enthusiasm, you with your despair. I ought to fight, and you ought to cry.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Shushanian, *Erkir hishatakats* (1966), p. 334.

¹⁰⁵ In Sevan, *Vazgen Shushanian* (1968), p. 79.

Unfortunately, pessimism almost always emerged victorious in his life. His ruined health, the result of a life of abject poverty, intensified his pessimism: "A day sooner, or a day later, here or a little farther away, in the country or outside, it will be the same remains and the same handful of ashes. Let us end, let us end this useless, this unnecessary, this sad story...."¹⁰⁶

Psychologists find this type of reaction to be a result of profound depression, which is not unusual in survivors of a great tragedy. The Armenian Genocide was such a tragedy, one of colossal dimensions. Indeed, aside from psychological analysis and the identification of various forms of depression, it will be interesting to consider the whole spectrum of reactions to situations of extreme despair and agony found in literary, metaphoric expressions. Sometimes the reaction is like that of a wounded animal, helplessly licking his wound. But patience and tolerance have their limits too. The unbearable pain and the sight of his oozing blood drives the animal insane and tempts him to rip open the aching wound and clean it out, even at the cost of his own life. As Shahan Shahnur explained,

There are two ways I can deal with it, revolt or compliance. This constantly oozing open wound would become the object of either my most caring treatment or my mockery (what a miserable irony). Then, on the contrary, I would want to squash it in fury and tear it with my claws, take it out, eventually

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 80.

kill it without further ado. It wouldn't matter if I lost my life by stabbing it."¹⁰⁷

Dealing with this constantly bleeding wound, according to Shahnur, is the destiny of the Armenian nation. It is deep-seated in the heart of every Armenian who has gone through the shock of the Genocide and is experiencing its dire after-effects. Sometimes the pain of the open wound provokes a strong sense of vengeance against those responsible for the calamity. But who are they? Why is there no direct reference to the true perpetrators, the Turks, in either Shahnur's or Shushanian's literature? These writers never ventured into atavistic analysis of the Turk. Hagop Asadourian attempted it in one brief remark that is very similar to Hagop Oshagan's characterization of the Turk. Discussing the brutality of a Turkish police, he expounded on "the never-changing type of the Turkish bully, who for five hundred years was never able to rise above the scorpion's instinctive mindless stinging."¹⁰⁸

Leon Surmelian was able to avoid the accumulation of rage by actually confronting a Turk and pouring out his anger on a substitute for the real enemy. He recalled the short period of time when he and his siblings were reunited in Russian-occupied Trebizond. They were among about twenty-five pupils, orphans like them-

¹⁰⁷ Shahnur, *Tertis kiraknoria tive* (1959), p. 49. This book is a collection of Shahnur's scattered pieces published in various Armenian papers.

¹⁰⁸ Asadourian, *Hovakimi tornere* (1965), p. 217.

selves, attending the newly reopened school of the Mekhitarist Fathers. They studied; they played; but the memory of their murdered parents and the horrible sights of rape, murder, and pillage did not let go. One Saturday afternoon, he wrote,

we played for a while in the yard. But there was much smouldering grief in our hearts, and suddenly five of us got together and decided to beat up a Turkish hamal. In the back of our school yard a ruined Armenian house constantly reminded us what the Turks had done to our homes.

They lured a Turkish *hamal* (street porter) into this house and beat him "with a frenzy of racial revenge" until his head was soaked in blood. This was an act of revenge, punishable or at least reprimandable in a civilized world, but a perfectly understandable reaction, an urge in the hearts of these young victims of an inhuman tragedy. This wild act of vengeance stirred turmoil. The Turkish community filed a complaint with the Russian military governor, and the culprits were expelled from school. But it was all the same to the boys. Now they "resolved to live only for revenge. We had no business going to school after what the Turks had done to us." Finally, after a long speech by the Vardapet, they got away with promises of obedience. "Revenge is the most sinful of all human passions," said the Vardapet. Then he added,

You must avenge yourselves, most assuredly. It is your greatest patriotic duty, your sacred life work. But you must avenge yourselves as Christians and Mekhitarist

gentlemen by rising to great heights of achievement... [so] that the whole civilized world will point to you and say: "These are the new branches of that sturdy old tree the Turks felled, but could not destroy its roots. It has grown and blossomed again."¹⁰⁹

Many survivors, with or without Catholic or Protestant upbringing, took that advice. They tried to bury their genuine anger. But that suppression resulted in dire psychological turbulence which in some, as exemplified by Shahnur and Shushanian, generated an internal reaction, a turning against oneself to excise the inner enemy and negate everything good about oneself; then the reaction was amplified and generalized to turn against everything beautiful in the world.

In Shahnur's case, his pessimism resulted not only from the burden of the past that weighed upon his soul, but also from the illness he grappled with all his life. Having been infected with tuberculosis early in his youth, he was in and out of hospitals and sanitariums. Poor health affected his outlook and attitude toward life and mankind, resulting in exaggerated judgments and metaphors offending good taste and the romantic view: "If the nightingale is attracted to the rosebush, it is not for the fragrance of its roses but for the aphids."¹¹⁰ Shahnur died in 1974 in a sanitarium near Paris, lonely

¹⁰⁹ Surmelian, *I Ask You* (1945), pp. 178-80.

¹¹⁰ Shahnur, *Krake koghkis* (1973), p. 99. In *Tertis kiraknoris tve* (1959), he wrote, "I prefer literature to my life because in my literature suffering has an end" (p. 20).

and forgotten. The deadly disease had eventually taken its prey.

An inward anger translated into vengeance

The injustice continues and the survivors of the great Catastrophe are its victims. Vengeance against those responsible for the calamity, a way to cast off the debilitating sense of victimhood, is not always possible. The result is an inward anger that most of the time is translated into vengeance against oneself and those around the self.

Vazgen Shushanian wrote of this peculiar feeling in *Garnanayin, Siro hez namakner* (Of spring: Humble love letters). He described how, on some days, under the influence of that rancor toward the world and human beings, he deliberately went out without combing his hair, with obscene thoughts on his mind, a dirty look in his eyes, and a licentious song on his lips, tossing lascivious comments and slurs at women passing by.¹¹¹ His inner anger and frustration told him that people are mean, and sometimes you have to have sharp teeth to bite them and an evil, venomous tongue to hurt those who want to sting you.¹¹² This sense of vengeance toward all mankind turned him against those who loved him most. He took pleasure in hurting his victim, an innocent and dearly beloved person, even if the ruthless blow tore his own heart up first: "When I looked at her

¹¹¹ Shushanian, *Garnanayin* (1956), p. 95.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 96.

eyes, my heart ached. I felt tears in my throat. I looked at Arp'ik and with a wild effort I shouted lewdly, 'Good-bye my beautiful Arpik,' like a scoundrel who whistles behind a girl's back."¹¹³ Lustful pleasure in fornication and debauchery, hallucination on drugs and alcohol can alleviate the pain, put a soothing dressing on the wound, make you forget the present and become indifferent toward the future, but all the time there is a voice calling you, a fragment of memory to awaken you.

Often, just a tune is enough to drum up my emotions. I become upset and feel an urge to run from one debauchery to another, from one downfall to another, ungodly and sinful. I want to measure with my heathen gaze the wide range of people's desires and throw my body into the blue flames of their lust. I want to wander from one bordello to another, from one orgy to another, and fall into a bestial sleep drunk and exhausted. But your eyes [referring to his dead sister, RP], your big chestnut-colored, luminous, innocent eyes hold me back.¹¹⁴

The image of Shushanian's sister, appearing in his dreams and in his waking hours, worked like a double-edged sword. It either instantly generated hypermnesia and dragged him into the past, or it interfered with his normal relationship with the opposite sex. *Ts'aygerg* (Evening song, 1925) is a testimonial to these oscillations. In this poem, the author-narrator speaks to his little

¹¹³ Shushanian, *Siro ev arkatsi* (1957), p. 186.

¹¹⁴ Shushanian, *Erkir hishatakats* (1966), p. 244.

sister, whom he lost one night on the roads of deportation. He shares with her the memories of happier days. He recalls the day their innocent childhood was interrupted by the Turkish horrors. The family took to the road on the death march and one by one they fell down dead, unable to bear the unbearable hardship. The author-narrator is now a young man with a tormented soul, bent under the burden of his horrifying memories. He cannot cope with the present. He cannot rid his soul of torturing images of the past and the memory of his murdered little sister. While making love to a French girl, a Lucette or another, he cannot help reminiscing, confusing the past with the present, and thinking of his dead sister. He sees his sister in this girl. It is his sister whom he so warmly takes in his arms and kisses her on the lips. But then, it is Lucette again. Bewildered and heavy-hearted, he asks, "Isn't this betraying you, my little Lucette?"¹¹⁵

The collapse of social and moral order

The Turkish atrocity did not end with destruction and murder alone; it completely subverted the survivors' world of moral order and robbed them of their ability to

¹¹⁵ Shushanian returned to this theme on different occasions. See, for example, two untitled poems in *Hairenik*, vol. 3, no. 12 (1925) and vol. 4, no. 4 (1926), that capture this theme. For further analysis see Rubina Perroomian, "Hairenik: A Periodical in the Heart of New England," in *Armenians in New England*, ed. Marc A. Mamigonian (Belmont, Massachusetts: Armenian Heritage Press, 2004), pp. 114–36.

conduct normal human relationships. The work of Vazgen Shushanian is a dramatic portrayal of this damaged and deranged inner world. What was lacking in the newly forming or re-forming Diaspora—a haphazard amalgamation of remnants comprising mostly young single men, widowed women, and children—was order, the foundation of a society. The French Armenian writers epitomized the collapse of social and moral order, depicting extreme situations to the extent of using the theme of incest,¹¹⁶ which had also been popular in French literature since the late nineteenth century.

In entertaining the theme of incest, French Armenian writers did not intend to shock readers with extreme trends in literary "innovation," as much as, consciously or subconsciously, to demonstrate the total collapse of the foundation of Armenian society in the aftermath of the Genocide. Indeed, more than imitating this trend in French literature, Armenian writers pictured the new reality in which the memory of the Tragedy, the dispersion of family members, and acute yearning for perished loved ones dominated normal relationship,

¹¹⁶ The theme of incest was not unprecedented in Armenian literature. In fact, according to the analysis of Ap'o Boghigian in an unpublished paper titled *Azgapghitsut'ian t'eman "Menk" i groghneru grut'iunneru mej* (The theme of incest in the writings of the "Menk" writers, 1986), Ghevond Meloyan, later a member of the *Menk* group, published a novel titled *Mayrē* (The Mother, 1909), subtitled *Nor vep* (New novel), with an oedipal construct. Citing theories put forth by prominent psychoanalysts, Boghigian expounds on the concept of incest and its origins and the reverberations of this theme in French Armenian literature of the 1920s and 30s.

sometimes even causing deranged and perverted bonding among survivors. Delving into the reasons for the collapse of social and moral order in French society, one can simply refer to Sigmund Freud's thesis and point to the breach of the incest taboo, a basic universal law holding human society together. Freud believed that the prohibition of incest was the one and only foundation of societal law that regulated the development of human societies. Based on that understanding, it is conceivable that the post-Genocide dispersion had obliterated the basic societal law. The writers of *Menk* perhaps subconsciously believed that confronting the idea of incest and dealing with it in writing could reinstate the foundations of a broken society.

Zareh Vorbuni wrote about displaced feelings between brother and sister in his short story, *Vardzu seniak* (Room for rent).¹¹⁷ Merely to say aloud the name Vardanush, that of his sister in the Old Country, soon to join him in Paris after a ten-year separation, is enough to awaken a torrent of emotions of love and longing in

¹¹⁷ Zareh Vorbuni, *Vardzu seniak*, in *Vardzu seniak, Patmavatsk'ner* (Room for rent: Short stories) (Paris: Atmachian, 1939). Zareh Vorbuni (Orbuni), né Euksuzian, was a member of the *Menk* group. His pen name Vorbuni signifies his lot, *vorb* meaning "orphan" in Armenian. He was born in 1902 in Ordu on the Black Sea coast. His father was murdered in 1915 and his mother managed to escape to Russia with her children. After the war they went to Constantinople where Zareh studied at Berberian High School, and he too, like Levon Surmelian, was recognized for his talent by Tekeyan and published in his journal, *Zhoghovurdi dzayn*. He fled the Kemalist persecutions and settled in Paris. He died in 1981.

Tigran. He is a lonely man devoted to his mechanical labor in a factory, outside of which he has no life. But why did a girl who smiled at him in the street arouse a guilty feeling in him? Why are the two images of the unknown French girl and Vardanush juxtaposed in his mind? He daydreams about the girl. Then he sees her again and she lures him into her apartment. When he realizes that she is just another prostitute doing business, he runs away exasperated, bewildered and confused. Now the image of his sister appears again, not as the little girl he knew, but as a grown woman, to comfort him and give him a sense of security. Is she a mother figure, that of the one he lost to a Turkish massacre? Is she a lover, caressing the tormented soul of this lonely youth?

Vorbuni again took up the theme of an unconventional brother-sister relationship, this time in the context of unconventional mother and son relationship, in *Ev eghev mard* (And there was man, 1964).¹¹⁸ The entire novel is a monologue. Tomas, an Armenian youth, is talking to his dead mother while standing at her gravesite, beside which lies the grave of Marie Josette, a French neighbor's daughter whom he had coveted all his life. And now that she has died in an accident and coincidentally has been buried next to his mother, she has become the center of his dreams and sexual desires. As he talks to his mother, he reveals his

¹¹⁸ Zareh Vorbuni (Orbuni), *Ev eghev mard* (Paris: Z. Vorbuni, 1964). Subsequent page numbers cited in parentheses refer to this edition.

character as a boy who refuses or is unable to grow up and become a man. In fact, he acknowledges that by stating, "The rule of growth is broken in our life. That is why a childlike phenomenon has remained on me" (62). He is weak, unstable, indecisive, and timid, always in fear and running away from the reality. He has all the characteristics of an adult orphan caught up in the turmoil of bizarre emotions. There is something abnormal about his attachment to his late mother. But he is a well-read person and he justifies his attachment by citing parallel situations in the writings of Charles Baudelaire or Gustave Flaubert (34). He contemplates escaping from his mother and gaining his freedom, but, characteristically, he feels guilty at the prospect of "making her a widow for the second time" (47). The novel speaks of the impossibility of the young man ever marrying.¹¹⁹ Srбуhi, an Armenian girl who loves him, forgives his faults and weaknesses and patiently awaits the moment when he will find the courage to propose to her. Yet for Tomas, Srбуhi is like a sister, just like young Herminé whom he had comforted and cared for after she was raped by Osman the Turk at the house where they

¹¹⁹ Significantly, the sense of deliverance Tomas feels after severing relations with his dead mother is obliterated in Vorbuni's next novel, *T'eknatsu* (The candidate, 1967), where the same character is once again caught up in oedipal desire. This novel is the second in a series with the general title of *Halatsvatsner* (The persecuted ones), the first being *Pordžē* (The experience, 1929). Vorbuni subsequently published *Asfalt'ē* (Asphalt, 1972), as the third in the series. *Sovorakan or mē* (An ordinary day, 1974), and two other novels were published later.

had both taken refuge (53-4). In fact, he calls Srбуhi "k'uyrs" (my sister, 123), like Shushanian who called every Armenian girl with whom he had an ephemeral intimate relationship "k'uyrs." That was a presumption, not an intuition.

In the years of turmoil, male deportees considered women as their sisters. They assumed responsibility for rescuing them, for defending and protecting them from sexual assault by Turks and Kurds. In the aftermath of the Genocide, in the outside world, that feeling of close kinship became a hindrance to the natural development of an intimate relationship with an Armenian girl and caused a guilty feeling, almost like committing incest.

The most bizarre reverberation of the theme of incest is in Shahnur's short story, *Buynuzlēnerē*.¹²⁰ Here, incest becomes the most horrific instrument of punishment in taking revenge on those who perpetrated the wreckage of the Armenian people. On their way back from the battlefield, a group of *fedayees* encounter a Turkish brother and sister. They force the pair into sexual intercourse and stand by watching this torture with the satisfaction of avenging the rape and murder of their people. Boghigian sees this act of forced incest as the intended destruction of Turkish society, believing the author would have been at least subconsciously aware of the subversive nature of breaking the incest taboo.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Shahan Shahnur, *Buynuzlēnerē* (The horned animals), *Menk* (May 1932).

¹²¹ Boghigian, *Azgapghitsut'ian t'eman* (1986).

In Nikoghayos Sarafian's *Ishkhanuhi* (Princess), the act of incest is committed between the beautiful Ayshé, the Turkified Armenian wife of a Turkish pasha, and her brother Aram, a survivor of the Genocide.¹²² Aram kills the pasha when he learns the truth about Ayshé, that she is his long lost sister, Araxi, now married to the murderer of their father. A series of other unconventional, unacceptable actions, including murder and suicide, follow the central act of incest. Nothing is salvaged except for the possibility of the reinstatement of moral codes and the incest taboo. The story tends to show that Aram's attraction to Ayshé is not purely a matter of love and sexual desire but is triggered by the urge to take revenge on the Turkish pasha by stealing his wife and thus dishonoring him, a motive that emerges before Aram learns the true identity of the pasha's wife.

The members of the *Menk* group were convinced they could reinstate order and establish their identity and their relationship to mainstream society and the world through writing, almost as if they were writing in order to repair and rectify the colossal damage. The attempt to repair is an obvious leitmotif in Vorbuni's *Sovorakan or mē*, in which Minas tries hard yet fails to repair the damaged eye in an old photograph of his father. In Shahnur's *Nahanje arants ergi*, Petros retouches photographs professionally, and the whole novel is about repairing and rectifying the damage done to Armenian life and reinstating order.

¹²² Nikoghayos Sarafian, *Ishkhanuhi* (Paris: N. Sarafian, 1934).

Each of Shahnur's characters in his novel and his short stories exhibits in his own way and through his own life experience the collapse of social and moral order. The most outspoken is Suren in his attack on Armenian sacred monuments. There may be a Freudian explanation for his blaspheming and disowning Armenian intellectuals of the older generation, father figures to these young survivors. But perhaps this reaction was a necessary step to acknowledge and express in the most cynical way the huge abyss that separated them from the pre-Genocide reality in order to be able to overcome that abyss and step forward into a healthy new beginning. However, the denunciation of every national treasure and traditional value, as represented by Narekats'i and his work, is only further evidence of an irreparable gap and a total collapse which, as Shahnur tends to show, would be followed by absolute alienation and assimilation: "the retreat" of the nation.

Blaming the ancestors and Christian tradition

In seeking the source of their misery, this generation of orphan-writers looked inward and to the Armenian past. And it is not surprising to find that they blamed their ancestors and the Armenian Christian tradition for their present predicament. *Hogh ev ariun* (Soil and blood), a poem by Andranik Tsarukian, is a stunning example of this mindset:

For the sake of a very old and blood-soaked bit of soil,

We turned a whole nation into a mother in mourning.
 For the sake of a cross and a frail crucified,
 We turned a glorious epic story into a miserable
 tale...¹²³

In this poem, Tsarukian speaks of the glories of the days of yore and compares them to the present plight of the nation. He then calls on the Armenian forefathers: "Fathers, fathers in mourning, what did you do to yourselves and to us?" He goes on to clearly charge them with responsibility for the calamity that befell the nation. He accuses them of abandoning the ancient and glorious faith of Armenia and adhering to Christianity which only brought the nation pain and suffering. The poem concludes by picturing the desolate situation of the present generation and their futile struggle. The past generation, he contends, at least struggled with their feet firmly planted on their land and they died spilling their blood on the soil of the homeland. The present generation is deprived of even that soothing sentiment.

Frustration and disillusionment poisoned their faith and drove them to destroy their national strongholds and overthrow the nation's revered idols. Shahan Shahnur's work embodies the spirit of protest and criticism of the past. In *Nahanje arants ergi* (written between 1927 and 1929), Suren is the rebellious soul, critical of Armenians past and present. As the intellect of the whole gang, he analyses, criticizes, panegyricizes, and defiles Armenian

¹²³ Tsarukian, *Hogh ev ariun*, in *Dar mē grakanut'iun*, ed. Tölölian (1980), vol. 2, pp. 317-18.

spiritual monuments. Through this vivacious and outspoken character, Shahnur put forth his own ideas, even at the cost of artificial and irrelevant interpolations like the rhetorical declarations and sloganized statements that hinder the flow of the text. Suren condemns the Armenian forefathers who taught their offspring nothing but obedience and patience. They taught the younger generation to blame themselves for the crimes committed against them by the nation's enemies. Paradoxically, at the same time, Suren condemns assimilation and encourages the generation growing up in Diaspora to cling to Armenian culture and traditions. But there is desperation in his voice. He witnesses the conscious and unconscious gradual retreat of the youth, their sad deviation from Armenian traditions, moral principles, nationalism, and loyalty to their roots.

In an outburst of anger and frustration, Suren attacks Narekatsi, blaming him for exhorting the Armenians to obey, endure, and be patient. He condemns Narekatsi for suppressing Armenian pride and national aspiration. He attacks *Narek* (the short title given to Narekatsi's *Book of Lamentation*) as disgusting and unhealthy, the worst book in Armenian literature and the greatest enemy of the Armenian nation. Here he rejects not the Christian teachings but Narekatsi's interpretation of those teachings:

By accepting his faulty and inadequate interpretation of the Christian doctrine, we became passive, compliant, supplicant, and insensible. We did not exceed our own self, we did not have a goal. As for our

collective effort, we did not aim for the possibility of the impossible. No great ideal brought us together to hold us all in its claws. I condemn that wretched man....¹²⁴

The language is so cynical and audacious and the attack so cruel that it prevents the reader from contemplating the message and perhaps finding some truth in the thoughts behind this harsh speech.¹²⁵

In another spell of despair, Suren ponders upon the dilemma of survival in dispersion, condemns and denounces the Armenian forefathers, and describes them as lowly, cunning, egocentric creatures who thought only of saving their own skin.¹²⁶

Our grandfathers were unable to carve anything on flesh, nothing out of flesh.... The unending generations of our forefathers were unable to rescue us.... In place of collective effort, we put fedayees; all our monasteries are the proof.... In place of struggle, we put pugnacity; all our political parties are the proof....

¹²⁴ Shahnur, *Nahanje* (1981), p. 124. Narekats'i (951–1003) was a clerical poet, philosopher, and theologian. He lived and worked in the monastery of Narek in the Vaspurakan province of historic Armenia. He was the author of numerous works, most famous among them, *Matian voghbergut'ian* (The Book of Lamentation), commonly referred to as *Narek*, after the monastery. Narekatsi was later canonized as a saint and *Narek* itself was used among Armenians for its power to cure diseases and foretell the future. It is this book that becomes the target of Suren's ridicule and contempt.

¹²⁵ Shahnur reiterated these ideas in articles he wrote for Armenian papers such as *Anahit*, *Haratch*, *Zvartnots'*, *Tsitsan*, *Ani*, and *Haykakan Tarets'uyts'*.

¹²⁶ Shahnur, *Nahanje* (1981), p. 103.

No matter how far back I go with my thoughts, I see Armenians forever as they are today: egocentric, selfish, disunited, grocers....¹²⁷

Suren's reaction may be an exaggeration, a hyperbolic representation of the prevailing mindset among the Armenian intellectual youth of Paris, the so-called *P'arisi tghak'ë* (Paris boys). In fact, I do not believe that Shahnur intended harm or destruction with the bold thoughts expressed so bluntly and in such stark and cynical language through Suren in *Nahanje* or in the articles he wrote for the Armenian periodical press. Rather, his language was an effective tool to alert his readers and create an atmosphere in which a new literary direction toward modernism could be born.

Of course, Shahnur's novel provoked strong controversy. It was received with a mixture of anger and admiration. The ideas he expressed in *Nahanje* were far too outrageous; in some cases, the language was shockingly offensive. But the talent was there; no one could deny that.

This stark criticism of the past, the values of the past, and the Armenian forefathers' shaping of that past was nothing more than the painful pangs attending the reformation of the Diaspora, which Hagop Oshagan described most poignantly:

Diaspora is the catastrophe prolonged, yet different. It is more than the catastrophe itself that is hard to

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 102.

explain. In 1920 our younger generation was a unity on the literary front in Constantinople.¹²⁸ In 1930, that is, at the outset of the formation of the Diaspora [underscored by Oshagan, R.P.], not only is that front destroyed, but the younger generation also attacks its erstwhile comrades-in-arms left and right, its mentors, and all those who served the nation when that generation was still very young. This is what Diaspora is.¹²⁹

Oshagan tried to dig into the source of this behavior and blamed "Christian Europe" for injecting the poison of "our own annihilation into us, the poison of hatred for each other in our souls." This is a symptomatic analysis of a unique psychological effect that no nation is capable of understanding, a unique collective psyche, that of a nation of uprooted refugees, survivors of a colossal catastrophe. Inward reflection, self-criticism, identifying a scapegoat, these are all symptoms of a discomfited, injured psyche. Studies of responses to trauma—mostly concerned with personal experience, a traumatic event in the life of an individual—show self-blame to be an "inappropriate coping strategy." In the case of these young survivors of a collective national trauma, self-blaming, or rather blaming the nation, or the forefathers, or the older generation, was taken to another level of

perceived avoidability.¹³⁰ And here they began to engage in counterfactual thinking, to construct or simulate alternative outcomes that always involved a different behavior or conduct on the part of the older generation and especially the literati.

Indeed, many blamed the older generation of Armenian literati for their misfortune and turned against them. Leon Zaven Surmelian expressed this attitude as a sixteen-year-old orphan struggling to find his way toward a secure and successful future. In his autobiography, he recalled the scene when he was summoned to the office of *Zhoghovurdi dzayn* to meet Vahan Tekeyan, who later became his godfather:

I held our poets—good men in a world full of evil—responsible for our national disasters, including the massacre in which I had lost my home and parents.... Looking at the editor across the table [referring to Tekeyan, R.P.], I was saying to him in my mind: "Because you are a famous poet our people chose you to head our national delegation to the Peace Conference in Paris. What did we get from it? Nothing! We were deceived by everyone...."¹³¹

A collective gesture of protest against the older generation of writers and traditional Armenian values manifested in Paris in the formation of *Menk'* (We). This group of young writers aimed to find new means of

¹²⁸ Oshagan refers to the group of leading intellectuals who initiated the *Bardzravank* literary movement.

¹²⁹ Oshagan, *Vkayutiun me* (1946), p. 93.

¹³⁰ See Christopher G. Davis et al., "Self-Blame Following a Traumatic Event: The Role of Perceived Avoidability," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, vol. 22, no. 6 (June 1996), pp. 557–67.

¹³¹ Surmelian, *I Ask You* (1945), p. 265.

collective survival, to build new bulwarks of ethnic identity, because the defenses built by the past generations had collapsed, and the ideas they had transmitted proved to be impotent in the Diasporan conditions.¹³² Shavarsh Narduni, an outspoken member of *Menk'*,¹³³ declared in the first issue of the group's literary periodical,

¹³² The group published the eponymous journal *Menk'*, of which five issues were published (the first appearing on April 20, 1931, and the fourth and fifth being a combined issue in 1932), for a total page-count of 278. Grigor Beledian (K'rik'or Baladian), in one of his lectures as guest lecturer at UCLA, made the following observations about the journal: the number of writers gradually decreased; in contrast to other literary journals of the time, *Menk* published more prose than poetry; Nikoghayos Sarafian signed articles only in the first two issues; and after the two first issues there were no polemical articles but rather collections of writings with no common theme or mutual relevance. Beledian maintained that although *Menk* did not come out with a manifesto, again in contrast to previous literary movements, the core members of the group nevertheless had their strong opinions published in the first two issues and these opinions were not necessarily in tune with each other. Beledian published an extensive research article in *Revue du monde arménien moderne et contemporain*, vol. 2 (1995-96), pp. 61-90, titled "Une tentative de communauté littéraire: La revue *Menk*," which was a summarized version of a chapter in his thesis.

¹³³ Garo Poladian recorded some interesting testimony by Shavarsh Narduni about the *Menk* movement in an interview he conducted with the renowned writer. Apparently, the name *Menk* was suggested by Narduni himself, inspired by the name of a similar English organization. He was the one who, despite strong resentment in the group toward Vazgen Shushanian, insisted that Shushanian should be included, and even made him co-editor of the journal, to work with Nikoghayos Sarafian. Narduni told Poladian that the group did not trust the designated editors and wanted him

We are searching for the youth who have shaken off the dust of their ancient traditions. We are looking for youth with a new spirit, new and modern like the cities ruined in the war and rebuilt after the Armistice.... We will come again to demonstrate the bankruptcy of the men of letters who came to Europe and sold us Western imitations. Our political fallacy is the result of a faulty literary orientation. It was our literature, that which came from Europe, which caused our destruction.¹³⁴

Nikoghayos Sarafian made his own remarks, basically calling for the unification of young Armenian survivor-writers regardless of their differences. The role and function attributed to literature may seem somewhat exaggerated here. Nevertheless, with the precedence of the Armenian Renaissance literature playing such a crucial part in the emancipation of the Armenian people and in shaping the Armenian liberation movement, Narduni's idea is not so farfetched. The group envisioned modern Diasporan Armenian literature as the

to write the manifesto. Then there was disagreement on the issues to be covered in such an important statement. So the movement was launched without a manifesto. The relevant issues were taken up in articles by members of the group who sometimes contradicted one another. In the interview with Poladian, Narduni reflected on the French Armenian literature of the 1930s and asserted with regret that if there had been harmony among the members of *Menk*, and if they had collaborated instead of intriguing against one another, French Armenian literature would have reached significant heights. See Garo Poladian, *Zruyts'* (Conversation) (Paris: Arax, 1952), pp. 164-9.

¹³⁴ Shavarsh Narduni, *Menk'... Menk'... Menk'...* (We... We... We...), in *Menk'* (Paris), no. 1 (1931), p. 39.

unbounded expression of the ideas and outlooks of young writers who were unique in their individual approach but who all shared the same national characteristics and the same sources of inspiration. Narduni's declaration or editorial in the first issue of *Menk* certainly echoed the prevailing state of mind among the new generation. Obviously, the orphan generation grew up denying the patronage of the older generation. They were searching for new survival strategies for Armenian culture and literature in the postwar world, particularly alongside the powerful French culture. The goal was to remain uniquely Armenian but to take part in the truly innovative Western movements and modernization. In short, this generation of young intellectuals was in search of an identity that would enable them to survive in that alien environment, and literature was the tool and the medium of that search as well as the locus of a spiritual homeland to replace the homeland now forever lost.

Significantly, less than a decade before the Paris boys gathered to launch the *Menk* movement, a few adolescent orphans in Constantinople came together to contemplate their predicament and expressed ideas along the same lines as those of the *Menk* group. There were four of them: Levon Zaven Surmelian, his brother Onnik, and two other youthful dreamers, Ashod and Vahram. In that important gathering of four, Ashod started off by referring to "this historic generation of ours," and continued, "There aren't many of us left, they killed most of us, but we survivors are strong, by God we are strong!

Our orphan generation has the genius of sorrow, and the indomitable power of it." Vahram picked up the theme, with a vision of salvaging the remnants of the nation:

[W]e should publish our own magazine and clean up all this mess. I have in mind a thick, substantial magazine, angry, vicious, shouting at first, quiet and melancholy later. We will call it *The Broom*, and sweep with it all the cobwebs off of men's minds.... We must return to the village, we must go back to our people. All this high culture and sophistication and Byronic ennui disgusts me....¹³⁵

His pompous and presumptuous tone aside, Vahram realistically pointed to the challenges the orphan generation faced. Of course, because of the later political developments and the demise of Constantinople, the activities of this exquisite group of young orphans were cut short. The challenges and difficulties, impossible to overcome for many, only increased. The easy way out was to rid oneself of the anxieties that Armenian issues caused and to live the comfortable life of a human being, like an ordinary citizen of the host country.

Themes from ordinary life

In their dispersion, the survivors tried to assimilate to the host society and pretend not to have national aspirations or yearnings. They even devoted their creative powers and literary imaginations to the new civilization and the new environment they so enthusiastically adopted. In

¹³⁵ Surmelian, *I Ask You* (1945), pp. 272-3.

their creative writings they took up themes from ordinary life around them, where neither the environment nor the players were Armenian.

An early example of this tendency was set by Michael Arlen, or Dik'ran K'uyumjian (Tigran Guyumjian),¹³⁶ who immigrated to England as a child with his family of Armenian merchants in 1901. He still held Bulgarian citizenship when WWI broke out, and kept that citizenship as well as his Armenian name, with which he signed autobiographical essays and articles in Armenian and English papers until 1920. That was when he took the pseudonym of Michael Arlen and began totally immersing in non-Armenian themes and motifs in his contributions to English periodicals. Two years later he adopted English citizenship and legally changed his name to Michael Arlen. His first novel, *The Green Hat* (1924), with no relevance to his Armenian past, brought him fame and he continued as an English novelist, essayist, and playwright until his last novel, *The Flying Dutchman* (1939). Was it a sudden change of heart, or the outbreak of another world war and the extermination of European Jewry that brought him back to memories of WWI? He returned to writing about the Armenian

¹³⁶ Fearing the Ottoman persecutions, the K'uyumjian family had moved to Bulgaria in 1892. Dikran was born in 1895 in Rousse, Bulgaria. He determined to be a writer, married an Italian countess in France, and had two children. His son, Michael John Arlen, the future author of *Passage to Ararat* (1976), was born in 1930. Michael Arlen, Sr., died of cancer in New York in 1956. He had produced nothing after 1946.

atrocities, but as Leo Hamalian notes, "only in the less widely read short stories and articles in *New Age* and *The Tatler*."¹³⁷ According to Hamalian, Arlen made his strongest statement on the Armenian Genocide in "I Knew Dr. Goebbels," in which he cursed the "intolerable and arrogant little monster" and continued,

I wanted to forget that I was a naturalized Englishman and become an Armenian again. I wanted to be a Jew and revenge all Jews.... The Young Turks slew us, but we slew them also. And to teach us our lesson as slaves and dogs, they slew us in our thousands, and they raped our sisters and whipped our mothers.... To hell with suffering patiently.... To hell with resignation....¹³⁸

It is obvious that despite his efforts to forget the past and adopt a new identity, the Armenian past had haunted him all along.

Hratch Zardarian's short story, *Erb eraznerë k'ushanan* (When dreams come late) is another example of the writers who chose subjects outside of Armenian life.¹³⁹ An old Frenchman, for many years a humble and dedicated instructor in dental prosthetics in Paris,

¹³⁷ Leo Hamalian, "The Armenian Genocide and the Literary Imagination," in *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective* (1986) p. 155.

¹³⁸ Michael Arlen in *The Tatler* (January 17, 1940), quoted in *ibid*.

¹³⁹ Hratch Zardarian, born in 1892 in Kharbert, was the son of the famous Armenian writer Ruben Zardarian who was arrested and killed in April of 1915. He settled in Paris and participated in the *Menk* movement. His novels, *Mer kiank'ë* (Our life, 1934) and *Vorbats'ogh mardik* (People becoming orphans, 1954), brought him fame.

suddenly falls in love with a new student, a beautiful seventeen-year-old French girl. In his scandalous infatuation, without hope of a positive response from the girl, he begins to pursue her and send her expensive presents, squandering his life savings. He loses his reputation and respect and is expelled from the school. He drags out his last days in the streets of Paris, jobless, homeless, and half-insane, still waiting for the girl to come to him.

In this category of non-Armenian themes by the same author we can include *Tseruk Ruson* (Old Rousseau), with an episode similar to the previous piece, and *P'arizi aghjikē* (The Parisian girl), a typification of French girls in their tendency to extreme coquetry. They are seen as capable of sacrificing anything to keep their youth and beauty because they are love machines and beauty is their only capital in life. In this episode the "The Parisian girl" commits suicide because she thinks that a post-surgical scar has destroyed the immaculate beauty of her face.¹⁴⁰

At a certain point, Shahan Shahnur began to write poems in French and publish them in French magazines.¹⁴¹ Characteristically, in his early novel,

¹⁴⁰ These three stories by Zardarian were published in *Hairenik*, vol. 2, no. 9 (1924), vol. 3, no. 6 (1925), and vol. 4, no. 3 (1926), respectively.

¹⁴¹ Shahnur signed his French poems under the pen name Armen Lubin. They were warmly received as sincere expressions of the pain, love, and hope of an immigrant striving with all his heart to absorb the French culture and lifestyle. He went back to writing in

Nahanje, he had already discussed the issue of young Armenian intellectuals in Paris writing in French on non-Armenian topics and placing their works in French publications. He was defending his move years before he ventured into writing in French himself. Here is Suren, typically speaking fervently:

I must live and spend my youthful stamina. I cannot be lulled by hope alone. I saw Armenians who came before me. They were always waiting for better days to come and they grew old with those hopes. My art does not want to wait for any daybreak. I don't want to blame Armenians, but they don't have the right to blame me. I want to speak, and it is natural that I address my words to those who have the time and the wish to listen to me; Armenians have neither one nor the other.¹⁴²

There is, of course some truth in this. Armenian communities in France, mostly refugees, survivors of the Genocide, were caught up in the everyday struggle of survival. They could hardly foster, support, and encourage the young intellectuals whose literature did not particularly speak to the heart of the victims, was alien to them, and whose wild conduct and lifestyle they hardly approved.

Leon Zaven Surmelian, breaking a long silence after the publication of his Armenian poems in 1924, used English as the medium of his artistic expression in his

Armenian in the 1960s, after which he published *Bats tomar* (1971), *Krakē koghkis* (1973), and other important works.

¹⁴² Shahnur, *Nahanje* (1981), p. 166.

autobiography, *I Ask You, Ladies and Gentlemen* (1945), and he was criticized for this by some. In a piece he wrote, likewise in English, as the Preface to a new publication incorporating his own Armenian poems and Tekeyan's letters to him, he expressed pessimism about the future of Armenians in America:

The melting pot is relentless, time and death show no mercy, and the Armenian element is dissolving into the greater American amalgam. It's a losing battle for [the] Armenian writer; he is beaten before he starts.... We can't go against the historic process. Sooner or later we shall lose our language, but we need not lose our Armenian spirit.

It was for the sake of keeping the fire of the Armenian spirit alive in the next generation that he chose to abandon his mother tongue and write in English, he reasoned. And to his critics he retorted, "But let me remind you that I happen to be one of those who came from the road of death and who carry immortal Armenian longings in their hearts."¹⁴³ He wrote short stories in English and was widely published. He also wrote some poetry but never considered himself a poet. His goal was to become more and more Americanized, and writing poetry helped him to feel American. Significant is the sense of freedom he identified with Americanness and associated with the genre of poetry, through which he hoped to reconcile his two identities: "I

¹⁴³ Quotations from Surmelian's Preface to *Vahan Tekeyani namaknere* (1950), pp. 9–10 (see p. 81, n. 4 supra).

felt better and freer when I wrote a poem—and at the same time, I felt more American too. Poetry might well heal the inner split and bring my two disparate selves together and make me whole again."¹⁴⁴ Yet total Americanization was never realized. There was always an identity rooted in the distant past imposing itself.

Survival as a nation

No matter what the justification these writers offered for drifting away or abandoning the Armenian language and literature, they were also the ones concerned about the gradual loss of identity among Armenian youth. They had to fight the fight of Armenians to survive as a nation. The strong impact of the Genocide had generated two opposing behavioral patterns on both the individual and the collective level. At the level of the individual struggling in an alien environment, a dichotomy of reactions was generated: either complete assimilation and adaptation to the New World, burning one's bridges and never looking back or, on the contrary, in fear of being engulfed by the tide of assimilation, denying real and present life in the world passing by and isolating oneself in a castle of memories and dreams of the past. At the collective level, this struggle entailed reorganization and mobilization, which involved a particular internal policy devised and implemented by intellectuals and

¹⁴⁴ Leon Surmelian, "The Sombrero," in *Pow Wow: Charting the Fault Lines in the American Experience – Short Fiction from Then to Now*, ed. Ishmael Reed with Carla Blank (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Da Capo Press, 2009), p. 398.

community leaders. This too generated a dichotomy of reactions: either continue the struggle, with the hope and aspiration of a brighter future for the nation, or succumb to the disappointment and disillusion brought about by the political reality of the time, give up the collective fight, and let the nation slide into indifference and eventual absorption into the mainstream society and culture.

In the immediate aftermath of the Genocide, the struggle to survive in the West brought the refugees together. They clung one another, tried to find solace in each other's company, and rekindle the warmth of their abandoned homes in the inviting atmosphere of Armenian churches and local community organizations. But most of them drifted away after they recovered from the initial shock. The young ones found consolation in their love affairs with easy-going, fun-loving American, German, French, and Italian girls. Shahnur described, in *Nahanje*, how Armenian youth—sole survivors of their family, or having left an aged and ailing mother in Turkey—broke ties with the Armenian community and wandered about trying to adapt to new values and forget the old ones. "Letters flew home less frequently and, of course, far away, mothers wept" (98).

Those who tried to stay the course watched with fearful eyes as their hopes and dreams crashed against the impregnable walls of the new civilization. They witnessed the old values, whether cherished or disparaged, fading against the colorful backdrop of the

new lifestyle while they had not yet found new values to cling to.

Garo Poladian's characters in *Ke hrazharim hayutené* (I resign from Armenianness) grapple with the issue of collective survival decades after the Genocide, in the aftermath of World War II. Seven men from different walks of life, with interests different in every way, have come together to do something. For what? For whom? The only common denominator among them is their Armenian origin and a deep concern about the dire state of the Armenians. "We all agree that something should be done, but what? A compatriotic organization? A newspaper? A publishing house? Or something else?"¹⁴⁵ Some in the group even consider a secret organization to engage in terrorism and avenge the murder of their loved ones, "to punish the perpetrators who now walk on the face of the earth unpunished, happy and proud" (19–21). This is Gegham, the revolutionary spirit in the group. But Dashnaksutun initiated such acts of revenge. Why did they stop? Zaven, another outspoken member of the group, blames the party for inaction, for betraying the cause of the nation, and even holds it responsible for the present deplorable situation. Harsh criticism of Dashnaksutun turns into self-criticism, to blaming every Armenian for having sold his soul, either for money or to France, or to Stalin, or to something else, anything but the collective good of the Armenian nation

¹⁴⁵ Poladian, *Ke hrazharim* (1978 edition), p. 6. Subsequent page numbers cited in parentheses refer to this edition.

(35-7). Self-blame for the calamity, the traditional response to catastrophe, appears to offer a way out of the psychological impasse that comes from the frustration of being incapacitated, unable to find a solution, incapable of any action. But as we saw earlier, self-blame is the wrong tactic and has no positive long-term effect. They all suffer from an illness called Armenianness (16).

For Hambartsum, the least educated among them, but who nevertheless runs a good and steady business, such talk is incomprehensible. He has become a Frenchman in every respect and has even developed some clout with French statesmen. He wants to distance himself from this strange circle lest his business and his tranquility suffer, but something unknown in his conscience keeps him there. Suren, the novel's narrator, tries to run away from the painful reality laid bare within this circle of strange friends. He wants to get out of town, at least for a short while. But when he falls asleep in a crowded train the reality visits him in a bad dream. His horrible scream frightens his fellow passengers.

Poladian offered a solution, at least a temporary one, for collective survival, for the survival of Armenians as a nation, in his 1966 novel, *Kraké shapikē* (The shirt of fire). Vrezh, the protagonist, loses his battle against the absorbing tide of assimilation and surrenders himself to the dominant society, to living like a Frenchman. But the shirt of fire, his Armenianness, continues to burn his soul. He returns to his parents, Armen and Shaké, the two Genocide survivors in *Artsivnere anapatin mej* (Eagles in the desert, 1958). Promising to join them later, he

persuades them to return to Aleppo where Armenian life is thriving. When he himself returns to Aleppo years later, he finds his parents teaching at an Armenian school in Deir el-Zor.

Middle Eastern countries were havens where Armenianness could sustain itself and flourish. But for Poladian, that was only a temporary measure. With his last breath on his deathbed, Armen advises his son to repatriate, "to live on the side of Aragats mountains where the eagles live, and hope that someday... to Ararat..."¹⁴⁶

Vazgen Shushanian expressed his deep concern and that of all Armenian intellectuals of his time about the hopeless struggle for national survival, and the demise of the old with nothing to replace it:

The struggle of the old generation was clear. They strove to overthrow the tyrannical oppression or to enrich the culture. Today the struggle is ambiguous and uncertain. The sociopolitical, the literary and philosophical values of the past seem meaningless. The new or the old civilization? What is the literary direction? We are wandering in darkness.¹⁴⁷

Post-Genocide Armenian literature reflects the patterns and strategies, intuitive and planned, in the individual

¹⁴⁶ Poladian, *Kraké shapikē* (1966), pp. 419-20.

¹⁴⁷ Shushanian, from a lecture he delivered in Paris in 1925 on Armenian Diaspora literature, quoted by A. T'op'ch'ian in his Preface to Shushanian, *Erkir hishatakats* (Land of memories) (1966).

and national struggle to survive as a nation, to perpetuate.

Aram Haykaz considered assimilation a natural and inevitable consequence of life in America. He told the story of Armenian families, newly immigrated from Constantinople, leaving behind the hardships they had endured at the hands of the Turks and falling in love with the American lifestyle. "With forgiving gaze we watched their unnecessary haste for Americanization."¹⁴⁸

In other stories, Haykaz portrayed families already assimilated in America. In *Mijazgayin ėtanik'* (International family, 1942), Jake the Armenian lives with nostalgic recollections of his native land and tormenting memories of the tragic events that cast him into the New World. He has found happiness in marrying a German-American woman who does her best to allay his nostalgia for the Old World. She cooks him ethnic dishes—*bulgur p'ilaf*, *ch'ik'uft'eh*, and *shish k'abob*—once in a while, a trivial effort. Jake, torn by inner conflict, has a strong urge to transmit something of himself, his past, his origins, and what it means to be an Armenian, to his two Americanized daughters. He tries, without success, to inspire them with love and appreciation for their ethnic roots. But American culture has absorbed them. They have nothing Armenian but a distorted notion of the history of its people and some predilection for *dolma*, *shish kabob*, and *bulgur pilaf*. Jake has failed. All he is able

¹⁴⁸ Aram Haykaz, *Lakotnerĕ metsts'an* (The kids have grown up), in *Aprek erekhek* (1977), pp. 97–102 (quotation from p. 97).

to pass on is a vague story of a tragic past and the plight of a nation of victims, weeping and lamenting their formidable losses, craving recognition by the world community.¹⁴⁹

In another story by Haykaz, the narrator's unnamed friend has married another Armenian in the hope of forming an Armenian family, but their children are estranged from anything Armenian. Now, after World War II, in the excitement generated by a wave of Armenian repatriation, he is thinking of moving his family to Soviet Armenia. He makes an effort to tell his children about the history of the Armenian people, the grandeur of their past, the beauty of their homeland. They are not interested. Granted, it would be an adventure to visit Armenia, but to go and live there is out of the question. They are Americans and they have nothing in common with their father's patriotic sentiments and ethnic belonging.¹⁵⁰

In Garo Poladian's *Ke hrazharim hayutene*, his protagonist, Babken, "has resigned from Armenianness," severed his ties, and run away. During his last meeting with his girlfriend, he had angrily shouted at her, "I resign... from you too, from all of you crummy, wretched people, the last remnants of a dying nation. You listen to me. I resign from your Association [of Armenian Youth],

¹⁴⁹ Aram Haykaz, *Mijazgayin ėtanik'* (International family), in *Ts'eghin dzaynĕ* (The voice of the race) (reprint, Montreal: Horizon, 1987), pp. 70–8.

¹⁵⁰ Haykaz, *Tsitseṃakĕ buyn ė shinum* (The swallow builds a nest), in *ibid.*, pp. 79–84. The story was written in 1946.

I resign from your circle of friends.... I resign from Armenianness."¹⁵¹ After the death of Babken's mother, his only link to the Armenian reality and the Armenian past, all he was left with was a box containing her scarf and the book of *Narek*. He couldn't stand the pettiness and the misery surrounding him in the Armenian community of Marseilles. He wanted to grow, to belong to a greater nation, a happier nation, and he was going to find all that in Paris.¹⁵² He wholeheartedly adopted everything French and even changed his name to George Ober.

But all during the following twenty years away from anything Armenian, a hidden pain has tormented him. To his French wife he is a mysterious person with a mysterious box that no one is allowed to come near. Once in a while he locks himself in his room on the pretext of writing a novel which he claims he wants to leave to the Armenian youth after he is gone.

Suren, the narrator, finds his long-lost friend in strange circumstances, and the novel continues with Babken telling Suren his story, one he intends as a deadly warning to be read by Armenian youth before they cross the border as he did long ago. "Beware! Fatal danger!... Beware! Beyond this point lies the abyss."¹⁵³ The book will be his blood tax to his people.

Assimilation is a "fatal danger" for the nation, but what about complete isolation at the other end of the

¹⁵¹ Poladian, *Ke hrazharim* (1978 edition), p. 142.

¹⁵² Ibid., pp. 169-70.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 54.

spectrum? Complete isolation as in continuing to live in one's Old Country town or village even while living in the New World. Hamastegh's short story titled *Zohē Kar Amun ēr* (The victim was Kar Amu, 1921) offers an example of this pattern of behavior.¹⁵⁴ Kar Amu, like

¹⁵⁴ Hamastegh, *Zohē Kar Amun ēr*, in *Erker, A, Giughē ev Andzrev* (Works, I: The village and the rain) (Beirut: Hamazkayin, 1966).

Hamastegh (Hambartsum K'elenian, or Gelenian) was born in 1895 in Perchenj village in the Kharbert region. It was a turbulent period in Armenian history and Hamastegh remembered the stories of the massacres of 1894-96 that were kept alive and frequently recounted in his village. It was before the Genocide, in 1913, that he traveled to the United States to pursue higher education, which he did not accomplish, but he did succeed in becoming an accomplished Armenian writer in America. When it came to devising a pen name, he combined his first name, HAMbartsum, with those of his brothers, ASTur, and EGHia, to read HAMASTEgh. He wanted his brothers, both victims of the Genocide, to live on in his literature.

Hamastegh published his short stories in various Armenian periodicals and then in separate volumes, including *Giughē* (The village, 1924), *Andzrev* (Rain, 1929), *Spitak dziavor* (The white horseman, 1952), *K'aj Nazar ev tasnerek' patmvatsk'ner* (Brave Nazar and thirteen short stories, 1955), and *Aghot'aran* (The chapel, 1957). See also a selection of the above-mentioned works in *Patmvatsk'ner ev Hek'iat'ner* (Short stories and tales), published by the Aramian Sanuts' Miut'iun, series no. 7 (Beyoglu: Hermon Matbaasi, 1963).

Hamastegh's detailed autobiography is published in the first volume of his complete works, *Erker, A* (1966). We learn that his wife's protracted and ultimately fatal illness left him devastated and afflicted with heart disease. Ironically, preparations were then underway for a pan-Armenian celebration of the writer's fifty years of literary activity. Reluctant to participate in any of the celebrations that were to take place in Beirut, Tehran, Yerevan, and the U.S., Hamastegh nevertheless flew to California for the first jubilee event. This was his last public appearance, as he collapsed with a massive

many other immigrant Armenian men, has lived in America for twenty years yet he knows nothing about the country. "He was thrown onto these shores by strange tides... but he wasn't the man to part from his native village."¹⁵⁵ Every night he dreams of his village, and these dreams usually linger on into the next day, dominating his mood and affecting his productivity at the factory where he works. His absentmindedness and his daydreaming eventually lead to a fatal accident. On the ill-omened day he is not focused on his work. His thoughts have drifted away to the past:

He was chatting with Sak'o, a fellow farmer. He was caressing his cow when a heavy hand rested on his shoulder. "Hurry up!" It was his boss. Kar Amu pulled himself together and began to work faster.... A few minutes later he let himself go again. This time he was offering a bunch of grapes to a beggar passing by the fence. Another instant, and suddenly... *k'urt', k'urt', ch'rukhhk, ch'rukhhk* [clackety clack].... The machines stopped. The factory fell into a commotion. There were bloody pieces of human flesh scattered everywhere.... The victim was Kar Amu.¹⁵⁶

In Benjamin Nourigian's *Mashats avel* (Worn-out broom, 1937), Akob Aghbar (Brother Akob) has never adapted to the New World and never even tried to. Yet unwillingly, he has become an American, "U.S. property,

heart attack while addressing the celebrants. The date was November 27, 1966.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., *Zohē Kar Amun ēr*, p. 148.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 149.

that is, a [piece of] chewing gum in Uncle Sam's mouth, where all the races, all the refugee sons of the Old World are chopped up and mixed... to make the flesh and bone of the future American."¹⁵⁷ Still, Akob Aghbar remains at heart an Armenian villager who only happens to live in America. He works diligently in a factory, sweeping the floors and keeping the place spotless, but he is always under a cloud of impending tragedy. That tragedy occurs one day when he is told, without forewarning, that he is no longer needed at the factory. He is sent home with his last pay packet, nine dollars and eleven cents, the price of his years of service and his life spent at the factory. The story ends with a statement by the narrator: "The world is witness, Akob Aghbar sold his life [*orn u arevē*, lit. his day and sun] for that price. The world is witness." Many short stories written in the early stages of Armenian-language literature in America picture similar situations, where scenes from the Old Country are intertwined with, or rather overlaid, in the protagonist's consciousness, upon his bleak life in the present.

For some, nostalgia lingered on and dragged them into isolation and unwillingness to adapt to the new life, even in the late 1940s. In Garo Poladian's *Ke hrazharim*, Andranik personifies the psychology of chronic homesickness. His ancestral home, a dull, dark hut, the farm, and the animals live forever in the mind of this village boy. He dreams of them day and night. He calls

¹⁵⁷ Benjamin Nourigian, *Mashats avel*, in *Spiurkahay patmvoatske*, ed. Gabrielian (1984), p. 299.

their names and talks to them, like a sick man in delirium. For long years he has worked indifferently, without a smile on his face, without relishing the foreign company or the foreign food.¹⁵⁸

Escape from painful reality into the world of dreams and memories of the past, as substantiated in literature, was a temporarily effective survival tool. Some succeeded in maintaining a balance. Others, weary and disappointed, wearing a mask of indifference toward everything Armenian, were carried off by the surging tide of assimilation.

Armenian intellectuals wrote, protested, warned, and admonished so that, in the words of Vazgen Shushanian, "the trumpets of victory would not stop blowing. What is important is that our songs continue to sound in these terrible years of exile."¹⁵⁹ Shushanian tied his hopes to the revival and reconstruction of equality and justice in Soviet Armenia. He believed the day would come. These orphan boys who "must carry their dead on their young but strong shoulders without complaint, bitterness, or disillusion, with indomitable faith in the sunrise of victory and equality,"¹⁶⁰ would put down their sacred burden on the "altar of the martyrs" in the homeland. They would whisper to the spirits of their dead, "rest

¹⁵⁸ Poladian, *Ke hrazharim* (1978 ed.), p. 15.

¹⁵⁹ Shushanian, *Mard mē vor Ararat ch'uni* (A man, who does not have Ararat), in Sevan, *Vazgen Shushanian* (1968), p. 24.

¹⁶⁰ Shushanian, *Erkir hishatakats* (1966), p. 209.

here, under your roof."¹⁶¹ For Shushanian, the Armenian Diaspora was only a temporary stopover, not a final place of settlement. He was ready to sacrifice the strongholds of the Diaspora for the achievements and the perpetuation of Armenians in Armenia. Let the Armenian language die away, let the songs fade away in Diaspora, let all the strongholds come falling down, one by one, if only Armenians could thrive in their homeland. "Thriving in the Diaspora is artificial, it has no substantial importance," he believed. "The Armenian nation cannot sustain if it does not take root in its own homeland."¹⁶²

Shahan Shahnur likewise did not believe that Armenians could preserve their national identity in the Diaspora. He witnessed with trepidation the assimilation of the younger generation, the gradual weakening of their adherence to Armenian customs and traditions. The next generation "will be a stranger in word and deed, willingly or unwillingly, *megha... megha... Araratin* (forgive... forgive... Ararat)," says Suren in *Nahanje*.¹⁶³ This was a sounding of the alarm at the retreat of the nation that Shahnur came to witness: "Let our leaders write and speak. Let them scream in gatherings, it's no use, no use. We will assimilate, all of us; we will be lost,

¹⁶¹ Shushanian, *Amran gisherner* (Summer nights) (Cairo: Husaber Press, 1930), p. 73.

¹⁶² These lines, written in 1940, are taken from Shushanian's diary. See *Hairenik*, combined May-June issue, 1943.

¹⁶³ Shahnur, *Nahanje* (1981), p. 124. Subsequent page numbers cited in parentheses refer to this book.

all of us" (101). Shahnur did not believe that a limited number of concerned intellectuals alone could save the nation and prevent the masses from being absorbed by foreign cultures. At the same time, he chastised the nation for retreating without resistance, without fighting back.

There is something terrible, irresistible, and that is the retreat of Armenians. Fighting is a noble thing and sometimes useful. A nation will come out of it either victorious or defeated; in any case, it will come out of it. But the retreat of their souls melts, annihilates, wipes out everything. (123)

One can quote myriad passages from Shahnur's novel which record the reality of the nation retreating into facelessness, into the negation of their ethnic identity. But to me, as I implied earlier, the entire novel is a struggle, and perhaps a desperate one, to save Diasporan Armenians by shocking their moral fiber and awakening them from the torpor, the self-indulgent lethargy in which they were living. The juxtaposition of binary oppositions, such as love versus hate, tender sentiment vs. vulgar behavior, sophisticated lexicon vs. harsh language, God vs. whore, and others, serves the purpose of shocking the reader. And the shock is exerted right from the beginning.

Nahanje is subtitled *Patkerazard patmut'iun hayots'* (The illustrated history of the Armenian people).¹⁶⁴ It begins

¹⁶⁴ Characteristically, Shahnur uses the same subtitle, *The Illustrated History of the Armenian People* (volume 2), for his collection

with two quotations from Saint Luke, as a religious prelude to the coming story and as an anchor for the projected *Illustrated History*. Significantly, both passages are about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, again, leaving the impression that Shahnur intended to draw a parallel between the resurrection of the Lord and the survival, or rather the revival of the Armenian nation after the Genocide. Turn the page, and there is the initial scene, the novel's true pacesetter: a vivid and outrageous description of a scene of lustful sexual act.

As I tried to imagine myself reading this novel in the 1930s, I truly began to admire Shahnur for his courage in treating such a taboo subject in Armenian literature. The novel was far too modern for the average Armenian mindset and even for the literary critics of the time.¹⁶⁵

of short stories, *Haralezneru davachanut'iunē* (Treason of the spirits, 1971). This volume will be discussed later in this chapter. The use of the term "illustrated" has a figurative meaning. With a subtle nuance of sarcasm, Shahnur intends to picture and underscore images that stand out as illustrations of Armenian life in the post-Genocide era.

¹⁶⁵ Levon Pashalian (Bashalian), writing in the French magazine, *Le Foyer*, praised Shahnur for his undeniable talent and his successful novel. "Nevertheless," he added, "some of the ideas suggested in certain passages, trying to be unique and profound, are plain nonsensical. Treating the concepts of God and whore together is one of them." The review was translated into Armenian and published in *Anahit*, nos. 1-2 (1939), p. 80.

Characteristically, when *Nahanje* was first published as a serial in *Menk*, Arshak Ch'obanian, a well-known literary critic of the time and the editor and publisher of *Anahit*, had written a long review of the novel, praising the spirit, the style, and the plot, but also criticizing the scenes where he thought the author had gone overboard and brought his novel close to pornography. Nonetheless,

The novel's main character is Petros, a young Armenian from Constantinople. He left his parents there and has no feelings for them or for the Old Country, or at least he tries to pretend indifference. He is handsome, healthy, and free to enjoy life in Paris. He has quickly adapted to the new environment and he is able to take advantage of every "opportunity" that knocks on his door. After all, he sees Paris as one big brothel, but "on second thought, there are no whores in Paris because all women are alike."¹⁶⁶ Therefore, he does not explain or define a whore, nor does he explain or define God. Petros represents or rather personifies a restless, feverish generation of young Armenians in Paris, most of whom

he had admitted that, "with his unique characteristics, his unique mode of expression, and his unique perception of life, he has brought a new tone to our literature." *Anahit*, no. 6 (1930), p. 109. Nine years later, however, in the same issue of *Anahit* in which he published Pashalian's review, Chobanian added his own article, titled *Aroghjē ev anaroghjē Shahnuri grakanut'ian mej* (The healthy and the unhealthy in Shahnur's literature), this time strongly attacking the author for his "irresponsible approach to Armenian traditions and nationalism." He listed a few passages from the novel where Armenian national traits and spiritual beliefs were questioned, as what he considered to be the unhealthy elements in Shahnur's literature. *Anahit*, nos. 1-2 (1939), p. 79.

As for the average reader's perception of the novel, Shahnur told the story of a lady who approached him and said, "I read your novel, and I truly admire it. But there are such obscene scenes in it that I couldn't let my daughter read it. Can't you write something more conservative?" "Oh yes," he replied, "I'm working on that. Next year I'm going to publish a wall calendar." See Shahnur, *Tertis kiraknoria tive* (1959), p. 20.

¹⁶⁶ Shahnur, *Nahanje* (1981), p. 17.

were alone, away from their families. Shahnur generalized these circumstances by referring to Petros as "the Armenian," in particular by attributing to him certain characteristics that he considered to be uniquely Armenian: simple-minded, stubborn, rancorous, and unforgiving.

The author used the name Petros interchangeably with Pierre, its French equivalent, indicating the conflict between the Armenian and the French identities. Most of the time it is Pierre who comes to the fore while Petros is pushed back into oblivion. The alternating use of the two names throughout the novel becomes a yardstick for the youth's ethnic consciousness, national feelings, and moral bonds to his mother tongue and Armenian traditions. In some instances these sentiments grow overwhelmingly strong and burst forth in patriotic declarations. Then they die down and fade away in the struggle of daily life and the pleasures of ephemeral love affairs.

Shahnur used the name-change device as a signifier of assimilation in other stories as well, for example, Robert-Norayr in *Pchegh mē anush sirt* (A little bit of warm heart) and Hambartsum-Jacquo-Adnan in *Haralezneru davachanut'iunē* (The treason of the spirits).¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ Shahnur, *Haralezneru davachanut'iunē*, was originally published under the title *Hambartsum* in *Anahit*, nos. 5-6 (1932), pp. 50-6. The same story, with minor changes and the addition of an Epilogue, was later published as the title story in the collection of six short stories, *Haralezneru davachanut'iunē* (Paris: Haratch, 1971), which includes *Pchegh me anush sirt*.

The issue of assimilation is a special focus in the stories in *Haralezneru davachanutiane*, which he subtitled as the second volume of *Patkerazard patmut'iun hayots'* (The illustrated history of the Armenian people), as mentioned earlier. The first three stories depict the ugliest facets of Armenian life in Constantinople, clearly suggesting that there is no future for Armenians in the "Old Country," that the possibility of surviving there as a nation is nil. Their existence in that city therefore adds nothing but disgrace to the history of the Armenian people.

The theme of assimilation is taken up in the most unusual way in the last story, *Haralezneru davachanutiane*, which lent its title to the entire collection. This is an abstract composition with no specific plot, consisting of a sequence of psychic tribulations, visions, and interpretations of love, hope, and faith. Hambartsum, a young Armenian immigrant in Paris, symbolizes the generation of survivors, witnesses to the massacres. "They murdered us by thousands and millions like animals and yet more brutally. None of the ideologies to which we were so dedicated before the catastrophe could stand against that carnage. Everything beautiful and noble was condemned to silence."¹⁶⁸ Comparing that past and the present, Hambartsum asserts that in those days, even in the most tragic moments, there was hope and the determination to go on, whereas today hope has faded

away and moral strongholds are in danger of being invaded by foreign elements. The national identity of the remnants of the Armenian people has lost its vitality and there is no resistance, no optimistic attempt to preempt the impending disaster.

Hambartsum constantly hears a mysterious underground voice: "I hoped to find you at that window which, though small, looks out to the sky. And behold, I find you outside of that same small, closed window, and you are looking inside toward the prison" (246). This image indicates that Hambartsum has lost hope for the future and the voice laments his situation. It also suggests that Hambartsum, typifying the survivors, has chosen the wrong strategy for national preservation: ghettoization, refusing to open up to the world. He insists that his name is Hambartsum (characteristically meaning "resurrection"), but the mysterious voice addresses him as Adnan (a Turkish name) when he struggles in the turmoil of Old World Constantinople, or Jacquo (a French name) when he struggles in the whirlpool of assimilation in Paris, witnessing the physical and moral deterioration of his generation. He keeps repeating, "but my name is Hambartsum," yet no one pays any attention. Surely this is a picture of the fruitless attempt of Armenian youth in Paris to preserve their national identity. Hambartsum is indeed the personification of these youths whose families were slaughtered in the massacres, whose thoughts and whose perception of life are still affected by the massacres. In moments of agony they long to escape this world and join their loved

¹⁶⁸ Shahnur, *Haralezneru* (1971), p. 252. Subsequent page numbers cited in parentheses refer to this edition.

ones in eternity. What is the use of dragging out your life here when your nation is crushed and your homeland lies in ruins? But then the mysterious voice pipes up again, warm and encouraging, reviving and strengthening the desire to go on living:

You should know that hope is born on both the light and the dark road, in laughter or moaning.... I want you to hope in your hopelessness.... In a state of wretchedness, it is advantageous to have hope for the future... because we are defeated by an unimaginable disaster. All you want to do is die. But you keep hoping. An insurgent cry has risen from within our homeland, and you keep hoping. (247-8)

This passage is one of the rare instances where Shahnur encouraged hope despite the prevailing darkness and advocated struggle for a brighter future. Otherwise, he was convinced that everything was useless and that the *haralezes* (in Armenian mythology, spirits with the power to revive the dead by licking their wounds) had betrayed the Armenian nation. But more than that, "The gods have betrayed us, Anahit has rejected us. And to the Armenians, everything seems ineffective, they don't see that anything can be done, they let themselves go, they become weak" (262).¹⁶⁹ The story as a whole explicitly embodies Shahnur's pessimistic attitude regarding the

¹⁶⁹ This passage is part of the Epilogue that Shahnur added to the earlier version of the story (titled *Hambartsum*), which ends with a strong monologue protesting against God, symbolically directed to the pagan Armenian goddess Anahit, symbol of the glory of the nation and the days of yore.

future of the Armenian Diaspora and recapitulates the conclusion of *Nahanje arants ergi*, the nation's "retreat without song."¹⁷⁰

In a very typical cameo titled *Mahazd* (Obituary), Shahnur offered another take on the imminent demise, that is, the complete assimilation of Armenians in the Diaspora. Two sisters have been reunited after long years of separation. One of them raised her family in France, the other in Germany. While they are eagerly chatting with each other and recalling old memories, their children play in a corner, reluctantly, without trying to befriend each other. The one born in France tries and fails to snatch a toy from the one born in Germany. Angrily, he turns away and yells in French, "You dirty German, go back to your country."¹⁷¹ This is truly the obituary of the generation born in the Diaspora.

Shavarsh Narduni did not dramatize the situation or sound the alarm with shocking expressions. He made observations, as the professionally trained physician that he was, visiting refugee families, mostly mothers and children living in poverty, ill and malnourished. In *Hints'eghi mē hōgevark'ē* (The agony of an ancient race), he recounts his visit to the home of a sick boy burning with fever. The mother, also sick and feverish, unemployed

¹⁷⁰ Shahnur's approach to Armenian traditions and especially to Armenian spiritual monuments is much more moderate in this second volume of his *Illustrated History of the Armenian People* as compared to the first volume (*Nahanje*). There are almost no sharp attacks or sarcastic remarks. His writing had mellowed and matured.

¹⁷¹ Shahnur, *Mahazd*, in *Tertis kiraknoria tive* (1959), p. 22.

and starving, has entrusted the boy to his older brother and gone out in the hope of earning a few coins. What will become of these two boys when they grow up, he asks?

In their souls, two races will be in conflict with each other. And naturally the Armenian will lose. Why should they be attracted to Armenianness, of which they know nothing but misery?... The road to opportunity is open for these starving children, and they will mix with the big crowd of this big nation.

The sketch continues with another scene as the physician attends to the sick and starving Armenian refugee families in a big apartment building, each family squeezed into one small room. "They are the last remnants of my people," he reflects, and they suffer in agony, "as if they are shouting out to the world... 'we fought the Turkish sword, we endured the hardships of the Arabian deserts... and now we want to live... for our children, for our history, for our culture....' Where is this misery described, in which book?"¹⁷² French society was all-engulfing, and the Armenian language as a bastion of Armenianness and an important component of Armenian identity was retreating, giving in. Narduni was not even confident that he could maintain his mother tongue which was gradually rusting away as he found no opportunity to use it. "I am afraid of my own soul

¹⁷² Narduni, *Hin ts'eghi mē hōgevark'ē* (The agony of an ancient race), in *Grakan tsolker* (1975), pp. 186–9.

because it is the soul of a youth. It will be fooled by foreign glory, it will forget my language."¹⁷³

Garo Poladian's interview with Shavarsh Narduni sheds more light on the latter's conception of assimilation. The interview took place years after Narduni recorded his pessimistic observations about French Armenian society, when French Armenians still persisted in France, and Soviet Armenia continued its existence and its cultural progress and had even called her sons and daughters home in the repatriation campaign of 1944–46. In this context, Narduni, a member of the Dashnaktsutun Party and a staunch opponent of the Communist regime in Armenia, remarked that, "If the Armenian government and the Armenians in the Diaspora work hand in hand, I assure you that assimilation becomes a ridiculous threat." His idea of the importance of collective effort in the Diaspora lies between the previously formulated options of national perpetuation or assimilation. "To keep Armenians Armenian, the Diaspora should organize itself," he asserted. He went even further and questioned the very concept of assimilation, which he considered a myth. First of all, he said, there are no *nations murées*. No nation or society remains uninfluenced and unchanging. He believed in *interpenetration*. In this kind of relationship, "assimilation will occur to some degree, but [total]

¹⁷³ Karot hay lezvin (Yearning for the Armenian language), in *ibid.*, pp. 95–101.

assimilation will be prevented, according to a program."¹⁷⁴

Altogether, expressions of hope and optimism are rare occurrences in French Armenian literature. In one such occurrence, Vazgen Shushanian expressed hope because, he believed, "it is in the nature of Armenians to worship beauty, a nature created by so much hardship and pain, and because they have believed passionately in the victory of revolution."¹⁷⁵ To attempt to interpret this rather ambiguous statement, one should refer to the French Armenians who, according to Shushanian, succeeded in making their way in French society through art and culture and the creation of beauty. There is also the influence on this statement of French socialist thought which required revolution to materialize. Shushanian's *Mahvan amgastē* (The veil of death) is a more explicit expression of his views.¹⁷⁶ Cast as the diary of a young Armenian artist, a concert pianist and actress, the piece elucidates the feelings and the emotional upheaval of a pathetic love, and also reflects the cultural life of the community, showing how balanced and well-adjusted some in the French Armenian younger generation were, capable of simultaneously partaking of French high culture and social life and the Armenian cultural experience imported from Western Armenia. Of course, the reality was not usually so bright.

¹⁷⁴ Narduni interview in Poladian, *Zruys* (1952), pp. 151-2.

¹⁷⁵ Shushanian, *Alekots tariner* (Tumultuous years), quoted in Sevan, *Vazgen Shushanian* (1968), p. 33.

¹⁷⁶ Shushanian, *Mahvan amgastē*, in *Hairenik*, vol. 4, no. 4 (1926).

Shushanian's canvas represents only a small corner of the life of the French Armenian community.

Shahan Shahnur's stories bear witness to the darker side of reality. Curiously, however, he believed that if there was hope for the future, it could only materialize through the *Menk* movement which, although it was a literary movement, was launched with great presumption and expectation. In *Nahanje*, it is Suren again who, in his particular way, ridicules the tenets of the past and forecasts the *Menk* movement.

That king of ours who was called Abgar, or Gagik, or Khosrov, gathered all the men in the country who were said to be intelligent, wise, clear-headed, and enlightened. He gathered them together and he murdered them all.... Then he ordered that a national song be composed. Everyone came and sang his song, but the king liked not one of them.... Until one day the great song exploded from everyone's lips with the same admirable, charming syllables. That is, one syllable: "*Menk*."¹⁷⁷

Shahnur was convinced that the society of the young Armenian writers in Paris gathered around *Menk* would bring about the revival of Armenian literature in the Diaspora. He believed that these enthusiastic young intellectuals would be able to build a bright future by attuning the rich traditions of Armenian literature with the modern literary achievements of the Western world. Unfortunately, the *Menk* group did not last long. Its

¹⁷⁷ Shahnur, *Nahanje* (1981), p. 104.

members dispersed and the eponymous periodical stopped publishing within a year.

Vazgen Shushanian was a devoted member of the *Menk* group, and he attached great hopes to it; perhaps the disappointment he experienced when it disbanded can be heard in his plaintive remark: "The fever to live, the fever to live... to do great things. I am suffering from a lack of friends of the road. Whomever I go with leaves me half-alone with all my enthusiasm and returns to their petty pleasures."¹⁷⁸

Recreating the Old World

While most French Armenian authors wrote about the profound sense of yearning they felt for the lost homeland and the deprivation they experienced in daily life, others, like Aram Haygaz and Hamastegh, buried their debilitating nostalgia in the recreation of the Old World. They fictionalized the past without mythifying or fetishizing it.

This theme was of course taken up by many writers including poets, the majority of whom have been forgotten and are not read today. Their writings either fetishized village life with nostalgic reminiscences of bygone days, or they sentimentalized the beloved homeland with trenchant lamentations over its loss. These manifestations were apt to make a tremendous impact on readers of the time, many of whom had also experienced the pain and agony of a great loss. These

¹⁷⁸ Shushanian, *Erkir hishatakats* (1966), p. 275.

writings were capable of building a continuing attachment to the Old World and sustaining consciousness of old loyalties that at least temporarily prevented assimilation. This trend can be labeled *giughagrut'iun* (provincial literature, literally, writing about the village). It is a genre that, even if it was popular among unsophisticated readers of the time, contributed nothing to post-1915 Armenian literature or to shaping its future direction.

Neshan Destegul predicted the doom of provincial literature. He conceded that the genre had pumped a breath of fresh air into the artificial and worn-out forms of Western Armenian literature at the turn of the century. But he refuted those who believed it was still a novelty and could earn a writer success and fame. He was referring to those writers—some of whom were quite popular at the time—who textualized and dramatized the Armenian past in fantastic and picturesque recollections of that enviable time. Conversely, he prescribed a literature that was elevated from its folkloric embryo and reaching toward the universal. This staunch critic of the trend admitted, however, that "recreating Armenia" was the only way to cure the incapacitating homesickness of Armenian refugees and inspire them with hope and optimism for the life ahead.¹⁷⁹

Shavarsh Narduni was one writer who ventured to create a truthful image of the Armenian village in the

¹⁷⁹ Neshan Destegul expressed this notion in *Tiroje aygiin mej* (In the proprietor's garden), his three-part essay in *Hairenik*, vol. 3, nos. 9, 10, and 12 (1925), discussed in chapter 1 supra, pp. 43–5.

short stories he wrote in the late 1930s. In the interview he gave to Garo Poladian more than a decade later, he characterized the Armenian villager, or the Armenian—since he believed all Armenians were villagers—as a combination, or assimilation, of three elements, nature, man, and his animals. In order to portray pre-1915 Armenian life in the Ottoman Empire, he believed, one should incorporate all three elements, and he thought he had succeeded in doing so.¹⁸⁰

The first part of Hagop Asadourian's autobiographical novel, *Hovakimi t'omerē* (Joachim's grandchildren, 1965), is a perfect example of nineteenth-century *giughagrutiun*. Adhering to the practice of nineteenth-century writers which was to identify a subject village only by its first initial, Asadourian referred to his native village as "Ch'." for Ch'omakhlu. Asadourian's goal was to bring back to life the village that had given him a happy childhood but now no longer existed; he wished to perpetuate his village in his literature. As he noted in the novel, he wanted the reader to feel and understand the spirit of his village folk who had carried their village in their hearts and walked with it on the road of deportation. And when they fell in the desert, unable to continue any further, they died imagining themselves in their village.

To the externalization of the Old World, Leon Zaven Surmelian contributed a detailed description of pre-1915 life in his hometown of Trebizond in his autobiography, *I*

¹⁸⁰ Narduni interview in Poladian, *Zruyts* (1952), pp. 116–20.

Ask You, Ladies and Gentlemen, first published in whole in 1945.¹⁸¹

Aram Haykaz was a master of this theme. His light humor and vibrant descriptions of people and places create a world to envy and to yearn for. In his short story, *Huysi chambun vra* (On the road of hope), for example, he laid out sweet memories of his childhood friends, their games and mischief, interwoven with scenes of daily life in the pre-1915 Armenian village. Then the fatal blow of the Genocide: "And those who, after years of searching, thought they had found the unknown and unfamiliar 'Hope' for the revival and the vengeance of the race, instead of being its torchbearers, became skeletons on its road."¹⁸²

Hamastegh was another artist whose colorful landscapes of the Old World in the form of short stories present the antithesis of a concern about the previously popular literature known as *giughagrutiun*, i.e. that it was

¹⁸¹ In a message to Armenian readers on the occasion of the Armenian translation of *I Ask You*, Surmelian explained that in presenting such detailed description of places in Western Armenia, it was his intention to provide accurate data for future researchers, historians, and ethnographers on places where Armenians no longer lived or places that no longer existed. He also explained why he originally wrote his book in English. He wanted to tell his story in a language other than Armenian so that others could see the small piece of the entire Armenian tragedy that was his life story. Here we also learn that before he published the work as a whole, he had published chapters in American magazines beginning in 1942. See Surmelian, Foreword, in *Dzez em dimum, Tiknayk' ev paronayk'* (1980).

¹⁸² Haykaz, *Huysi chambun vra*, in *Aprek' erekhek'* (1977), pp. 113–17 (quotation from p. 117).

monotonous and depressing. His stories manifest a unique approach to this already tired theme. Hamastegh reaffirmed his embrace of the theme in a short autobiography in the opening of an Istanbul publication of a selection of his short stories.¹⁸³

Opening a parenthesis here, it is worthwhile to point out a striking phenomenon suggested by the pen names of Aram Haykaz and Hamastegh. Both incorporated the names of their murdered brothers with their own to create their pen name, as if to give life to their brothers in the literature they produced. Whether consciously or subconsciously, they were commemorating their brothers in what was also an act of revenge toward the murderers: remembrance and externalization against the attempt at annihilation.

In the aftermath of the 1915 catastrophe, with his ties to the homeland severed, Hamastegh, like other Armenian intellectuals in the United States, came face to face with the obligation to create literature. He began writing poetry and prose, following the symbolist school, but always in search of a form and conception that would suit his own outlook, his mission, if you like. He stopped searching when he found his inner world, the village and Armenian life in the provinces. He assumed the mission of renewing and reforming the tradition of T'lkatints'i and Ruben Zardarian in the New World. Like Darbinian, he too believed that in order to find a modest niche in

¹⁸³ Hamastegh, *Patmavatsk'ner ev Hek'iat'ner* (Short stories and tales) (Beyoglu: Hermon Matbaasi, 1963).

international literature, Armenian writers and poets should echo the spirit of their own nation, remain faithful to their national heritage, and use it in all honesty. Hamastegh followed his intuition, his ethnic Armenian instinct, and took his inspiration from Armenian life in the pre-1915 village and from the miseries of dispersion throughout the alien world.

Hamastegh knew his craft well. In *Zruyts' shuni mē het* (Conversation with a dog, 1927),¹⁸⁴ for example, the narrator is a lonely man and his interlocutor is a street dog who has appeared on his door step one dark and stormy night. Now the dog shares the fate of this wandering Armenian along with his little corner, a small apartment in Paris. Having befriended the dog, the narrator tells him the sad story of his life, how he was once a happy young man in love, sowing the fields and herding the cattle in his native village of Hoghdar. One day the gendarmes picked him up from the fields outside his village and he was sent to the battlefield, never to see his family again. By some miracle he survived and walked away from a pile of dead and injured soldiers. He kept walking for three days until he reached a road where the caravans of deportees had passed. He was greeted by horrendous scenes of dead bodies, amputated limbs, and skulls. In the dark night they came alive and began speaking to him. He thought he knew them all: they were his fellow villagers and they told him their

¹⁸⁴ Hamastegh, *Zruyts' shuni mē het*, first published in *Hairenik*, vol. 5, no. 6 (1927), pp. 1-8, and later published in volume 1 of the author's complete works, *Erker, A* (1966), pp. 389-404.

stories, how, without warning, they had been forced to take to the road and leave everything behind, home, fields, orchards, church. He ran away terrified, but when he passed a nearby Arab village he was even more terrified to see the skulls of Armenian victims posted on sticks to serve as scarecrows. He managed to steal one, and that white skull, smiling a kind, sweet smile, had accompanied him on his trek to freedom, as he passed through many countries, all the way to that little corner in Paris.

In this short story, the Armenian village comes alive in the most vivid colors. There are no boring descriptions, but masterful strokes of the artist painting an abstract landscape interrupted by strokes of misery and death. The lonely narrator has kept the memory of his native village and the horrors of its destruction alive in his heart, a typical characteristic of the survivor's vivid memory of a horrifying experience in the distant past. He yearns to go back, to return to the ruins of his past. He sees himself standing there screaming out for justice: let the executioners, the murderers of his folks, seize him and torture him to death. In his death, he will smile an open smile, like the skull that hangs on his wall.

Ruben Darbinian recognized Hamastegh's distinct talent and the artistic quality of his work from the very beginning.¹⁸⁵ In the article he devoted to the writer in 1924, he acknowledged the first decade during and after

the war as a sterile period devoid of significant names and works in Armenian literature. And, naturally, he explained it by the great upheaval in Armenian life which was unfavorable for the development of high-quality art and literature. Unlike Neshan Destegul, who considered human suffering to be a uniquely rich source for the birth of true art, Darbinian blamed the enormity of that cataclysmic experience for the absence of true art and stressed the importance of peace of mind for the artist to create a successful work of art, and it was to the favorable conditions more or less existing in America that he attributed Hamastegh's success. He attested to the sparks of cultural reawakening in Armenian life in the U.S. and went so far as to see it as a "temporary center" of liberated Armenian thought and creativity. He praised Hamastegh as a promising young writer who was able to characterize the suffering of Armenian refugees, many of whom were misfits in Diasporan society, and with whom readers were likely to identify themselves. He also emphasized Hamastegh's talent for colorfully yet realistically describing the old Armenian village—humble huts, proud mountains, refreshing springs—in dream-like images that mesmerized homesick Armenians. He cited *Shen giughi hin oreren* (From the old days of the thriving village), published as early as 1921 in *Hairenik* daily, as the first confirmation of Hamastegh's talent.

Hamastegh was the master of his trade, the unique realistic portrayer of Armenian life before, during, and after the Genocide, without sentimentalism, romantic

¹⁸⁵ Darbinian, *Hamastegh*, in *Hairenik*, vol. 2, no. 5 (1924), pp. 42-54.

pathos, or lamentation, but with a penetrating, lasting influence on readers of all times.

I could expound on each of the aforementioned writers' works on the theme of recreating the Old World. I could dwell upon each and every one of Hamastegh's short stories, such as *Tapan Margar*, *Napastaki oragrut'iun*, *Astghkan Saylë*, *Ch'alon*, *Ernek ayn orerun*, *P'ilik Aghbar*, *Andzrevë*, and many others. And behold, a complete picture of pre-1915 Armenian life in historic Armenia would emerge with its landscape, its modest lifestyle, chores, pleasures, celebrations, and griefs, its happy times and its difficult times. That would have been a worthwhile endeavor but it is beyond the scope and focus of my work. Let this short analysis of the theme convey my intention to show how this literature transmitted Armenian customs and mores to the next generation, along with the sense of belonging to the Armenian homeland, the impossibility of returning to it, and the truth about the Turkish atrocities. Let it show how this literature worked as a source of knowledge and self-recognition, as well as a source of inspiration for the next generation's responses to the Armenian past.

3

A Renewed Outpouring of Memories

One who researches literary responses in the immediate aftermath of the Armenian Genocide will have a difficult time finding firsthand accounts of the massacres and the deportations, verbal encodings of personal experience, published in periodicals or as monographs. The topical genre of the memoir seems not to have developed yet, and references to the Catastrophe echoed more in nostalgic poetry or as a subtext interwoven with other themes. The experience was too immediate, the memory still too painful, and the daily struggle for survival too consuming for the survivors to be able to look back, relive their dreadful memories moment by moment, and put them down in writing.

Nevertheless, we find an early short prose piece titled *Vordekoruys mayrë* (The Mother who lost her child, 1924), by Mary Galaijian of Alexandria, Egypt, in which the

narrator is the only survivor of her family. During the deportation she finds a newborn baby hidden behind some bushes on the roadside. Despite her own desolate circumstances, she takes the baby and looks after him, finding in him some consolation and alleviation of her own pain and loneliness. One day the baby's mother appears at the door of the narrator's makeshift dwelling. Driven mad by the horrifying scenes of murder and slaughter, the woman has been wandering around in rags, dirty and hungry, looking for the baby she had hidden from the murderers before walking on alone with no hope of surviving. The narrator takes her in, feeds her, and looks after her until she recovers her old self. Then one day the mother takes her baby and goes away, leaving the narrator once again in the agony of her loneliness and grief.¹

Galaijian published another piece in the same genre, but the disparity and incompatibility of the subjects speak to the fact that she was not necessarily recounting her own experience but what she had heard from fellow survivors. This second piece, titled *Gharibis* (To my man in exile),² is the narrator's open letter to her husband who left her and their unborn child to find work abroad and never returned. She describes the hardship she went through to raise their child and to care for her husband's old and ailing mother. When the massacres began, she consented to marry a Kurd in order to save the family.

¹ Mary Galaijian, *Vordekoruys mayrč*, in *Hairenik*, vol. 2, no. 7 (1924), pp. 17-18.

² *Ibid.*, *Gharibis*, in *Hairenik*, vol. 2, no. 11 (1924), pp. 25-7.

But soon her mother-in-law died and the Kurd killed her little boy in order to have her all to himself. In this new situation, she had no choice but to kill the Kurd and avenge the murder of her son. Now she is a runaway, wandering in the countryside of "this hell, this land of evil and blood."

These and other prose pieces as well as the nostalgic poetry that proliferated in the Armenian press of the 1920s and 30s are true manifestations of the Diasporan Armenian psyche under the debilitating effects of the recent traumatic experience.

With the passage of time, the theme continued to appear in the Armenian press, though much less frequently. The Old World generation of refugees continued to express their last sighs of pain and despair emanating from a still bleeding, unhealed wound, their unfulfilled love and yearning for the fatherland. S. T'ap'arakan's two poems, *Erani mi or* (I wish one day) and *Tundardzi ughis* (My homecoming road), published in 1967, clearly show the author's longing for his hometown in the Old Country, still unabated after all these years.³ A. Dabaghian's *Polso vanets'i khohararnerē* (The Vanetsi cooks of Constantinople) exemplifies the wistful recollection of the bright and enviable days of the pre-Genocide era. *Polisen Der Zor* (From Constantinople to Deir el-Zor) by the same author and Ch'it'uni's *Aysor u erek* (Today and yesterday) record memories of horrible

³ T'ap'arakan, *Erani mi or* and *Tundardzi ughis*, both published in *Hairenik*, vol. 45, no. 9 (1967).

scenes witnessed during the Genocide. Ep'rem Sargsian's *Patmakan oreri depk'er ev demk'er, Erevanë 1917-in* (Events and faces of historical days: Yerevan in 1917) is an effort to save from oblivion important events and heroic figures from pre-Genocide, pre-Soviet Armenian history.⁴

The above-mentioned pieces are short in length and very limited in scope. But as we know today, some survivors kept a diary during the years of the Genocide and continued to record important events in their life in the New World. Curiously, however, for many reasons these memoirs did not see the light. Sometimes the survivor-authors of such diaries did not even share them with their close relatives. After they were gone, many of these writings remained locked in a trunk in the attic in the home of the author's son or daughter. Such manuscript bundles were automatically transferred to the grandchildren who, more often than not, could not read the language they were written in. Some held onto them out of respect for their grandparents; others got rid of them like old junk, with no cognizance of their value.

In the past thirty years or so, however, and particularly in North America, there has been an upsurge of memoir writing, mostly in English, or as translations of Armenian originals, but also in Armenian. Decades after the immediate Armenian-language responses, survivors in their old age and with the encouragement of their children have begun to write. Moreover, with a

⁴ All of these pieces were published in *Hairenik* quarterly, vol. 3, no. 9 (1970).

rekindled interest in their forefathers' past and their own roots, grandchildren have unearthed their diaries and published them in the original language or in translation.

The impetus behind this sudden interest in their parents' traumatic experience and their life in the Old World was twofold. On the one hand, as a result of the diligent activities of Armenian cultural and political organizations in the Diaspora, a gradual awakening of the Armenians occurred. The second-generation survivors, relatively well adjusted to mainstream society, began to shed the mantle of mourning for their dead and stand up for their rights with a determination to counteract Turkish denial and achieve world recognition of the Armenian Genocide. As the fiftieth anniversary of the Genocide, the year 1965 marked the turning point. Instead of the usual mournful commemorative events on April 24, Diasporan Armenians organized demonstrations calling on Turkey to recognize the Armenian Genocide. Simultaneously on April 24, 1965, for the first time in the history of the Soviet Union, masses of demonstrators, incited and led by dissident intellectuals, took to the streets in Yerevan, the capital of Soviet Armenia, and demanded the return of historic Armenian lands.

In addition to all this, in America especially, the atmosphere of prejudice and discrimination against ethnic minorities, particularly African Americans, was gradually yielding to the social movements underway in the 1960s and 70s. These movements shifted American culture toward more tolerance for ethnic differences. At

the same time, people became more interested in looking into the past and searching for their roots, in other words, exploring their ethnic identity and gaining a sense of belonging to the past, of sharing a history with other members of their group. The American culture of the time facilitated group affiliation and identification. The Armenian past was obviously associated with deportation and massacres, which became a source of self-understanding, self-consciousness, and self-identity. The catalyst for this process was the memories of the massacres and the pain of adjusting to the New World, automatically transmitted by the survivor-refugees, whether or not their sons and daughters were willing to absorb them. Another catalyst was nostalgic recollection of the Old Country, or the lost homeland, in poetic and prose memoirs that continued to appear in the Armenian press. Although mostly wanting in æsthetic value, this literature functioned as a source of knowledge and inspiration linking the generation growing up in the Diaspora to the Armenian past.

Stories of blood and tears

And thus, memoirs were published and widely read.

K'erop' Bedouk'ian

K'erop' Bedouk'ian (K'erob Ptukian) was a grown man living in Canada when he began to pen the story of his ordeal and his survival. He dedicated his book to his mother and sister "whose unselfish devotion and loving sacrifice made possible the survival of the family during

the holocaust of 1915-1918."⁵ And, indeed, their bravery and determination to stay alive and at least help the remnants of the family to continue reverberate throughout his account. Kerop explains, "My mother had found a way to get under the cloak of St. Peter when her physical strength seemed to fail her. As to her spiritual strength, she seemed to have an unlimited supply, drawn from her faith in Jesus Christ" (68).

In *Some of Us Survived*, published in 1979, he assumes the unique perspective of a nine-year-old boy from Sivas (modern Sebastia), observing the world of atrocity around him. Perhaps the source of his courage to bear the unbearable and survive was the innocence and naiveté of a child who could play games with life and challenge death.

I forced myself to examine the stinking bodies, to guess their time of death. There came a time when the body melted completely into the sand under the hot desert sun—I thought this happened in about six days. When I saw a baby still clinging to her dead mother's breast, I knew this death was quite recent. (46)

He remembers his parental home in Sivas and the large family of twenty: his grandmother, who ruled the roost, and the families of her two sons, Kerop's father

⁵ Kerop Bedoukian, Foreword, in *Some of Us Survived: The Story of an Armenian Boy* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1979), n.p. Subsequent page numbers cited in parentheses refer to this edition. Prior to the American edition, the book was published in London under the title, *The Urchin: An Armenian's Escape* (1978).

and uncle, with children ranging from infants to grownups over twenty years of age, all living together in the same household. The two brothers and their then newly formed families had survived the massacres of 1896, and now, nineteen years later, were once again facing imminent danger.

Kerop's first encounter with the extraordinary was when, at nine years of age, he stood in the town square dumbfounded and watched the hanging of an Armenian man said to be a revolutionary. The body was left to dangle on the gallows for three days, spreading terror and warning of worse yet to come. Like everywhere else throughout the Empire, all the Armenian men, including Kerop's father and uncle, were rounded up and put in jail, and their shops and businesses were looted. Kerop saw his father for the last time in jail, and the family, together with Kerop's half-paralyzed grandmother, set off toward an unknown destination. The family had turned down the Turkish mayor's offer to avoid deportation and remain in Sivas if they converted to Islam (9-16).

Then Kerop depicts the violence committed by the gendarmes leading the caravan, the attacks and lootings by local people as the caravan passed a Turkish village, mothers fainting or losing their mind as they helplessly witnessed or fought in vain to keep their daughters from being dragged away and raped or their small children kidnapped. Gradually, food and water ran short, the attacks became more frequent, and the number of deportees diminished by death, kidnapping, or killing.

But other caravans from different places joined them and they kept moving. Kerop maintained a detached and indifferent posture throughout, as if he were a spectator roaming around to see everything. Gradually, however, his aloofness disappeared (chapter 3, "Through the Mountains"). The first real shock came after they reached the Euphrates, where he witnessed the ugly violation of a pretty girl by six Turkish boys. They ripped her clothes off, molested her, and ordered her to stand up and dance naked. Then he saw her frantically run to the river and drown herself (49-50).

The remnants of the family finally reached Aleppo. But here, what the torturous journey had not been able to do, the spread of typhus did. Some of Kerop's surviving family members fell victim to the disease. He himself appears to have suffered a bout of typhus, but he regained his health and his self-confidence as the caravan moved out of Aleppo and on to Birecik (Birejik). He had seen so much misery and horror that he thought nothing could be worse than what he had already experienced, and he firmly states, "From this point on, no disaster of any kind could drive me to the point of desperation" (57). And, indeed, he proved himself when it became necessary to defend himself against a group of Turkish boys attempting to steal the precious gallon of *tawn* (yogurt drink) that he was carrying home to his family's makeshift quarters in Birejik. He head-butted one of the boys and knocked him down, then ran home with what he had saved of the *tawn* (78).

It was not easy for Armenian refugees to live in that Turkish town. They faced the hatred and malice of the locals. There was an acute shortage of housing, and Kerop's family spent the winter in a doorless, windowless cave where they slept on the bare ground with one blanket over the eight of them. They were able to fight starvation as their mother rationed each one a handful of raisins per day, just to keep their bodies functioning (100). Later events confirmed Kerop's conviction that it was his mother's careful planning and perseverance that kept the family going. They still had a long way to go before they reached Constantinople after the war, and in many instances, despite his vow not to lose his posture of self-confidence, Kerop found himself lost, scared, and confused. He faced dangers worse than in Birejik, dangers that did drive him to the point of desperation. His family reached Constantinople in 1918 and remained there for nearly four years, until the threat of Mustafa Kemal advancing on the city drove them to Bulgaria, determined not to become victims of a new massacre.

Parenthetically, Kerop's experience in Constantinople, where he entered *Kedronakan Varzharan* (Central School) in 1920, is consistent with what Mushegh Ishkhan reported, that is, a high level of tension between local students and refugee students (205).

The last leg of their long journey began in 1926 when they left Varna and traveled to Liverpool where, after waiting weeks for their turn to immigrate to Canada, Kerop was held back because of his trachoma. He had to

wait until his eyes were cured before he could reunite with his mother, elder sister, and younger brother who had gone ahead to Canada. His younger sister had settled in the United States after the war, but as the immigration laws were tightened, she was not able to bring them there (chapter 16, "Going West").

Alice Muggerditchian Shipley

Alice Muggerditchian Shipley's memoir, *We Walked, Then Ran*,⁶ published in 1983, traces an unusual route of escape from the horror of Turkish atrocities. The long and difficult journey took Alice, her mother, and two sisters from their native Diyarbekir to Harput (Kharput or Kharbert), Dersim, Erzinjan, and Erzerum, then Tbilisi, Baku, and Astrakhan, then up the Volga River to Archangel, across the Arctic Ocean and the North Sea to Great Britain, and finally to the United States. A map at the beginning of the book outlines their trajectory.

Alice's story is unique not only because of this unusual trek, but also because of her observations and memories about the extraordinary contacts the family maintained. She was raised in an Armenian diplomatic family with close ties to well-known British and German politicians of the time, and even to Turkish political leaders. David Lloyd George stayed at their house when he visited Turkey to participate in the celebration of the

⁶ Alice Muggerditchian Shipley, *We Walked, Then Ran* (Phoenix, Arizona: A. M. Shipley, 1983). Subsequent page numbers cited in parentheses refer to this work.

Constitutional Revolution in 1908. The following year Sir Mark Sykes was their guest.⁷ Of course, years later when Alice, her mother, and two sisters reached London as refugees, Mr. Sykes pretended never to have met them and refused to see them (3-5). Alice's father, Thomas Muggerditchian, known as K. M. Thomas to the British and Europeans, was vice consul at the British consulate in Diyarbekir, dragoman to the British Empire, and a member of the British intelligence service. Because of his status, the family acquired British citizenship.

Due to these circumstances Alice Muggerditchian's memoir provides a unique perspective and takes on the attribute of a documentation of the views and reactions of some European officials to the ongoing Turkish atrocities, which are portrayed in the context of world events and policies of the time.

Alice especially remembers Baron Max von Openheim's visit to their house sometime in 1910 and his boasting about Germany preparing to make war on Europe and Great Britain. This German historian, archaeologist, and explorer of the Middle East proudly declared, "We will be sitting on top of the world... by the end of 1914" (5). Thomas Muggerditchian reported this directly to London and was reprimanded for doing so. Twice in 1913 he received documents signed by Talaat Pasha from the Kurdish sheriff of Diyarbekir, an

⁷ David Lloyd George was a British statesman who became prime minister of the United Kingdom in 1916. Sir Mark Sykes was an English traveler and politician who became a diplomatic adviser on Middle East affairs.

informant of the consulate, which advised local Turkish officials that Turkey was planning to join Germany in the coming war against England and that they should "keep an eye on the Armenians" (6-7). At this time the Muggerditchian family moved to Harpout so that their older sons and daughters could attend Euphrates College.⁸ Thomas remained at his post in Diyarbekir until midsummer 1914 when the consulate was evacuated and he fled to Egypt with a party of diplomats. Enroute he learned that the Turkish government had accused him of treason and Enver Pasha had signed his death warrant (42-9).

In early spring of 1915, turmoil broke out in Harpout. Alice watched from her window as gendarmes dragged Armenian notables out of their homes. They were taken away, never to be seen again. She mentions Professors Lulejian, Vorperian (Vorberian), Buchukhanian, and Tenikejian (T'enik'ejian) among the arrested. Then the gendarmes began searching Armenian houses for weapons. Alice's mother and older sister—two brothers and a sister were already in the United States—buried the guns and burned Thomas's papers (52-5).

Rumors were circulating that Armenians in the city would be driven into exile. One afternoon a bully shouted in the street, "The decree from Constantinople demands that all Armenians be exiled to *Arabia*. The Turkish Government does not want these *gavour* pagans

⁸ Alice had three older brothers and two older and one younger sister. She was nine years old when the massacres began.

to remain on its holy soil" (61). The family prepared to leave with the intention to somehow reach Egypt and join Thomas. The furniture and all household items were put out for "auction," but the auction turned into Turkish neighbors dragging away the large items and looting the house. When the gendarmes began to mark the doors of Armenian houses with the word *sofkiat* (*sevkiyat*, exile), the family was advised by Vahaj Efendi, a high-ranking sheikh and a member of the same Masonic Blue Lodge as Thomas, not to depart with the first convoy. A few days later they had news that the entire convoy had been slaughtered half-an-hour outside Mezireh (modern Elazig), in the valley below Harpout. A second convoy went out and was slaughtered in the same manner as the first one. The unbelievable news was verified when, after a few days, the wind blew in the stench of rotting corpses and "the wild dogs began to drag human extremities into the streets" (68). Now Vahaj Efendi urged them to disappear as soon as possible.

The family took refuge in the 150-bed hospital in Mezireh built by the American Medical Mission Board and run by Dr. and Mrs. Henry Atkinson. There were 250 Armenians in the compound in the guise of needed workers. But the local government was adamant about thoroughly carrying out the job it was entrusted to do. Dr. Atkinson was forced to vacate all the Armenian patients and take in 500 wounded soldiers. Then the gendarmes stormed the hospital. This time it was Miss Campbell, the head nurse, who secreted the family in her private room until Dr. Atkinson arranged for the

American consulate to take them in. But the gendarmes were after the Muggerditchians and threatened to blow up the consulate. The consul indicated that it was time for them to go. "America not being in the war, the consulate could not harbor families of Turkey's enemies" (79).

The Muggerditchian family left the consulate to join the long line of exile. But they were lucky again. On the way they stopped at the German orphanage run by the Reverend Yeghoyan, a graduate of Heidelberg and a former in-law. He took them in and gave them shelter. Once again Turks caught up with them and they returned to the hospital which had fallen into disarray. Lice-born typhus was rampant, claiming victims every day (80-95).

In early October 1915, the news went around that Enver Pasha had granted a pardon to all Armenians. After that he paid a visit to the hospital on the pretext of checking on the wounded Turkish soldiers, but everyone knew his purpose was to bring the Armenians out of hiding. Once again Vahaj Efendi warned them to leave the country through Kurdistan, a hint that he was aware of a final blow being planned to liquidate all the remaining Armenians (95-111).

More than once throughout her memoir, Alice mentions Assyrians helping them, giving refuge to the family in their home. Evidently, at that time Assyrians were spared, as the target of annihilation was only Armenians, and not other Christians of the Empire.

The Muggerditchians—three sisters and their mother—reached Baku in late 1916, where they stayed until spring 1918. This time they had to escape the Bolsheviks who were ravaging the city, burning the oil wells, and campaigning to dominate the entire Russian Empire. So they started off again, up the Volga to the north, then over and down to the UK. They were in London when the Armistice was declared. In March 1919, they received enough money from Thomas in Egypt and their two brothers in California for passage to America. As they were about to embark, officials noticed ringworm scars on the scalp of Alice's younger sister, Armineh; the family's journey was stalled. It was in May 1919, with Armineh's scalp completely healed, that they finally sailed for New York. A comfortable life awaited them in America.

John Minassian

In his old age John Minassian went back to his notes to complete his memoir, *Many Hills Yet to Climb*,⁹ which he

⁹ John Minassian, *Many Hills Yet To Climb: Memoirs of an Armenian Deportee* (Santa Barbara, California: Jim Cook, 1986). Subsequent page numbers cited in parentheses refer to this work.

Minassian mentions in the Appendix that he brought with him to America the notes he had jotted down about the episodes in his tragic experience which had affected him the most. For a long time he could not work on them; the memories were still fresh and caused him pain and despair. Finally he collected them under the title, "Forgotten People." He also collected some notes in New York in 1926 under the headings, "Vartan, the Reverend," "Makroohy"

published in 1986. He brings to light another tale of pain, deprivation, suffering, and courage, and at the same time memorializes the erstwhile thriving Armenian life in Gurun and Sivas. He felt an obligation to leave his memories for the next generation, memories of the men and women who played a role in his life, raised him, encouraged him, took care of him when he was a lost boy, and protected and saved him from the Turkish murderers. He could not forget the words of a young Armenian graduate of Harpout College when all the men in Gurun were rounded up and jailed in the Turkish prison: "That is the plan of the Turks, to put an end to all of us. But... you may survive, and if you do, it will be your obligation to tell the whole world how it happened and why.... You are the witness to our tragedy. It is your duty to tell it all" (51). These words became his motivation, and words spoken in despair by his father, when their caravan of deportees was climbing the first hill outside Gurun, inspired the title of his book: "There are many hills yet to climb" (61). And, indeed, their deportation route took them up and down, "turning endlessly, ever higher" (63).

Hovhannes, or John, named after John the Baptist (Hovhannes Mkrtich'), was born in Sivas. He was six months old when the massacres of 1895 began. His parents went into hiding with their newborn baby and were saved. His father, an elder in the Armenian

(Mak'ruhi), "Krikor" (K'rik'or), and "Please Look Up." See *ibid.*, p. 251.

Apostolic Church, later became a Protestant and a trusted friend of American missionaries. Among close friends of the family and frequent visitors at their house were Miss Graffen, principal of the American Protestant missionary school, Mrs. Zenger from Switzerland, founder of the girls' orphanage, and Ernest Partridge, principal of the American Teachers College in Sivas (7-11).

In 1908 the family moved to Gurun where Hovhannes attended high school, always dreaming of going to college in America. Instead, his parents agreed to send him to the then-famous American Teachers College. The young man was nineteen years old in 1914 when he journeyed to Sivas for his second year. However, "considering the mood of the country," the college administration had decided not to take out-of-town students that year, and Hovhannes returned to Gurun (13-17).

Like other memoirists, John Minassian describes the draft of young Armenian men into the Turkish army, the confiscation of arms, and ugly stories of torture and imprisonment. When the Armenian male population of Gurun was arrested and incarcerated one day in late spring 1915, Hovhannes was taken but his seventy-seven-year-old father was spared. His father came to see him in jail and asked him to pray and not lose faith in God. But, in a significant departure from his Protestant upbringing, Hovhannes was in no mood to pray. "I felt as though God had indeed surrendered his powers to Allah and that it was too late for prayer or anything else"

(52). That night, a group of younger men, including Hovhannes, were separated out and sent to the central Armenian church which was being used as a prison. The rest were "sent to be butchered the next day." After two weeks, Hovhannes was released. His father's petition to the police commissioner had been effective. Ironically, a few days later his father was summoned to city hall and held for questioning. He was released only to be deported with his family (50-9).

So the whole family, father, mother, Hovhannes, his nine-year-old sister Anoush, six-year-old brother Vahan, and the three-year-old twins, began the journey. Hovhannes's two older brothers with their own families were in the same caravan of three hundred Armenians. He remembers the ordeal day by day. As they passed single file on a narrow trail overhanging a deep valley in the Taurus Mountains, he witnessed carnage in the valley below. Kurdish villagers were running around grabbing everything they could, shooting and killing. He realized that the same fate awaited his caravan. And indeed, after the Kurds finished with the caravan down below, they climbed up the hill and the looting and killing began. The escort guards from Gurun watched the carnage with calm indifference. "The earth was soaked with blood. We had to keep chasing the dogs from the villages below that had come to get their share of their masters' butchery" (67).

Leaving the dead and dying, the remnants of the caravan began to move again. Days and weeks went by as they kept moving along the hard road. John's father

was shot in the hip and could no longer walk; he begged them to go on without him; they had to leave him behind. This was the first painful loss the family experienced. After four weeks of constant walking, the caravan reached the outskirts of Antep (Aintab). The Armenians of Aintab, who had not yet been given deportation orders, came to help the wretched remnants, as they had done with other caravans before (68-82).

The Minassians managed to reach Aleppo, where John fondly remembers Reverend and Mrs. Eskijian, who did everything they could to alleviate the pain and suffering of the refugees and provide them with shelter. But the Turkish government would not tolerate the accumulation of Armenians in Aleppo, and one day when Hovhannes went to visit his mother and siblings at their temporary shelter, they were gone. With much difficulty, he found them in another camp. He wanted to join them, "wherever it was they were going," but his mother would not agree. She thought he was better off staying with Reverend Eskijian; she knew they were headed for the worst. To lighten his mother's burden, he took Anoush and Vahan with him; they said goodbye and were separated for good. He managed to have the two siblings admitted to the over-crowded German orphanage run by the Protestant minister, Aharon Sheriazian (83-92).

Hovhannes's job in Aleppo was to visit all the underground hideouts of refugee college professors, ministers, and young graduates who were living under the constant threat of discovery and re-deportation.

Dressed as a local Arab, he made the rounds and distributed money from Reverend Eskijian. He also visited the train station which brought in more refugees every day; there he picked up the sick took them to see a physician (92-3).

The American consul, Mr. Jackson, found funds to help the orphans, and the Reverend Eskijian enlisted Mr. Juskalian Hovhannes to collect Protestant boys at the train station or wandering the streets of Aleppo, and supply food to feed them. Very soon the churchyard was filled with children, Protestant or pretending to be. Some were moved to a rented house that served as an orphanage (93-6).

Hovhannes's job expanded to finding shelter or hideouts for children who could not be housed in the orphanages, while Reverend Eskijian concealed a number of young intellectuals from nearby Antep (Aintab) and Tarsus, former ministers, professors, graduate students, and teachers, in his secret basement. These were his staff, writing "reports of the tragedies and crimes of war, and the desperate need for help." These reports were sent to the United States, and relief funds came to U.S. Ambassador Henry Morgenthau in Constantinople, "but, alas, all too late" (97).

What the perils of deportation had not done to the wretched refugees, the typhoid epidemic did in Aleppo in the winter of 1915-16. They died by the hundreds every day. Hovhannes fell ill, and had not completely recovered when police raided the shelter. He fled, and after a few hours out in the streets, he returned to find

the shelter vacant. "They had apparently... thrown them in the wagon to be doused with lye to make sure they were dead" (99). Despite the epidemic, raids, arrests, and re-deportations, there were still too many refugees, and orders came to Aleppo from Constantinople "complaining that the local government was allowing too many Armenians to roam the streets" (101). The police became even more attentive, and several times Hovhannes came close to being arrested, but each time he was saved by a miraculous intervention. Mr. Juskalian was felled by typhoid, and when Reverend Eskijian died too, Hovhannes took over as administrator of the orphanage and continued until he was no longer safe, and then he worked as a teacher in the German orphanage (98-121).

But the constant danger of arrest in Aleppo compelled him to make the hard decision to leave all his friends and benefactors and escape to safety. In this he was assisted by Armenian employees of the German railroad company, some using Turkish or Arab names. Of course, their origin was more or less known but tolerated because of their aptitude, versatility, and expertise. They helped him get work on the project to extend the railway east from Aleppo, through the desert. He managed several bakeries that supplied the construction crews (mostly prisoners of war) in Darbasia and later Nissibin (ancient Nisibis, modern Nusaybin), southeast of Mardin, where he contracted malaria (123-50).

John Minassian wistfully recalls his encounters with Armenian girls in Arab or Kurdish captivity in the desert.

At Nissibin he met a pale, blonde, young Armenian woman who begged him to help her rejoin her people. Another woman named Makroohy (Mak'ruhi), younger and less attractive, was desperate because her master had decided he did not want to feed another mouth, and had gone and left her behind (158-63).

One day an Armenian boy, about nine years old, appeared in the camp. He had been beaten for stealing bread. Hungry for days, he had fled the Arab household where he worked as a shepherd. He did not remember his parents and he did not speak Armenian, but he did remember his Armenian name, Kikor (K'ik'or, Grigor). Hovhannes took the orphan under his wing and grew attached to him. The boy called him "my Papa Habib" (Hovhannes had adopted the name Habib to pass as an Arab). Now there was Kikor, Makroohy, and the blonde woman, "strange flowers" of the desert, as he called them, and they all depended on him and his promise to get them out of that desolate place in the middle of nowhere (165-8).

In the summer of 1918, there was "something in the air." Contradictory rumors spread about the war. There was fear and uncertainty among the (disguised) Armenian employees and the British and Indian POWs in the construction camp. Cut off from the outside world, they sensed unusual movements, but the Germans shared no information. Soon it was known that the Germans were leaving and turning the entire operation over to the Turkish army. The latter took over immediately and demanded that all the employees'

names and records be handed over. That, of course, meant a new massacre. But events took another turn: the Turkish army was retreating toward Anatolia and English officers came from the Baghdad front to retrieve their POWs. It was time to move again, and partly by train (slipping Kikor past the Turkish officers in charge), partly on foot, and then with a small Arab caravan, Hovhannes returned to Aleppo which was now under British occupation and "alive with happy returning deportees" (183). Here, Kikor was placed in a new orphanage Mrs. Eskijian had organized, this time with English funds, and Hovhannes joined the teaching staff (169-87).

From here on, one might expect a story of revival, prosperity, and a happy ending, but the local Muslims, mostly Arabs, resented the occupation and the multitude of Armenian refugees pouring into the city. There was a riot, and the mob broke into orphanages and buildings sheltering Armenian refugees. There were killings and looting. The British army quelled the riot and tightened its grip over the city, and calm returned (190-2).

But what had become of Makroohy? Hovhannes felt guilty, having abandoned her in the desert camp after he found her in bed with an Australian POW. "[H]ad I been a friend or put the last stab in her back? Or... maybe from one tent to another, she had fallen lower and lower?" (193). But was Makroohy to blame? How many young Armenian women suffered the same fate, abandoned to die or plunge ever deeper into the tainted life of a prostitute or concubine in the Kurdish and Arab towns

and villages in that suffocating desert? How many of them, even in big cities like Aleppo, refused to return to their families, unwilling to embarrass and disgrace them? Vartouhy, whom Hovhannes met in Aleppo, was one such, "a spring butterfly caught in a net, a broken bud never to bloom, handled by many admirers, soiled and cruelly crushed, and thrown into the gutter" (196).

In spring 1919 Hovhannes decided to undertake the journey to the destination he had been dreaming of all these years. He took the train—now run by the French—for Constantinople, intending to make his way to the United States. He traveled in the company of an Armenian family, a grandmother, her daughter, and her daughter-in-law, on their way to join her son who turned out to be a rich and influential figure in Constantinople. But the train stopped at Adana; the line forward had been cut. Hovhannes taught classes to Armenian deportees gathered in Adana, and after a six-week stop, the train moved again. He carried unforgettable memories of the devoted Armenians he had met there, and admiration for their zealous struggle to revive the Armenian community and rebuild Armenian Adana (199-208).

John Minassian describes Constantinople as the "City of Paradise," and indeed, his enthusiasm in visiting vestiges of the old city, his commendation of the leaders of the reviving Armenian community, and his delight in rediscovering old friends and compatriots from Sivas—who had likewise survived and reached freedom—prove a fitting conclusion to his memoir. He was fortunate

enough to reunite with Anoush, his only surviving sibling. His old friend from the desert had taken her from the orphanage in Aleppo and delivered her to him in Constantinople. Soon they were joined by their aunt and her three children, who had spent the war in Samsun. Her husband had been drafted into the Turkish army, and she had not heard from him again. The remnants formed a new family (212-42).

Finally, after years of dreaming about America, the necessary papers were completed and the day of the departure was set. The last obstacle, however, was Anoush's eyes, infected with trachoma. Like Kerop Bedoukian, Hrant Sarian, and thousands of other deportees, Anoush had contracted this highly contagious and debilitating disease that for some would result in blindness. The filth in the places they lived, the inevitable contacts with Kurdish and Arab nomads and tent dwellers who lived in absolutely unsanitary and germ-infested environments and carried this disease for generations, and the abundance of flies spreading the germs around were causes for so many Armenian deportees having caught this and other diseases. The U.S. government had strict laws against admitting those who were infected into the country. Anoush was not allowed to board the ship. She too had to wait until her eyes were completely cured, and then she would join her brother in America (245-7).

Dirouhi Kouymjian Highgas

Almost twenty years after she set foot on American soil in 1929, Dirouhi Kouymjian (Tiruhi Gouyoumjian) Highgas felt she was ready to begin writing her memoir. Her children and her non-Armenian friends encouraged her to write. They knew she had an exclusive story to tell, a story of horrors and death, but also one of determination and the will to survive. She decided to write her memoir in English for others to see what the Turks had done to the Armenians, but the medium she chose was difficult for her to master. She rejected the idea of a ghost-writer: she did not want someone else's interpretation of the reality of her life. Thus the process was very slow, but her story, *Refugee Girl*, was eventually published in 1985.¹⁰

Dirouhi begins her memoir with a detailed description of each member of her extended family: grandparents, parents, uncles, and aunts. But before beginning, in a short Prologue she pours out her anger and frustration at the world's indifference toward "the unspeakable sufferings the Armenians endured. Ah, what did it matter? Who really *cared*?... After all, some shrugged, it was *seventy years ago*!" Dirouhi was a witness, and her story is her testimony against Turkish denial of atrocities. She rejects the Turkish notion that gendarmes protected the caravans, and that bandits and

¹⁰ Dirouhi Kouymjian Highgas, *Refugee Girl* (Watertown, Massachusetts: Baika, 1985). Subsequent page numbers cited in parentheses refer to this work.

terrorists were to blame for the crimes committed against Armenians. "I am living witness to these outrageous lies, and attest to the fact that they did *not* protect us; that *they* were, indeed, the originators and the perpetrators of these infamous acts...." By telling her story, she accomplishes a self-assumed mission to speak up for the "thousands of Armenian girls and women [who] ran away from enforced 'marriages' with Turkish husbands," some "with their half-Turkish babies in their arms, leaving behind the children they could not carry," and for the many "who were left ravaged, forever, by Turkish rapists" (np, author's emphases).

As is usual with almost all the memoirists, her story begins in the idyllic environment of a happy and carefree childhood surrounded by loving parents and grandparents. Dirouhi was born in such an environment in Konia (Konya). And the memory was so alive in her that decades later, she confessed, "I can still smell the flowers my grandmother plucked and twisted into my hair. As I write this, the scent of the roses, almost overpowering, fills the room... I am a child once again..." (2).

The happy times were short-lived; they passed like the calm before the storm. The news of Turkey entering the war and Armenian men being drafted into the army ominously foreshadowed the horrible events to come. When the arrests began in 1915, Dirouhi's father was taken away. The next day, some of those arrested were hanged. Dirouhi's father was not among them. Was he still alive? They did not know. They only knew that Armenians were ordered to leave without their menfolk.

Even before they could make preparations to go, the Turks, men, women, and children, began looting their houses. Indifferent toward the occupants, they carried away what they wanted. Dirouhi notes with irony, "They weren't 'trespassing,' nor were they 'stealing,' since everything we owned was now, by law, *theirs!*" (47).

They were taken to Bozanti in freight cars, and when the train stopped and the doors were opened, they saw a large group of men standing in the station with their hands tied behind their backs. The gendarmes cut them loose and they ran frantically toward the deportees, calling out their family name to see if their families were among the deportees. Dirouhi's father was one of these men. "It was a terrible 'reunion'" (49), she notes. The next day they joined a caravan and began moving south-easterly on foot, Dirouhi with her mother, father, maternal grandparents, uncle, and younger sister. From then on, her story is the usual: *chetes* (bandits) attacking, looting, kidnapping, randomly killing, then their caravan joining up with others coming from farther away, with more horror stories of Turkish atrocities to tell. They walked for weeks through the barely passable gorges of the Taurus Mountains, leaving behind those who could not continue, until they reached their first destination, a concentration camp in Katma (el-Qatma), near Aleppo (49-57).

Dirouhi relates how her father was always busy devising a way to escape, and in fact, he arranged it by bribing the gendarmes. The family fled to Aleppo, but deportees were forbidden to enter, and after a brief

respite, breathing the air of freedom, the whole family was arrested and sent back to Katma. Dirouhi remembers lying in their tent at night, protected by her father, uncle, and grandfather, lest the *chetes* spot the nine-year-old girl and snatch her away. In fact, there were many attempts to take her, even as a favor to the family, promising her a good life. But she was lucky, her parents and grandparents still had the stamina to continue and the nerve to reject these offers. Hiding in their tent, she could hear the gunshots, the cries beseeching the gendarmes to spare the young children. Her grandmother kept praying, her words reverberating with the old interpretation of God's wrath punishing His favorite people for the sins they had committed: "Oh, God!... Was it our sins? What sins did we commit that you allow us to be tortured like this? What are the sins of these innocent children? Release us from these horrors. I beseech you!"¹¹ Dirouhi understood that what she meant was not release from the camp, but release through death (66).

¹¹ In *Literary Responses* (1993) I have discussed the concept of sin and punishment in the Old Testament as the prevailing explanation for collective catastrophes that befell the ancient Jewish nation. The concept was transmitted to Christian Armenia and remained embedded in the minds of clerical historians of ancient and medieval Armenia as a plausible interpretation of national disasters that were abundant in Armenian history. Although the concept of sin and punishment lost validity and was abandoned by the Armenian renaissance writers, nevertheless, it persisted as a popular belief and interpretation of collective trauma, to surface time and again during the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Turkish massacres.

Then, to the amazement of the deportees, it was announced that the troubles were over, no more deportations. The deportees were to be distributed to nearby Kurdish villages. The gendarmes even provided a few camels to help with their transportation. Some deportees tied their children to the camels and walked alongside them in that dark winter night toward Birecik. But when they reached their destination the air was filled with the terrified screams of mothers. Their children had frozen to death (73).

The mayor of Birecik allowed Dirouhi's father to stay in town with his family because he was a skilled shoemaker and the town would benefit from his craft. But their stay was cut short: after he came down with typhus and died, the family was driven out. He had caught the disease from Dirouhi while looking after her when she was sick. Typhus, cholera, and malaria were raging and sweeping through the refugees. Dirouhi's family moved to a village whose name she does not remember, but the Kurds there were friendly. After a year or so, the family was "drafted" into a road-building crew, moving from village to village for months until finally they were "discharged" and made their way to a village in the valley of Surooje (Sürüc, between Aintab and Urfa). Dirouhi's mother gave up her wedding ring, her last valuable, which she had hidden in her hair, to rent a small room where they all squeezed in together. During their year-long stay, they all worked hard, baking bread, making candles, and weaving at home, for scant pay, living out their days until the war was over (75-96).

Once, a young Armenian girl, the "wife" of a Kurdish neighbor, came crying to their home and begged them to rescue her from her "husband." They promised they would, and indeed, after the Armistice, when they were free to move to Aleppo, they took her with them and left her there in an orphanage. The city was bustling with Armenian refugees coming in from every direction. "Trains emptied more and more refugees into Aleppo. We were the survivors of the Armenian race..." (96-8).

As luck would have it, Dirouhi's paternal uncle was discharged from the army and returned to Konya to reclaim the family's huge property. He asked Dirouhi's mother and two daughters to join him there, which they did. "Slowly, our lives fell into a routine. I wanted to go back to school. I had been a road builder, breadmaker, candle-maker, weaver, needle-woman—I was an expert in all of these 'trades,' but I knew nothing. I desperately wanted to finish my education" (111). She was unable to accomplish her wish; instead, she became a successful designer and dressmaker.

Life was peaceful in Konya under Italian occupation, until the soldiers disappeared overnight and Turkish gendarmes began to spread terror in the streets. They searched Armenian homes and rounded up the men. The order was to send them into the interior of the country. It was 1923, the beginning of Mustafa Kemal's reign over Turkey, and for Armenians the nightmare started all over again. Through his two sons who were serving in the French army in Aleppo, Dirouhi's maternal grandfather, who still lived in Aleppo, sent an affidavit for Dirouhi's

mother and two daughters to go to Syria. But the authorities told Dirouhi's mother that no one was allowed to leave the country. On the other hand, "There were posters being nailed all over the city stating that all Armenians must deny their Turkish citizenship and leave the country at once!" (123). Armenian houses were confiscated once again and turned into schools, army barracks, and hospitals.

The family faced another ordeal on their journey by train to Aleppo. The Armenian refugees on board were disembarked at Tarsus station and no one knew where to go. Dirouhi decided to find a way over this hurdle. The hardship she had endured since 1915 had made her a tough girl. She had been standing on her own two feet for too long — "ever since I was a little girl."

Children naturally live in a world of fantasy, and build up a "fairytale" view of life, and I was no different... but all of the dreams I dreamed as a little girl had already been destroyed by the Turks, and I had reluctantly put my fantasies away a long time ago.... (164)

She ran into the city to find a French institution that would honor their affidavit and help them reach Aleppo. Her venture was successful. They reached Iskenderun by steamship, and this time it was an Armenian officer who helped them get an Armenian driver to take them safely to Aleppo. What Dirouhi took with her was the memory of a gruesome ordeal she would never forget, all her life (123-35).

Hovhannes Mugrditchian

In the Preface to the English version of Hovhannes Mugrditchian's memoir, *To Armenians with Love*, Paul Martin attests that his father "spent long hours writing in his native tongue about his personal experiences and about events that shaped not only his own destiny but that of the Armenian people." Martin had his father's memoir translated into English because, "[f]or our children and grandchildren, we knew we had to have an English-language version."¹² According to Martin, after his father returned from Soviet Armenia in 1963, he began writing about his experiences in the two homelands. He had not made notes along the way, and "it was a case of depending on his remarkable memory to recall the dates, incidents, events, and experiences he recorded with great diligence, a task that occupied him until his death in 1974" (204).¹³

¹² Paul (Mugrditchian) Martin, Preface, in Hovhannes Mugrditchian, *To Armenians with Love: The Memoirs of a Patriot*, trans. Dr. Arra S. Sevakian, ed. Christopher Gilson and Paul Martin (Hobe Sound, Florida: Paul Mart, 1996), pp. xvii-xviii. Subsequent page numbers cited in parentheses refer to this book.

Hovhannes Mugrditchian's memoir is also discussed by this author in an essay titled "The Tears and Laughter of Cilician Armenia: Literary Representations of Destruction and Revival, 1909-1918," in *Armenian Cilicia*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian and Simon Payaslian (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda, 2008), pp. 391-417.

¹³ In the Epilogue, Paul Martin explains that the title chosen for his father's memoir captures the true feeling of the author: "In him was a spirit of patriotism that was steadfast to the very day he left us." Mugrditchian, *To Armenians with Love*, p. 204.

Hovhannes Mugrditchian was born in 1888 in the village of Lapajle, one of several villages near Baghché (Bahçe) in the Amanus Mountains. Two weeks before he was born, his father died in an earthquake in the village of Kuzul Aghaj as he rescued a woman and her baby. Hovhannes's mother experienced hardship raising her children, but she made a vow to send him to school outside of Lapajle so that he would return and open a school for the children of the village. He studied first in the orphanage school at Sis Monastery, then at the Nersissian School in Aintab, and finally at the St. James Seminary in Jerusalem. He was in Jerusalem when the massacres of 1909 occurred. "Lost in the horrible slaughter were all of the adult males of our Mugrditchian clan!" (7-29).

In 1912 Hovhannes returned to Lapajle to open a school and teach, fulfilling his mother's vow. The villagers were building a new church upon the ashes of the old one, with a room for the new school. But this time they had learned their lesson. They built a secret vault in the church to store weapons for self-defense in case of need. One night Hovhannes was attacked by the son of Black Hasan, the person most responsible for the 1909 massacres in the Armenian villages of the Amanus. Black Hasan was tried and sentenced to 101 years in exile, but he was released soon after. He was killed at the hands of Hovhannes' brother, the only survivor of their family (37-8). But Black Hasan's son killed Hovhannes' brother and threatened to kill Hovhannes too. The assailant was arrested, tried, convicted, and jailed in the regional

capital of Osmaniye. When he made an escape attempt, he was shot dead by the Armenian prison guard. "An Armenian was avenged by an Armenian" (39).

In January 1913, Hovhannes married Beatrice, whom he had met in Jerusalem, and they soon left Lapajle for Osmaniye where he took up a teaching position at the Armenian school. When the war broke out, a large military force was stationed in the town because of its location on the railway. To accommodate the military, the government confiscated a number of buildings, including the Armenian school. Now students were being taught in makeshift classrooms in people's houses. Soon conditions deteriorated even further, and Armenian life in Osmaniye was in disarray. The first deportees from Zeitun passed through the city in May 1915, confirming ominous rumors of the government's decision regarding the fate of the Armenian population of the Empire. Hovhannes and the *k'ahana* (priest) were not allowed to meet the deportees or help them. However, he remembers his brief contact in June with Zohrab and Vartkes as they passed through Osmaniye on their way to exile.¹⁴ A month later it was the turn of

¹⁴ Krikor Zohrab (Grigor Zohrap) and Vartkes (Vardges) Serengulian were Armenian deputies to the Ottoman Parliament who fought against the government's treatment of the Armenian citizens of the Empire. Zohrab pleaded with his longtime friend Talaat Pasha—to no avail—to stop the deportation and release the Armenian civic and religious leaders arrested on April 24, 1915. Zohrab and Vartkes were themselves arrested on May 21 and sent into exile. On the way, near Urfa, on July 20, 1915, they were attacked by a group of bandits led by Ch'erk'ez Ahmet and were

Hovhannes's family. Osmaniye was swept clean of its Armenian population of a few hundred households (45–9).

The next station on the road to exile was Katma, where they joined some 20,000 Armenians brought there from various places to be sent to Deir el-Zor. Escape was the only alternative to certain death. Hovhannes and seven other families bribed the police and escaped to Aleppo. After that, it was continuous escape and hiding, always under threat of being discovered and exiled. The swollen and unrecognizable corpses lying beside the roads they traveled were constant reminders of the fate that awaited them. A fortunate turn of events allowed them to hire on to a railway tunnel construction project under the protection of an Armenian engineer and his German chief. But that was only a short reprieve. "In that spring of 1916, strict orders came by telegram that the fifty thousand Armenians working on the railway tunnels from Intilli and Aydun all the way to Aleppo had to be deported, immediately and without exception, to designated exile locations" (55).

Soon Hovhannes and his party were part of the caravan to Birejik traveling along the banks of the Euphrates by way of Fundujak, Marash, and Aintab. Their caravan followed the route an earlier one had taken, and the rotting bodies of old people and small children stripped naked and left by the road were

brutally killed. Ch'erk'ez Ahmet confessed to the crime in 1918. See Grigor Grachian, *Inch'pes momank'* (How to forget), posted on <http://www.Keghart.com>, October 10, 2009.

evidence of the atrocities committed against the preceding caravan. "We were only beginning to experience the terrible things that were to take place before we would reach the bloody banks of the Euphrates on our way to the desert" (56). Indeed, girls were snatched away, and old men and women who could not keep pace were beaten to death. But apparently this was not enough. Only "a few" were lost, as the *zaptieh* (gendarme) in charge of the caravan apologetically reported to his chief. The situation was quickly remedied by random gunfire, and then the loss was considerable. Then came the attacks by Turkish villagers "with hatchets, scythes, shovels, truncheons, and sickles. They slew nearly five hundred persons. Not content with that slaughter, they took with them as captives many of the younger men and women" (57).

The dilapidated caravan moved on, their numbers rapidly diminishing under continuous attacks and random executions, thirst, starvation, and then on top of it all, a typhus epidemic. Along the way Hovhannes and his wife were separated, and again he escaped arrest. In a village where he was given temporary work, a thirteen-year-old Armenian girl had been seized from a caravan by Salih, son-in-law of the village chief. He starved her, and when she stole an egg to satiate her hunger, he "punished her by throwing her into a forty-meter-deep dry well. Inhumanity knows no limits!" (71).

Meanwhile, Hovhannes's wife Beatrice was taken to the infamous camp at Meskené (el-Maskana), a station on the way to the final destination, that is, liquidation at

Ragga (Rakka, el-Raqqa) or Deir el-Zor.¹⁵ Beatrice recounted how they were forced to walk for seven days before reaching Meskené, where about 100,000 Armenians were spread out on the banks of the Euphrates in wretched conditions. Every day people were dying of hunger and disease. Some had been waiting there for weeks for their turn to be sent on, but their destination only took them deeper into the desert to perish. Desperate and hopeless, Beatrice threw herself in the river to end her life, but she was rescued by the sister of a former classmate. Her rescuer's family took care of her, and one night, learning that it was their turn to move, they decided to escape, and took Beatrice with them. The road was full of danger. Arabs attacked the group and one captured Beatrice. He was dragging her by the hair when an Assyrian horseman passing by recognized her as the wife of his friend Hovhannes, and stopped the Arab. This miraculous intervention saved Beatrice from a lifetime of captivity. When she finally reached Aleppo, she said, "My feet were covered with sores, and painful thorns embedded in my feet, legs and arms had to be removed." She sent Hovhannes word of

¹⁵ Meskené (el-Maskana) was the last populated town before the Syrian desert. Some distance from the town was the site of a concentration camp of the same name where the renowned writer Aram Antonian spent time before his escape to Aleppo. After the war, Antonian published stories inspired by eyewitness accounts of camp incidents in a collection titled *Ayn sev orerun* (In those dark days) (Boston: Hairenik, 1919). For a discussion of life in Meskené, see Peroomian, *Literary Responses* (1993), chapter 6, "Aram Antonian."

her whereabouts, and finally, after being apart for eight months, they were reunited in Aleppo in March 1917 (77-82).

Life in Aleppo was not easy. The danger of Hovhannes being arrested and sent to Deir el-Zor was ever present, until he found a job in one of the German military hospitals and was given a signed document that exempted him from being exiled. Gradually gaining the trust of his employers, he was able to recruit other Armenian refugees and give them jobs and security—he recalls placing forty-eight in the five military hospitals in Aleppo. In October 1918, when the German officers left Aleppo, Hovhannes took charge of the wounded soldiers still in the hospital. He turned them over to the British when they entered the city (82-7).

Besides his own ordeal, Hovhannes records the stories of pain and suffering of other survivors he knew in Aleppo. "These varied stories were but illustrations of the blasphemy, treachery, and horror that marked those terrible years" (88).

In February 1919, Hovhannes and Beatrice returned to Osmaniye which was now under French control. The joy of meeting their surviving friends and relatives and the grief of hearing the stories of how others had perished were mixed with the enthusiasm to rebuild their ruined nests. But this was only a short respite for Armenian survivors. The rise of the Kemalist movement, word of new massacres, rumors that the French would relinquish Cilicia to Kemalists, and the bombardment of Adana by Turkish forces made them take the road of

exile again. This time their final destination was the United States. They reached Ellis Island on August 14, 1921 (91-100).

Hovhannes continues the story of his life in America, including his involvement with *Hayastani Ognut'ian Kazmakerput'iun* (HOK, Organization of Assistance to Armenia), which was a Soviet Armenian initiative to secure financial help for the economically devastated country and to conduct pro-Soviet propaganda among Armenians in the Diaspora. His strong support of Soviet Armenia and his inclination toward the ideology prevailing there determined his decision to repatriate, and he and Beatrice reached Yerevan in February 1949 (107-38).

Hovhannes describes the severe shortage of food and housing, the miserable conditions, the low standard of living, and the widespread fear and terror (140-44).

He had brought to Armenia twenty-two crates of machines and tools to set up a leather craft guild and teach others the skills that he and Beatrice had acquired in the U.S. This was how he intended to help the economy. But after seven years, he was merely granted permission to sell his equipment to another factory. Nevertheless, he was satisfied in having passed on his craft. "Persistence finally had its reward!" (144-79).

Repatriates to Soviet Armenia were re-exiled in massive numbers in 1949, and then again in 1953, just

before Stalin died.¹⁶ With his demise, the persecutions halted and life returned to normal. Hovhannes and his wife, now retired, continued living in Yerevan for another ten years, visiting, traveling, and "observing with admiration the economic and cultural progress of our Armenian fatherland." This devotee of Soviet Armenia finally decided that he had fulfilled his duty toward his homeland, and in 1963 he and Beatrice returned to America to be near their children (195–202).

Hrant Sarian

Hrant Sarian's diary,¹⁷ recorded day by day in Armenian, begins on June 24, 1915, with the proclamation of "Mobilization" (*Seferbeylik*) in Adabazar (modern Sakarya), a small town east of the Gulf of Izmit. Men aged 18–50 were drafted into the Turkish army, and Armenian schools and other buildings were appropriated for use as army barracks and hospitals. Adabazar was shaken by news of the deportation of Armenians from the nearby village of Sabanja (Sapanca). Fourteen-

¹⁶ Hovhannes reasons that Stalin's policy was to keep the population of Soviet Armenia below one million so that it could not qualify as an independent republic, according to the terms of the Soviet constitution, because his plan was "to annex Armenia to his own fatherland, Georgia." Mugrditchian, *To Armenians with Love* (1996), p. 142.

¹⁷ Hrant Sarian's diary (1915–23) was translated into French by his daughter, Louise Kiffer, under the title, *Le journal de mon père*, and posted online with the Armenian original in 2008. I accessed the original and the translation at <http://choisy.pagesperso-orange.fr/> on April 14, 2008.

year-old Hrant was among those who went to watch them passing by and hear their stories of leaving homes and furniture behind and expecting the Turks to take everything. But the town-dwellers did not believe that could happen to them. After all, Sabanja was a small village and it was easy to move those people out.

Nevertheless, the terror gradually enveloped the city. Hrant describes in detail the brutality with which government officials searched Armenian houses for hidden arms and ammunition, as men were tortured and women threatened with being stripped and thrown into the river if weapons were not given up. He remembers the date of August 1, 1915, when notices were posted announcing the start of the deportation that day, with the residents' date of departure specified in each street. Everybody was trying to sell their belongings in preparation for the journey. But the Sarian's house was requisitioned by the gendarmerie and the family was told not to sell anything, and to lock up all their furniture in two rooms and hand the keys over to the authorities. The middleman was a respected Armenian. He told them that everything would be given back to them when they returned, and moreover, that when they reached their destination they should send their address to the head of the gendarmerie and he would send them a half-pound every month for rental of the house. Did the middleman himself believe his story? Did he trust the government so far as to not even imagine it would commit a crime against its own citizens? We know that incredulity was commonly the first reaction of many Armenians when

they heard the news of the deportation order. The best explanation given was that it was just a temporary measure for their own good.

Unprepared for and unsuspecting the hardships awaiting them on a long, long journey, the Sarian family moved out on August 10, traveling first by carriage to Arifiyé and then by freight car via Bilecik to Eskişehir where the first concentration camp was set up outside the city. Hrant notes that an order came for Protestant Armenians to return to Adabazar, being exempt from deportation. His family stayed in the camp for a month. In the most laconic terms, he records the beatings, the disappearances, and the demolition of makeshift tents that he first witnessed there. His family then continued south by freight car to Afyon Karahissar and another camp with relatively better conditions and less control. After three weeks, the *sofkiat*, as Hrant calls it, resumed.

Group by group the deportees were dispatched to unknown destinations. Hrant's group was sent by train to Konya, and then on to Ereili (Eregli) at the northern foot of the Taurus Mountains. It was October 17. Ereili was the last railway stop for the refugees; from here on they had to buy a donkey, rent a cart, or walk if they didn't have the means. The perilous walk through the mountains to Bozanta (Pozanti) and then Tarsus took a week. At Tarsus they pitched their tent among many others and remained for four weeks. Then they went east across the Cilician plain by train via Adana to Osmaniye, a day's journey. After eight days in Osmaniye, it was *sevkiyat* again, and the caravan began to walk. Eye

infections and diarrhea added to the hardship of aching limbs and empty stomachs. Hrant began to suffer acute pain in his eyes.

It was November when they reached Islahiye. Here the first victim in the Sarian family fell. Unable to endure anymore, Hrant's grandfather died on November 25. They moved on to Atchaz. There were daily expulsions toward Deir el-Zor during the month they spent there. When they moved on, "only 500-600 people were left" in the camp. Winter was coming and they still hadn't reached the "destination." Heavy rains collapsed their tents and people were freezing to death in the cold nights. They camped at Aleppo for nine days, then traveled south by train past Homs to a camp at Ihsaher. There, Hrant's grandmother died of exhaustion, the family's second victim. It was January 21, 1916. Typhus broke out and Hrant's mother and brother were laid low. Driven out of Ihsaher, the convoy moved on toward Damascus. Now it was the middle of February. Although the refugees had papers proving they were artisans (Hrant's father was a tailor), they were not allowed to enter the city, so they set up their tents at Draa (Adra').

Expelled from Draa, the family went in the dark of night to the small Arab village of Gharbiyet el-Gharbiyeh where they spent two and a half months. There was no fresh water and no toilets. The Arabs used a stagnant pond to wash themselves and took their drinking water there too; the refugees did likewise. Here there were no gendarmes (*sevkiyat memuri*), but they had run out of all means of sustaining themselves. Their money was gone;

they had sold all their belongings including extra clothes and their bedding. Father's telegrams to relatives in Adabazar asking them to send money went unanswered.

A new development brought new hope. All the refugees were summoned to Draa where the authorities had built a public bath for them. Their old clothes were discarded; their overcoats and bedding were heated in special ovens to get rid of the lice; the men were given a shave, the women a haircut, then everyone got a free bath. A tailor shop made new clothes for all. Hrant's mother began working in the shop; her wage was three rolls of bread per day per family member.

It was rumored they would be sent home, but instead they were sent north again, arriving at Hama in May, only to find that there were no facilities and no work. The available dwellings were infested with lice and scorpions and people were dying of typhus. They shared a single rented room with other refugee families, and mother found work that paid one loaf of bread per family member per day. They would spend nearly two years in and around Hama. It was there in September 1916 that they first had news of the slaughter of refugees at Deir el-Zor. Hrant concedes that with all the hardship his family had endured, they were still better off compared to those whose terrible stories they were hearing. At least the family was together: father, mother, brother and sister. In October they learned that Hrant's uncle, his wife, and his daughter were at the concentration camp near Meskené, living in misery and very hungry.

After providing a detailed account of the difficulties of earning a living in Hama, always hungry, always looking for a job and not finding one, Hrant writes about a new military mobilization in September 1917. The Armenian refugee men were rounded up, including Hrant's father, held in prison for several weeks, and then sent to Damascus as soldiers in the Turkish army. The family was on the edge of starvation and collapse. By the end of the winter, "200-300 refugees a day were dying in Hama."

In February 1918, Hrant's mother found work and a place for his siblings to stay at an orphanage. He himself got a job on the estate of a wealthy Arab outside Hama. At one point, he went to visit his mother in town, only to find that she had gone to Aleppo. Now the Arab decided to adopt him and gave him religious instruction. But the night he brought in a mullah to circumcise him, Hrant fled. He considers that night the most frightening night of his life. He walked for a week, begging a crust of bread from one village to another, even scavenging cucumber peelings. He was beaten by Bedouins and fled onward, hungrier and weaker. He met an Armenian woman who gave him some bread and told him that "many Arabs had captured young Armenian girls in the region."

It was a miracle that he reached Aleppo and found his mother in a weaving workshop, with his siblings staying in an orphanage. Hrant and his mother continued to live half-starved and dressed in filthy rags. They shared a lice-ridden room with other refugees. In late spring,

Hrant learned that his uncle, aunt, and cousin had starved to death at Meskené.

Working at different places in Aleppo or nearby villages, they somehow survived until October 1918, when the Turks began to evacuate the city before the British advance. Aleppo was in turmoil. For two weeks there was no government; there was looting and killing in the streets; Arabs were catching and killing anyone who looked like a Turk. At city hall, Hrant saw "the bodies of twenty Turkish soldiers, decapitated, lying in the square."

Things began to improve under the British occupation. Hrant entered the orphanage run by Rev. Aharonian [Aharon] and was admitted as a day-student in the school at Saboon Khan. Now he, his mother, brother, and sister were all residing in the same orphanage, working or attending school. But this short-lived peace was interrupted when Arabs began attacking Armenian orphanages and businesses. As others also mention in their memoirs, the mob would not tolerate the presence of so many Armenian refugees in their town; Aleppo was no longer safe for them. Hrant records February 28, 1919, as the date of the worst attack. He decided to leave.

He describes his adventurous flight to Adana, and eventually home, riding on the roof of the railcars carrying Turkish soldiers northward. He counted eighty-two stations and sixty-six tunnels before he reached Adabazar at the end of March 1919, after nearly four years in exile. Soon his mother, sister, and brother came

home too; there was still no word of his father. "Ten of us left, and now there were only four of us." In April they learned that father had died in hospital at Zahleh.

At the beginning of June 1919, Hrant was admitted to the orphanage at Katekiugh (Kadiköy) in Constantinople, ready to pursue his dream of completing his education. His diary covers the years up to 1923. In the same meticulous detail, he recorded every move he made, every person he met, every community event he attended. He was a witness to the bustling cultural life of postwar Constantinople. He also witnessed Turks demonstrating in the streets in celebration of the capture of Smyrna in early September 1922. From then on, he relates the joyful celebrations of the victorious Turks, without directly referring to Mustafa Kemal's capture of Constantinople.

Then, on November 27, 1922, he was informed that on the morrow he would be sent to a Greek island by the American Red Cross Near East Relief. A total of 1,600 Armenian orphans reached Corfu on December 4, and Hrant left the island on February 2. After further travails and adventures by sea and by land, he reached Marseilles on April 3, 1923, the date of the last entry in his diary.

Vahram P'ap'azian

Vahram P'ap'azian was a survivor without having directly experienced the hardship of deportation. He was born in Constantinople and educated in Armenian schools. He graduated from Roberts College in 1913.

According to his testimony, he was four years old when, walking with his parents on the day after the massacres in Bab Ali (1895), his father pointed to both sides of the street and said that yesterday, Armenian blood ran here like a flood. He said that even though he was only four, from that moment on he was conscious of the Armenian predicament and decided to dedicate his life to his people. He wrote his memoir (in Armenian) and published it in Beirut in 1962, dedicating it to his children and grandchildren, hoping to instill in them the love of his people which he kept in his heart all his life.

Papazian had quite an adventurous youth: he was a delinquent student who stole money from his father to gamble. However, his father's vigilance and proper response, as he attests, turned the "thief son" into a community leader and a renowned athlete. Vahram Papazian represented Turkey in the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm, Sweden.¹⁸

¹⁸ Hayk Demoyan provides a detailed account of Papazian's athletic career and his participation in the 1912 Olympic Games, in *Haykakan sportē ev marmnakrt'ut'iunē Osmanian Kaisrut'iunum* (Armenian sports and athleticism in the Ottoman Empire) (Yerevan: Tigran Mets, 2009). According to Demoyan, Mkrtich' Mkrian went to Stockholm too (pp. 103–25). He writes that Turkish attempts to come up with Turkish athletes to send to the Games were fruitless, whereas, with Armenian athletic clubs already in place in the Ottoman Empire, it was easy to find qualified athletes. And it was the Armenian community of Constantinople, not the government, that financed the trip. With the participation of these two in track and field events, Papazian in the 1500-meter race and Mkrian in the discus, it was the first time in history that the Turkish flag flew among those of countries competing in the Olympics.

After a short and unsuccessful stint as a teacher in an Armenian school, Papazian sought employment elsewhere and built his career in a British telephone company. And when, at the beginning of World War I, the British were leaving Turkey, he was the only one "with knowledge of all the secrets of the profession and useful to the Turks, at least for the time being."¹⁹ He was even provided a letter of exemption from military service signed by Talaat Pasha allowing him to continue working at the company under the new Turkish management.

In an emotionally charged account of his life story, Papazian delineates the deprivations suffered by his kind: Armenians in Constantinople who somehow avoided deportation. Indeed, it is customary to assume that they mostly spent the war years in relative ease. Papazian's memoir portrays their constant struggle to survive those difficult years. He tends to pursue the goal of convincing the next generation that Armenians had no guilt or responsibility in instigating the unprecedented slaughter.²⁰ This is where he digresses from the story of his own life and begins to write the history of the First World War.

¹⁹ Vahram P'ap'azian, *Ser, ser, ser* (Love, love, love) (Beirut: Sevan, 1962), p. 66.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

Bertha (Berjouhi) Nakshian K'etchian

Bertha (Berjouhi) Nakshian K'etchian wrote her story at the behest of her son and daughter. *In the Shadow of the Fortress: The Genocide Remembered* was published in the English original in 1988. In the Preface she writes, "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 now being denied...." Thus her motivation for this "laborious process of writing" was to counteract that denial. She was determined to join the struggle for world recognition of the Armenian Genocide because, she writes, "Recognition of the crime does not bring the victims back, but it eases somewhat the pain of the living."²¹

Like the stories of other memoirists, hers too begins with a depiction of her birthplace, Husenig, a village in the vicinity of Mezireh (modern Elazig), and it goes on to portray each member of her extended family. She even goes back to the massacres of 1895 and relates the story of the family's ordeal at that time, their torture, murder, and survival.

²¹ Bertha Nakshian Ketchian, *In the Shadow of the Fortress: The Genocide Remembered*, ed. Sonia I. Ketchian (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Zorian Institute, 1988), pp. ix-x. Subsequent page numbers cited in parentheses refer to this book.

It is most likely that the book's title was inspired by the imposing presence of the Urartian fortress casting its "shadow" over Kharbert, the ancient hill town above Mezireh, and the popular game of "Fortress" that Armenian children used to play in the spring of 1920, as Bertha recalls (p. 104).

Berjouhi was only three years old in 1915, but the tragic events that brought the dispersion and demise of her family were a memory that lived with her since the day when angry soldiers raided their home in search of suspicious materials and demanded that her grandmother give up the little girl. The captain insisted that they would all perish on the hard road of deportation, and he promised to take good care of the child like a daughter of his own house (13). Berjouhi was thankful to her grandmother who obviously did not comply, and the family began to prepare for the death march—all nine of them and all of them females, since no male remained in the house. That was the last she saw of her grandmothers. She and her mother Altoon and her older sister Elmas were left behind to stay with her uncle's family in Mezireh, in the hope that since he was a baker who would be providing bread for the army, his family would be spared, and indeed they were. But the authorities did not permit Altoon and her two daughters to live with the family (28-31).

Over the next few months they went into hiding in the dark and humid basements of empty Armenian houses in Husenig, surviving on pieces of dry bread they found during their nighttime wanderings. Then the authorities relaxed their search for Armenians in hiding, and some survivors even returned. Altoon began working in Turkish and Armenian houses to earn enough bread for her children. But the months of starvation or malnutrition at best took their toll. She was no longer able to carry on with such hard work, so she

decided to put Berjouhi in the orphanage at Kharbert run by missionaries and supervised by Mr. Riggs. The year was 1917. Now another ordeal began for the child who was left with the heartache of being separated from her mother for the first time (77). Even as she was getting used to the atmosphere of the orphanage, the administrators decided that, since she had a father in America and a mother nearby, she should leave the institution to make room for those who were real orphans and had no one at all to take care of them.

The family stayed in Husenig until the fall of 1922. Things were better. Father was sending money from America and they were able to get by without Altoon having to work so hard. Children were attending an Armenian school that had opened in Mezireh in the mansion of a wealthy Armenian woman who lived there with her young son. Her husband had been killed by the Turks, and later, after her daughter had married a Turkish officer, she was given permission to stay in her house. She rented out a large part of it to the missionaries who established an orphanage for boys there, and outside children were allowed to attend school along with the orphan boys (101-3).

Berjouhi does not go into the details of how and why things changed during the fall of 1922. All she knew was that the American missionaries were leaving the country and taking the orphans with them, and that the orphanages and the schools were closing. Armenian civilians were also permitted to leave the country. After several attempts, Altoon was finally able to beat "the

typical Turkish manner: never do today that which can be postponed indefinitely" (119), and she managed to secure the family's exit passports. The hardest part was saying goodbye to friends and neighbors with whom they had "endured the tragic times and cruel years together.... A bond like that lasts longer than any other" (122).

The coach driven and escorted by Turks was carrying the few Armenian women and their children to freedom. "This was the same route that seven and a half years ago had led our valiant Armenian men to their deaths." Now they were being escorted to freedom "by the same gendarmes, or others no different from them.... What a miracle! Of course, there was a catch somewhere; anything involving Turks will have one" (123). The long journey by coach and by train finally took them to Aleppo which they reached on December 1, 1922. After a long wait and many difficulties along the way, they set out for their final destination, America.

The rest of Berjouhi's book recounts their reunion with Father and a few other surviving relatives. Among these were her three cousins, young girls who had lost their parents to the Genocide and who had gone with Arab women upon the insistence of their grandmother in her last days on the death march. They had found each other, apparently living in the same neighborhood, and had met secretly all during their years of servitude in an Arab town. After the Armistice, they were among the orphans rescued by Armenian volunteers.

Life settled down to normal for Berjouhi and her family, "but the past weighed heavily on all. The present must make up for the past; the living must fulfill their duty to those who perished. Only then can the living deserve a better future" (151).

Many of the memoirists discussed here as case studies either implied or directly expressed the same thought in their writings. Psychologist Ervin Staub believes that such recognition indeed helps the healing: "Empathy, support, and acknowledgment of the group's suffering by the rest of the world can make a major difference." He reasons that acknowledgment tells survivors that the world does not accept or tolerate what their group has gone through.²²

Nargiz Zhamkoch'ian

Nargiz Zhamkoch'ian's story was written down by Vitali Ianko and published under the title, *The Promise at the Sea*.²³ The publisher's note on the book's jacket flap

²² Ervin Staub, "Healing and Reconciliation," in *Looking Backward, Moving Forward*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London, UK: Transaction Publishers, 2003), p. 267.

²³ Vitali Ianko, *The Promise at the Sea* (New York: Vintage Press, 2004). Subsequent page numbers cited in parentheses refer to this book.

Ianko's mother was Armenian and his father Ukrainian. He is a scientist, and the author of articles on science, medicine and psychology. He lived and worked in Armenia as a professor of psychology from 1971 to 1991, during which time he became interested in Armenian history. He married an Armenian, and in

specifies that it is a "fictionalized memoir." However, in my view, the fictional aspect of Ianko's writing is the style he uses, the flashbacks, artistic digressions, metaphors, imaginative passages, and perhaps some of the dialogue that does not reflect the exact words of the speakers but was devised, as Ianko attests, to convey the situations that Nargiz described. As Ianko admits, he gave the characters flesh and blood—as fiction requires—only to help the reader grasp the meaning of the unprecedented and inconceivable atrocities that Nargiz and her family endured. By establishing the "fictional" character of Nargiz as the narrator, Ianko also sought to downplay his role of recording and reproducing her story. With these elements obscured, what remains, or rather, what is reflected, is the first-person narration of a true life story. Therefore, in this context it is appropriate to treat Ianko's book as a memoir. However, in appreciation of the unique style he has adopted, I will bring forward one example to give the reader an idea of how he has treated the raw material at hand.

1991 moved to the United States where he currently teaches at Brown University. As he notes in the Preface, before coming to the U.S. he and his wife spent many summers vacationing in Sukhumi, where they rented a room in the Zhamkoch'ian family home. There he became interested in his elderly landlady's life story and promised her that he would write a book about it. He fulfilled this promise many years after he settled in the U.S. By that time Nargiz Zhamkochian had passed away.

Ianko created his pseudo-patronymic by combining his parents' family names, GrigorIAN and ScripchenKO.

In one of his imaginative passages, and a very long one too, Ianko looks at the mass murder and uprooting of the people from their homes from the vantage of the family dog, Sevouk (aka Blackie), "the Rats Destroyer." This is an interesting piece that Ianko's imagination has produced, adding an abstract dimension to his writing. He follows Sevouk after he escapes the cruel new occupants of Nargiz's abandoned ancestral home and takes shelter with other dogs like himself. Each dog tells its story, its own eyewitness account. Especially gruesome is the dogs' discovery of the shallow grave of the massacred Armenians. The hungry dogs dig into the flesh and bones, but Sevouk resists the temptation and walks away heavy-hearted. And he wonders: "There are no other species in the entire animal kingdom who dare to commit such an act against people. The answer comes into my mind: another group of people must have done it. However, this obvious answer troubles me even more. *How can humans kill their own?*" (251, author's emphasis). Sevouk is haunted by the question of who were these people, killed and buried along the road? Why didn't he stay and sniff their scent? He would probably recognize his master's cadaver. He keeps hoping either for the family to return or for himself to peacefully meet his end. "Is it possible that they cannot return because they are dead and their bones are scattered along that road? Thus, my waiting has no meaning?!" (253).

Nargiz's story chronologically begins with a detailed description of the grandiose position of her maternal grandfather, Pogos Aleksanian (nicknamed "Lord"

Pogos), in their ancient town of Kutora (Kotyora, modern Ordu) on the Black Sea coast: his prosperous tailoring and carpet shop and his cordial relations with the local authorities. Of course, Nargiz had been too young to remember all this; she heard it much later from her surviving grandmother Iughaper (Iughaber or Yughaber), who also told stories about their life and important events before 1915. Ianko presents these stories as family reminiscences of the old world as it was before Nargiz was born.

The family's peaceful life ended with the outbreak of World War I. Pogos Aleksanian's elder son Harout'iun escaped to Russia to avoid arrest after killing a Turk in revenge for the torture and murder of his best friend. Nargiz's father, Nishan Zhamkochian, and her paternal Uncle Levon were drafted into the Ottoman army. She never saw them again. Pogos Aleksanian and his younger son, fifteen-year-old Simon, together with all the remaining Armenian men, were driven out of town to be slaughtered. Miraculously, Simon escaped. Much later he was reunited with the few surviving members of the family and described the last hours before the slaughter and his horrifying experience afterwards. He never got over his traumatic past. Shame and guilt for having converted to Islam in order to save his neck shadowed his normal life and eventually caused his death.²⁴

²⁴ In a chapter titled "A Letter instead of an Epilogue," it is revealed that despite being unfit to serve in the army, Simon was drafted and sent into battle against Germany during World War II. The Germans captured his entire division and decided to kill the

When the deportation order was declared, Grandmother Iughaper entrusted Nargiz and her little brother Hakop (Hagop) to the Greek Nikos, a loyal and hardworking tailor in Pogos Aleksanian's shop. This was right before she and Nargiz's mother, Pietzar (Paytsar), took the road of deportation. Nargiz recounted,

Since almost all the Armenian men had been destroyed, it only concerned women and children. Informants with gendarmes went around to the Armenian houses and notified the inhabitants that nobody would be allowed to sell any belongings. To some households the Turks offered the option of converting to Islam to avoid exile. If not, the Armenians were given a couple days to arrange for departure. (40)

The Zhamkochian children were sheltered by the Greek until the government decreed that anyone harboring or

Jews among them and hold the other soldiers as prisoners of war. The soldiers had to prove that they were not Jews by demonstrating that they were uncircumcised. Simon refused to do so, and he was shot. Nargiz learned about this twenty years later when a Russian who had been Simon's comrade-in-arms came to see her family in order to fulfill the promise that he and Simon had made to each other, to inform the family if one of them fell in battle. After the war, the Russian soldier, a former POW, had returned to his country where he was arrested and exiled to Siberia.

The letter that constitutes the Epilogue was sent to Vitali Ianko by Susanna Amirian, the wife of Nargiz's grandson. It was dated April 1995, two years after Nargiz had died. On her deathbed, she had told Susanna everything that she didn't get to tell Ianko and implored her to send him the information. She had even given Susanna some old family pictures to be included in the book.

hiding Armenians would be executed. The children were thrown out in the street.

Nargiz was four and Hakop was two years old. She was too young to remember all this, but the story was told to her much later by her mother and grandmother. What was fatefully imprinted in her mind though, and what she could never forget, was the moment when, with an animal instinct to survive, she had abandoned her sick little brother and crawled away from the pile of children the gendarmes had rounded up on the seashore. She saw the *zaptieh* (gendarme) drive away the Turkish women who came to bring the children a piece of bread and a mug of water. She heard him shout, "Wait a little, and you will see them drink a lot of water." In horror she watched the *zaptiehs* throw the crying and moaning children into the sea to drown. That was the last time she saw her brother, but she lived all her life with the memory of that scene and the terrified look on his face, visiting her in dreams and waking hours. Nargiz grew to hate the sea that had swallowed her little brother and later cast up hundreds of bodies of Armenian victims on the shore (3-5, 153).

Nargiz was rescued by a mullah, a friend of her grandfather. She lived in his house for a short while until his wife died. Obviously, the mullah could not take care of the little girl. He took her to a family he knew in a Turkish village, and she lived with them for four years in the most inhumane conditions. Referred to as a "*giavour kiz*, i.e., infidel girl," and given a Turkish name, Emine, she was "always hungry as a wolf, chilly, and dirty" (51),

working all day as shepherdess of the family's small flock of goats and sheep. During the four years Nargiz spent in the village, she completely dissolved into her Turkish identity, forgot her mother tongue, and prayed to Allah. Then one day a woman came to their door, claiming to be her grandmother, but Nargiz refused to go with her. The poor woman, having spent months searching for the surviving remnants of her family, would not give up on the granddaughter she had finally found, and eventually she convinced the confused and bewildered child to return to her Armenian family, or what was left of it (53-9).

Nargiz and her grandmother walked back to their home in Kutora where they found her mother Pietzar and Uncle Simon in their house, now empty down to the bare walls. The year was 1919. Soon Haroutiun turned up too. He had been desperately searching the concentration camps for surviving family members, lost hope of finding them, and returned to his paternal home.

Only seven Armenian families were left in Kutora, and only one of them was still Christian. Nargiz remembered a woman and her three beautiful daughters, two of whom had tattooed foreheads, a reminder of their previous ownership by an Arab; the third was pregnant by her Turkish abductor; another four brothers and sisters had died of starvation and typhus on the deportation route (75). The other families were the converted ones whom Nargiz called *shuṭvatsnerē* (the turned over, i.e. those who had converted to Islam) (74).

But what about Nargiz's mother and grandmother? How had they survived the deportation?

They never told me... never told how exactly they survived the route, the death march from the cozy seaside town to the lifeless sands of Syrian deserts.... Sometimes they suddenly fell silent when I entered the room. Maybe they were ashamed of what had happened to them. (48)

Nargiz only knew that her mother had remained captive in a Kurdish village for years.

To her last days, my mother kept the entire horror of her "death march" and the circumstances of her survival in the Kurdish village deep inside herself. Shame and guilt! She did not want to disturb or embarrass me, her daughter, even though I was not little Nargiz anymore. (194)

Indeed, neither woman ever shared their ordeal with her. Only fragmented phrases now and then, sighs and eyes brimming with tears betrayed their shattered psyche.²⁵

²⁵ Nargiz never learned exactly how her grandmother escaped from the concentration camp near the railroad station at Urfa, but she somehow found her way to the mansion of Mousa Agha, a wealthy Turk whom she and "Lord" Pogos had once visited years earlier. Upon her entreaty, this friend of her late husband took her in without recognizing her. He had just fired the cook for a disaster in the kitchen that ruined the meal being prepared for guests who were about to arrive. Iughaper went in and made the best rice pilaf, to everyone's delight. She was saved by her great culinary skills. In a chapter titled, "Eat To Live, or Some Useful Recipes of the Survivor," Ianko relays the recipes for the delicious dishes that Nargiz cooked

Back in their hometown and hoping to rebuild their lives, the survivors of the Zhamkochian and Aleksanian family faced insurmountable difficulties. There was Simon's reconversion and Haroutiun's return, which Nargiz's mother and grandmother were trying hard to keep secret, even at the cost of continuously bribing the wife of the Armenian informer, Missak Gazanchian. Obviously, if they were discovered, Simon would have to go back to living as a Muslim and Haroutiun would be jailed for the crime he had committed years earlier. The informer's wife was simply blackmailing the family. Then there was Mustafa Kemal's campaign to organize the Turks against the Greeks, which made the local Turks hostile toward the Greeks and the remaining Armenians in Kutora. The family decided to escape to Sukhumi where Haroutiun had bought a tailor shop.

But Haroutiun had things to take care of before he could leave town. First, he had to find the infamous hole called *Sheitan Delik* (Devil's Hole), where his father's body and those of Kutora's Armenian men had been dumped after the Turks had tortured and killed them. He intended to retrieve his father's remains and give him a proper burial. With much difficulty he and Simon reached the ill-omened hole from which a poisonous gas was emanating. It was impossible to reach the bottom. But Haroutiun had come prepared with an alternate plan, that is, to blow the place up. Which he did. The

for his vacationing family, and which her grandmother had passed down to her.

Devil's Hole turned into a huge pile of rubble mixed with the ashes of the Armenian victims. The two brothers took a solemn oath in front of this huge tomb to "be an Armenian forever, even if it brings only misery." They vowed "vengeance on our enemies and traitors..." (144).

Haroutiun's next mission was to take revenge on Missak the Traitor for his father's death; it was Missak Gazanchian who had led the Turkish gendarmes to the Armenian houses where they arrested the men. Simon had seen him entering his father's shop with the gendarmes. Now, years after the event, fearing Armenian reprisal, Missak had shut himself up in the safety of his hut in the Turkish quarter of town. Haroutiun and Simon went there. Minutes later the job was done. Missak was shot in the face (147-9).²⁶

The family had arranged to escape by sea and reach Sukhumi that same night, but first there was the Laz smugglers' attempt to deceive them and steal their belongings; then, once the Lazes were promised more money and persuaded to cast off, their dilapidated boat

²⁶ The Epilogue, that is, the letter sent to Ianko by the wife of Nargiz's grandson, also reveals that Uncle Haroutiun was arrested in Sukhumi in the early 1930s by the NKVD (the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, i.e. the secret police) for no apparent reason. Nargiz and her mother tried hard to meet with an NKVD officer to clear up the matter. When they were finally given a hearing, they came face to face with a person they knew from Kutora. Comrade Kazanchian was the son of their old nemesis, the Armenian informer Missak Gazanchian (the son had altered his name a little to sound more Russian). Stunned and frightened, the two women got up and left. As for Haroutiun, he disappeared without a trace (230-1).

was carried out to sea by a storm. Ironically, the survivors of the Great Catastrophe were now on the verge of succumbing to the angry waves of the Black Sea. The Lazs prayed to Allah, and Nargiz's grandmother prayed too, but her prayers were different. She begged forgiveness for her numerous sins and was ready to accept God's punishment if the others could be saved. "God All-Mighty, forgive our grave sins! I have lived too long; my sins should be the most numerous and heaviest among all of us. Punish me, and show them your mercy!" (160). Significantly, as Nargiz relived the moment decades later, she questioned the notion that God was responsible for all that happened, and remarked ironically, "God had taken a map of Turkey and a red pencil and had marked all those death-march routes for the Armenians, ending them in the deserts or the depths of the sea. Of course, he did not like that some victims had disobeyed his plans" (161). Dirouhi Kouymjian's grandmother was not alone in asking, "For what sins of ours?" The concept of sin and punishment was there to explain what was impossible to explain.

Miraculously, a military ship spotted the troubled boat and rescued the travelers, but the ship was headed for Constantinople. Their unplanned sojourn in the city lasted four years and ended when its capture by Kemalist forces drove them and hundreds of families like them out of the country (163-221).

Hampartzoum Mardiros Ch'it'jian

Hampartzoum (Hambardzum) Mardiros Ch'it'jian wrote only 50 pages of his memoir, at the age of 74, but he could not go on any further. He had been prompted to tell his story by his daughter and the students in the class she taught as part of an ethnic studies program. It was a painful experience for him. Although he had never been able to suppress the memories, but by putting them into writing he was reliving the past moment by moment. Thus the project was dropped for a quarter of a century. But the story had to be told. His family recruited Seda Maronyan to take the existing manuscript and add the rest of the story as Hampartzoum would dictate, now at the age of 102. She describes her task in her Preface to the Armenian version of Ch'it'jian's memoir.²⁷ Half-way through the preparation of the Armenian text, Hampartzoum's daughter, Zaruhi Sara Ch'it'jian, began working on an English version of her father's memoir. This was published as *A Hair's Breadth from Death* in 2003.²⁸

²⁷ Hampartzoum Chitjian, *Mazi ch'ap mahin mot, Yeghemen veraproghi husher* (A hair's breadth close to death: Memories of a Genocide survivor) (London and Reading: Taderon Press, 2004). Seda Maronyan explains that she recorded the story as Hampartzoum recounted, without changing the text, the language, or the vocabulary. She also studied some 500 letters that Hampartzoum had received from his nephew and brothers between 1914 and 1923, and added to the text the factual details these letters provided.

²⁸ *A Hair's Breadth from Death: The Memoirs of Hampartzoum Mardiros Chitjian* (London and Reading: Taderon Press, 2003).

Hampartzoum was born in Ismayil and lived in Perri (Berri) in Charsanjak, 60–80 miles northeast of Kharbert. Armenians were a majority in Perri, about 800 families, and they owned most of the shops and businesses. Hampartzoum was fourteen when the deportations and massacres began in the spring of 1915. As with most other memoirists, he begins by describing his hometown, the members of his extended family, one by one, and the details of their life, society, church, and school before 1915. He remembers their happy home, his father, six brothers, two sisters, and a step-sister from his father's second marriage.

Then the shadow of the forthcoming terror spread over Perri. Hampartzoum's father was arrested, imprisoned, and tortured for two weeks. The authorities had confiscated Armenian shops in the marketplace and turned them into jails where Armenian men were

In her Preface to the English version of her father's memoir, Zaruhi Sara Chitjian explains the necessity of an English version and at the same time she writes, "Although I took great caution to *maintain the essence* of my father's original text, I was not able to fully capture the emotional impact and nuances of the pain and grief expressed in his own words in the Armenian" (p. xiii). I decided to go by the Armenian original (2004) in order to stay closer to Hampartzoum's own narrative, but to refer to the English version (2003) for citations, although in some instances the English version does not quite follow the original. Subsequent page numbers cited in parentheses refer to the English version of 2003.

In any event, as with all other materials that I have studied for this book, I have followed the same path that Sara noted in the books she autographed for me: "Read with Empathy, Compassion and Commitment."

tortured and killed. Hampartzoum remembers his first visit to the makeshift jail, standing at the door of the cell in which his father was locked up. "What a pitiful sight! What a wrenching memory! After all these years, remembering that moment is agonizing and difficult to forget... the person crying and whimpering in jail was my father" (91).

Then came the turn of the older Armenian boys. Soldiers went about and rounded them up and meanwhile committed brutalities on a whim. One Turk spotted a beautiful young Armenian woman who was several months pregnant and took her to his house. Soon another Turk challenged him and a fight over the woman broke out between them. Unable to agree on who should have her, they decided to amuse themselves instead. "They ripped the unborn baby from her womb. They pierced a stick through the baby's fragile body and stuck it next to the mother's lifeless body" (93). And they showed off their victims to the Armenian crowd as a warning of what was awaiting them.

Hampartzoum did not know how or why his father returned home. "His work coat was splattered with dry blood, his face was gaunt, and his eyes were consumed with despair... an image of my father that would haunt me the rest of my life" (93). Without saying a word, he took his four sons—the two older ones had already been sent to the United States—to the Turkish *mekteb* (school). That was the last time Hampartzoum and his brothers saw their father and the rest of the family. The four brothers, together with 150–200 boys between the ages of

four and fourteen, remained in the *mekteb* with a Turkish soldier guarding the door. It was certainly a center of Turkification. Hampartzoum's name was changed to Rushti. The boys were given a piece of dry bread and allowed to drink water from the fountain. But the most devastating experience for these boys was not the uncertainty of their fate, or being away from their parents, but the shameful work they were forced to do for days on end. The older and stronger boys were sent out to pillage Armenian homes, all vacant now, and to bring items to the Armenian church where they were locked up as the property of the Turkish government. Of course, Turkish officers supervising the operation carried home what they liked. There was no law, no accountability.

About a year later, during the Kurdish rebellion and assault on Perri, the Kurds set the town on fire. The vestiges of Hampartzoum's childhood went up in smoke. As he watched from afar, the Armenian church burned down, and he remembered all the Armenian treasures and valuables that the children in the Turkish school had been forced to haul in and store there. He felt the pain of losing forever what he had cherished, mixed with a feeling of vindication in knowing that the perpetrators would not enjoy the Armenian wealth either (122).

During those days when Hampartzoum and the boys were out pillaging Armenian houses, he was met with the agonizing landscape of the deserted town and "the incessant whimpering and whining of the stray dogs and cats searching for their owners.... I empathized so well

with those creatures when I saw them finally give in. They curled up and died quietly in front of their master's home" (103). We witnessed a parallel image in Nargiz Zhamkochian's memoir as narrated by Vitali Ianko, in the agony of the once loved and cherished house pets suffering their last breath in starvation and despair. The Turkish genocide applied to these innocent animals too.

For days in the *mekteb* the teachers and the mullahs tried to teach the boys about Islam, but then, perhaps thinking that Turkifying the older boys would be too difficult, they separated them out. Hampartzoum was among the ones destined to be killed. He miraculously escaped—he calls it "my first escape"—and was taken in by a Turk called Korr Mamoe (Blind Mamoe). This man even arranged for him to secretly meet his younger brothers and give them food. The last time he saw his brothers, they told him that the Turks were going to take them to their fathers. Hampartzoum knew what that meant, but he had no choice other than to let them go.

Hampartzoum stayed with Korr Mamoe for about a year in Perri, where he occasionally met with other Armenian boys who were Islamized and lived and worked as servants in Turkish households. Apparently, Korr Mamoe did not force him to convert. His twin brother Kaspar had somehow survived the killings in the *mekteb* and was also serving a Turk. Hampartzoum saw Kaspar when they were fleeing the Kurds during the Kurdish insurgence in Dersim in the spring of 1916. He wanted to go with Kaspar and his Turkish family, but Kaspar's master slapped him in the face when he asked

to take his brother along and reminded him that he should be thankful to escape with them and should not ask for anything more (120).

Hampartzoum remained with Korr Mamoe, always looking for an opportune moment to flee and join other Armenian boys living with Kurds. At least, he did not consider the latter as perpetrators. He even believed that if Armenians had not been so engulfed in their internal disagreements and had united with the Kurds, the Turkish perpetrators would not have been able to carry out the annihilation of the Armenians.²⁹ After a few unsuccessful attempts, he finally escaped and joined a Kurdish caravan going to a village called Itchmeh where he had heard that many Armenian survivors had taken refuge. He was still the boy named Rushti, but things were better now until one day a Turkish army regiment charging the retreating Russian army raided a house on their way. They raped the girls and committed other brutalities. They tortured Hampartzoum with a burning stick because he had helped a very pretty Armenian girl named Zuvo to escape. He fell down unconscious and the soldiers left him for dead. It took two weeks for his wounds to heal. "It is hard for me to relate what our pure innocent girls and women had to endure forcibly not only during the genocide but also in the following years as well" (138).

²⁹ Hampartzoum repeats this notion a few times in his memoirs, but somehow it is not picked up in the English version. See, for example, p. 108 of the Armenian original.

Learning that some Armenian survivors had returned to Perri, Hampartzoum decided to walk back to his hometown in search of a surviving family member or relative. He found an aunt living there hungry and alone. The entire town was suffering hardship and a shortage of food because of what the Turks had done to the Armenians (141–2). Perri had been plundered and burned. Hampartzoum saw new houses built by the invading Kurds on the site where the Armenian cemetery once stood. The Kurds had built the Armenian headstones into the walls of their homes.

Hampartzoum and his friend Levon Gopoian decided to go to Kharbert disguised as Turks in a small caravan. On the way they met an Armenian boy who had seen Hampartzoum's brother Kerop alive, but he also informed them that the Turks had killed the little boys from the Turkish school and thrown them into the Murad River because they were too young to work. Hampartzoum's youngest brother, six-year-old Neshan, was among them (144).

Hampartzoum remembers Dr. Mik'ahil Hagopian (Mik'ayel Hakobian) in Kharbert as a kind man, a benefactor who helped all Armenian survivors.³⁰ His house was a haven for Hampartzoum and he stayed

³⁰ Later in Hampartzoum's memoirs (p. 161), we learn that Dr. Hagopian's son Hagopik, who was a little boy during his time in Mezireh, was the same J. Michael Hagopian, the famous Armenian American filmmaker, who established the Armenian Film Foundation and dedicated his life to interviewing hundreds of survivors and producing documentaries on the Armenian Genocide.

there for a few months working as a servant. He also remembers the German orphanage opposite the doctor's garden and the starving Armenian orphans who lived there. He used to pick fruit and vegetables from the garden and throw them over the wall for the orphans to eat (150).

Hampartzoum recalls the great famine of 1918 in the interior regions of Turkey. The Turks, Kurds and Armenians all suffered. All day long beggars came to the doctor's door and begged for bread. It was Hampartzoum's duty to go to the Armenian bakery very early in the morning, get the day's supply and carry home the heavy load unnoticed, before the soldiers were up and about. The baker was only allowed to bake bread for the Turkish soldiers, and smuggling out bread to give to others was a punishable crime (154).

One day Hampartzoum's younger brother Kerop stood at the door. Their reunion was the happiest moment he experienced in the three years since he had lost his father and his siblings.³¹

Hampartzoum's memoir continues with the brave youth wandering from one place to another, from one village to the next, accepting all kinds of work, from

³¹ According to Hampartzoum, citing a book by Gevorg Yerevanian titled *Patmut'iun Ch'arsanjaki hayots'* (The history of the Armenians in Charsanjak), some time in 1918 American soldiers came to Turkey and forced the Turks and Kurds who were holding Armenian children as slaves to turn them in. The children were gathered in a field between Kharbert and Mezireh for relatives to claim them (156).

cleaning toilets to watering the cattle and washing out their stables to helping in bakeries and on construction sites, always with minimal compensation, but just enough so that he and his brother did not go absolutely hungry. He describes people he met, lived, and worked with in his months of wandering, some of them kind, others wicked and malevolent, some helpful, others causing harm, and the many sick and hungry orphans he encountered in Turkish houses or in the streets.

He was back in the German orphanage in Kharbert with his brother Kerop when the war ended and the Germans fled. Now the American soldiers were in charge. With the help of older boys, Hampartzoum among them, they searched for large Armenian houses occupied by Turks, threw out the Turks, and converted the houses into much needed orphanages, as the number of orphans kept increasing (190). The German orphanage was under American control, and Mr. Henry Riggs replaced the German Mr. Ehman as headmaster. In those days, besides collecting Armenian orphans from Turkish houses and from the streets, Americans were also collecting Armenian bones. They paid one dollar for each sack of bones the "Turkish rogues gleefully filled.... Another insult! The Turks even profited from the bones of the Armenians they had slaughtered" (191).

There was no end to the suffering and hardship Hampartzoum faced every step of the way in Kharbert. A few times he was on the point of being caught, imprisoned or killed. It was becoming more and more difficult to earn a living for himself, his brother, and a

few other orphans who had pinned their hopes on him (209–20). He finally decided to leave the homeland he cherished, to entrust his brother to an Armenian family and depart from Armenia. The date was May 18, 1921. He joined a Kurdish caravan headed for Van and Bitlis. This was a mistake because along the way he saw what these Kurdish barbarians were doing to Armenian girls who were trying to escape to safety (228). With two other Armenian boys he found an opportune moment to leave the caravan.

A striking characteristic of Hampartzoum's memoir is his perpetual soliloquy addressed to God and his paradoxical relation with Him. He calls on God to witness his misfortune. He reproaches God for abandoning the Armenian people and putting them in such intolerable hardship. He even calls Him deceitful. He denies God's existence and apologizes to his readers for his strong sentiment. But all along, it is God from whom he seeks salvation, and he attributes every event in his life to God's will. "Without God's will even the leaves of the trees would not move," his father had said, and he fatefully repeats the phrase even when he is in the mood to defy God.

The perilous months-long route of escape took Hampartzoum to Tabriz in Persia, to the doors of the Armenian Prelacy and to the mercy of the Prelate, Archbishop Nerses Melik'-T'angian, an extraordinary clergyman who had taken on the difficult task of aiding and protecting thousands of refugees from Western and Sovietized Armenia who were roaming the streets of

Tabriz and dying of hunger and disease (244–50). After Hampartzoum wrote several letters to his brothers in America, help finally arrived and he began another long journey full of adventures that took him from Tabriz to Baghdad, Aleppo, Beirut, Marseilles, and Mexico on his way to the United States. In 1923 he was reunited with his brothers in Los Angeles.

Yervand Kyureghyan

Yervand Kyureghyan (Ervand Kiureghian) represents a totally different perspective in *Im housheri chanaparhov* (Through my memories): that of a warrior—a *fedayee* and a soldier—who dedicated his youth, the best years of his life, to the Armenian armed struggle, to the defense of Vaspurakan, his native land, and to the creation and defense of the Independent Republic of Armenia.³² His

³² Yervand Kyureghyan, *Im housheri chanaparhov*, ed. with Introduction and Commentary by Sergey Vardanyan and Lousineh Sahakyan (Yerevan: Lousakn, 2009). Subsequent page numbers cited in parentheses refer to this work.

The editors have added informative notes to every personal and place name that Yervand mentions, but fortunately they have not interfered with his writing style and linguistic peculiarities. The book includes two separate indexes of people and places, pictures of *fedayee* leaders and troops, family photographs, and a map showing the author's trek or "military road" (1906–22).

As to the author's chosen orthography, the classic or old system mostly used in the Diaspora, the editors have revised it according to the system presently used in Armenia, the new or "reformed" orthography (the English transliteration of the author's name follows the Romanization adopted by the new orthography). With this intervention, on the one hand, the many spelling errors in the

story is not only one of blood, tears, pain, and suffering, but also one of courage, determination, and gallantry. It is a documentation of important events and personages during the most turbulent period of Armenian history, from the massacres of 1895 in Van to the fall of the Republic of Armenia in December 1920, the subsequent uprising against the Soviet usurpers in February 1921, and the mass exodus along the Arax River toward Iran a few months later.

Yervand Kyureghyan was born in 1888 in K'erts, a village in Hayots' Dzor in the Vaspurakan region. From a very young age he experienced all the deprivations of an orphan. He was only two years old when an epidemic of plague killed almost all the livestock in the village. Impoverished and desperate, his father, like many other men in the village, left his young wife and son and migrated to Constantinople to find work. Father returned when Yervand was four, but before long he killed a Kurd in self-defense, and had to escape to Constantinople to evade persecution or harsh punishment. The family did not hear from him until he returned in 1908, after *Hurriyet* was proclaimed. He had been absent during the massacres of 1895 and he had been told that the

manuscript have disappeared, as the editors have it, but on the other hand, the authenticity of the author's writing is diminished.

The author's son, Varouzh Kyureghyan, explains that his father began writing his memoir when he was 100 years old, and that the raw, unedited manuscript was hastily published in Los Angeles in 1998 because Yervand, then 108 years old, was rapidly declining. He died at age 110.

Armenians in his native village were all killed, that there was no one left. Of course, that was not far from the truth, since Kurdish *ashirets* (tribes) from nearby villages had wreaked havoc on Kerts, and those who managed to survive the carnage had fled. In fact, Yervand and his mother would have been killed too if it hadn't been for his father's Kurdish friend Mullah Tahir, who arrived in time to rescue them and take them to his own village, Abzeini. Yervand and his mother stayed with the Mullah's family and enjoyed the hospitality and friendship of his wife and two sons. When they returned to their village almost two years later, it was destroyed, their house had been looted, and still unburied remains lay scattered about. Like other surviving villagers, they began to rebuild their lives upon the ruins of their homes.

Times were tough. Kurdish attacks and Turkish persecutions were on the rise. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) had begun to arm the villagers for self-defense. Field workers and freedom fighters (*fedayees*) such as Lort'o, Dali Ghazo, and others were regularly sent to the villages to inspire hope as well as the determination to fight back. Yervand was drawn into the organization and became a devoted *fedayee* for life. The ARF activists collected money from the villagers, in some cases by coercion, to procure arms. Yervand served as a messenger, carrying letters from the field workers between Kerts and Shatakh. Soon, a fair quantity of arms and ammunitions was stored in the villages. The authorities found out about it and began searching

houses. Yervand describes the brutalities in simple words, without elaboration:

They put a cat in Halepts'i Mkrtych's pants and beat him and drove a nail into T'amko Avet's head; he lost his one eye.... Finally, the Turkish officer was convinced that there were no weapons to be found and, taking fifty gold pieces, he left the village to do the same in other villages. (99)

Yervand married after his father returned. His son Ghazaros was born in 1910. In late 1914, Yervand was drafted into the Turkish army. His father's efforts to buy an exemption for his only son, as Turkish law allowed, were to no avail. Suleiman Efendi, a Turkish lawyer and a friend, rightfully advised him, "Don't believe the Turkish officials. They will take your money and take you too anyway" (119). After four months of torture and inhuman treatment in the army barracks, Yervand managed to flee. "For four months we had not seen a barber; we had not changed our cloths; we had not had a bath. The hair on our heads was mixed with the hair of our beards" (127).

Yervand was back with the *fedayee* troop when a Kurdish *ashiret* attacked the village in late March 1915. After the battle was over and the Kurds were pushed back, Andranik, the famous *fedayee*, ordered the villagers to take refuge in P'esandasht, as the Armenians of nearby villages had done, under the protection of Levon Pasha (an ARF field worker). The fighters were sent to Van to take part in the defense of the city. Vaspurakan was

under siege, towns and villages were being bombarded. Yervand describes in great detail the long heroic defense of Van, after which he returned to find his father had been killed in the Monastery of Varag and their village plundered and burned.

Yervand and sixty other *fedayees* joined Hamazasp's volunteer army. Eghisheh Pahlavuni³³ was their troop leader, and Tigran Baghdasarian, for whom Yervand held a special admiration and reverence, was their commander. The volunteer army began to move forward, waging war in K'aradasht, Ankgh, and other villages. It was during these operations that Yervand witnessed the deserted, ruined or burned villages and the unburied corpses of Armenian peasants massacred earlier.

There are a number of books about the defense of Van, Vaspurakan, and the short-lived Armenian administration that governed the state. Yervand's meticulous account of his own participation in the day-to-day battles in the villages and in Van, the systematic attacks by the Turkish army, the Kurdish assaults, the entrance of the Armenian volunteer army unit, and the escape of the Turkish army, all add to the record of the history of the defense of Van and to the refutation of the Turkish claim

³³ Yeghisheh Pahlavuni described his paramilitary activities in the Armenian liberation movement and his participation in the Armenian volunteer troops during World War I and in military operations during the life of the Republic of Armenia, 1918–20, in his memoir edited and published by his son, Norayr Pahlavuni, under the title, *Yeghisheh Pahlavuni, Hushamatian* (Yeghisheh Pahlavuni: Book of memories) (Yerevan: Moughni, 2006).

that the measures taken against Armenians were because Armenians revolted against the government in Van. Armenians simply refused to be killed.

Yervand describes the unexpected retreat of the Russian army in August of 1915 and the panic among the Armenian population in their haste to follow the army to the Caucasus and escape the impending massacres. He attests to the harsh and selfish conduct of the retreating Russian soldiers which caused so much suffering and death for the Armenians on the difficult roads toward Ejmiatsin in Eastern Armenia.

Yervand's father was killed in the Monastery of Varag, as mentioned; his mother was killed on the road to Ejmiatsin; his wife was shot in the leg by Kurds attacking her caravan and died in a hospital in Ejmiatsin. Yervand was left with his young son and had no choice but entrust him to the orphanage in Alexandropol (Giumri or Gyumri) (168).

He returned to his village in 1916 when the Russian army was advancing on the eastern front, but being the only survivor of his family and finding his home in ruins, he decided to join the troops of Azat Simonian of Shatakh and fight the Turks in Hayots' Dzor. In 1917, when the Russian soldiers were deserting and the Russian army was immobilized, he joined the regular army of Kosti Hambartsumian. During the second exodus from Van, he was in Hambartsumian's army, fighting all the way to Eastern Armenia. He does not fail to list and provide a short description of every village along the road.

In 1918 Yervand was a mounted soldier in the detachment of Tigran Baghdasarian, fighting against the Azerbaijani Turks. He describes how their troop captured Turkish villages, and despite strict orders to send prisoners to army headquarters then at Igdir, they killed them, "ten-twenty of them every night." In simple, unembellished words, he explains, "Aslan and Ghazar had seen their families slaughtered by the Turks. Who could let them remain alive?" (189). The Turkish denial literature often cites Armenian brutalities against "innocent" Turks as evidence of wartime atrocities committed on both sides. The authors of such literature, of course, fail to mention that the occasional killings of Turks or Kurds occurred after the Armenian population had been put through the most heinous experience. Armenian *fedayees*, the remnants of slaughtered families and destroyed towns and villages, were avenging the murder of their mothers, fathers, wives, and children. Turkish atrocities, a well-orchestrated and executed annihilation of Armenians, had robbed these simple peasants of their normal life and turned them into fighters with a thirst for revenge.

Finally, on May 23, 1918, Bashgarnets'i Mamikon's troop was in Sardarabad.³⁴ After two days of heavy

³⁴ At this point, the editors of Kyureghyan's memoir add a note explaining that the detailed description of the participation of this troop, consisting of *fedayees* from Van, in the battle of Sardarabad is a valuable historical document. It proves that Harut'iun T'urshian, the author of an extensive study of the battle of Sardarabad, erred in assuming that Tigran Baghdasarian's detachment did not take part

fighting, Yervand was shot in the leg and transported to a hospital in Ejmiatsin (215). He was barely saved from having his leg amputated by an old friend who took him out of the hospital and patiently healed him using herbal remedies.

When Yervand returned to military operations, he joined Tigran Baghdasarian's detachment under Sebuhi (Eighth Army) in 1920, this time to fight against the joint front of the insurgent Azerbaijanis, the Red Army, and the Armenian Bolsheviks. The Armenian army was retreating under the constant advance of the Kemalist army. Yervand notes that Turks were fighting with Russian weaponry (264). Alexandropol had fallen, but the Eighth Army kept fighting until the sovietization of Armenia on December 2, 1920. A few days later, the Red Army, already in power, disarmed the soldiers of the Republic and marched them toward Dilijan. Fearing execution, Yervand and eight others escaped and hid in the villages.

On February 15, 1921, a group of former soldiers of the Republic under Aslan Step'anian began to move toward Yerevan to take part in the people's insurgence ignited against the repressive Bolshevik regime. Yervand describes the uprising and the seizure of Yerevan prison in which they came face to face with an appalling scene of the most brutal executions. The Bolsheviks had murdered the prisoners, the leaders of the Armenian

Republic, with machetes and axes and had piled the naked, blood soaked bodies in jail cells. Hamazasp, one of Yervand's favorite *fedayee* leaders, was among them.

Yervand spent the next two months fighting the Bolsheviks. Then in April, with the recapture of Yerevan by the Red Army, the final exodus toward Iran began. Yervand crossed the Arax River into Iran and his soldiering life came to an end.

The long life of a *fedayee* and then a soldier in the Armenian volunteer army, with dozens of armed encounters from Van to the newly established Republic of Armenia (1918); the uprising of the Armenian Bolsheviks (May 1920); the sabotage of the ARF leaders who tried to uphold the independence of the Republic; the collaboration of the Russian Bolsheviks with the Turks; and the eventual collapse of the Armenian Republic; it's all there in Kyureghyan's memoir, 312 pages of concentrated information, without analysis or superfluous expressions, raw material that would be twice as long if elaborated.

Emotional expressions or outbursts of grief and pain are rare. Yervand's articulation of these sentiments is wanting. He relies on the reader's imagination to understand his pain. When he reports that he gave his son up and almost lost consciousness at the door of the orphanage, he writes, "Dear reader, imagine for a moment my unfortunate situation" (169). And again when he visited Ghazaros at the orphanage for the last time, and his son cried and said, "I want my mommy, take me to my mommy," Yervand writes that it was "as if

in the battle. See Kyureghyan, *Im housheri chanaparhov* (2009), p. 211 and fn. 280.

the earth and the sky fell upon me" (256-7). In the winter of 1920, when Alexandropol fell to the Turks and Yervand's unit had to retreat, he begged his commander to let him go and take his son from the orphanage, but he was not allowed to do so. "I had saved three injured soldiers, but my one and only son remained a prisoner of the Turks. I cried" (263).³⁵

Sentiments of joy and pride visit him as he writes about the victory of the Armenians in Van after fighting against the Turkish army for forty days. "All this is before my eyes, I can see it clearly. Tears of joy and happiness press my throat" (146). The same feelings rush in when he proudly describes the celebration of Armenian independence on May 28, 1919, in Yerevan. "Now, when I remember it and write about it, tears run from my eyes. What glory my eyes saw" (238). In the exodus of the Armenian population of Kars after it fell to the Turks in the winter of 1920, Yervand saw another heart-rending sight that he could not forget: a woman with her three small children, all freezing cold, wet and muddy, trying to cross a river. "When I saw this, the world crumpled on me" (260).

³⁵ According to Varouzh Kyureghyan, Yervand's son from a second marriage, his father later found Ghazaros and corresponded with him. Ghazaros remained in Soviet Armenia and attended military school there. He served in World War II, and that was the last Yervand heard of him.

Yervand remarried in Iran in 1923 and had two sons and a daughter. The family immigrated to the U.S. in 1984.

Each one of these incidents, and many more not quoted here, deserve elaboration. The reader is left unsatisfied, wanting more. For example, a writer's artistic imagination could have done more with a short paragraph about an Armenian boy named Hovsep' whom the *fedayees* almost killed, thinking he was a Kurd. Indeed, he had become a Kurd. That was when he had fallen in love with the daughter of the Kurdish chieftain Rasul. Catching the lovers together, Rasul held his dagger to Hovsep's chest and threatened to kill him. "If you become Muslim, I will marry you to my daughter Zayneh. If not, I will kill you both." Hovsep agreed, and they were married. When the Russians came, they massacred the Kurds, and Hovsep's wife and baby died. Rasul tried to run away, but Hovsep killed him and escaped. He returned to his native village and found it ruined and his folks massacred. From then on, he was on the run until he was caught by Armenian *fedayees*.

Yervand Kyureghyan lived a long life, and his memory never failed him. He gave interviews and lectured to youth groups, and every time he spoke, he relived these episodes with the same details.³⁶ This phenomenon is more or less true with all the survivors of

³⁶ As a student in Professor Richard Hovannisian's Oral History class at UCLA, I had the opportunity to interview Yervand Kyureghyan (I recorded his name as Ervand Kiureghian) in the spring of 1985, and I was amazed by his unwavering memory, his ability to enumerate and describe in detail, more than seventy years later, the places, the villages large and small, and the names of hundreds of people with whom he had had either a brief contact or a lengthy association.

the Great Catastrophe, especially if they were adults at the time. They recount not merely their past experience, but what they have lived and relived, over and over again, all their lives.

Arshaluys Martikian (Aurora Mardiganian)

Perhaps one of the first memoirs to be written about the Armenian Genocide, and maybe the most poignant, with its graphic details of incredible brutality, barbarism and inhumane torture, is that of Arshaluys Martikian, written after she reached the United States with the help of Near East Relief in November 1917. Her name was changed to Aurora Mardiganian and the narrative of her harrowing experience was first published in 1918 under the title, *Ravished Armenia*.³⁷

³⁷ Aurora Mardiganian, *Ravished Armenia: The Story of Aurora Mardiganian, the Christian Girl Who Lived through the Great Massacres*, interpreted by H. L. Gates (New York: Kingfield, 1918). Her narrative is included in its entirety in a recent study by the film critic and historian Anthony Slide, *Ravished Armenia and the Story of Aurora Mardiganian* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 1997). Subsequent page numbers cited in parentheses refer to this latter work.

Slide mentions in his Introduction (p. 6) that the Armenian couple who temporarily sheltered Arshaluys helped her to place notices in the newspapers in the hope of finding her missing brother. It was through these notices that the press got wind of her story. Her narrative, however, reveals that all three of her brothers had already been killed, the oldest one in prison before the deportations began, and the two younger ones before her eyes, as punishment for her refusal to surrender to the Turkish bey.

In any event, the American media took an interest in her story and interviewed her through an interpreter. Harvey Gates found out about her and offered to write the entire story as she would narrate it

Arshaluys Martikian was born in Ch'emish-Gezek', about 30 kilometers northwest of Kharbert. She was fourteen when Husein Pasha, the military commander of the district, came to their house on Easter Sunday, 1915, and demanded that her father give her up to him to add to his harem. Husein Pasha had made this demand many times before, but Mr. Martikian, a wealthy banker with connections among the higher authorities and the British consulate in Kharbert, had refused. This time it was different. It was wartime and Husein Pasha could do as he pleased. He demanded Arshaluys and in return he promised to protect the family from the imminent deportation. Being refused again, he left in fury. Arshaluys begged her parents to let her go to him and save the family, but they would not consent to their daughter's ultimate sacrifice. And then the horrors began.

Arshaluys's father and her fifteen-year-old brother were taken away and jailed. The next day, *zaptiehs* (gendarmes) took a group of prisoners outside of the town and killed them. Arshaluys's father and brother were not among them. Hearing about the fate of the first group, the other prisoners decided to put an end to their lives. The younger men killed the older and weaker ones — Arshaluys's father killed his son — using the rocks that an Islamized woman, who was permitted to visit the

in Armenian. Decades later, Guren Sargsyan's Armenian translation of Gates' original English interpretation of Aurora's story was published under the title, *Hoshotvats Hayastan* (Los Angeles: Nor Hayastan, 1995).

prisoners, provided them. Then they set the jail on fire. The authorities found out about the woman's conspiracy and threw her into the fire to burn with the prisoners (58-9).

Then it was the turn of the women and children, and the deportation of the Armenians of Ch'emish-Gezek' began. They were all driven out of their houses and gathered in the center of town. *Zaptiehs* raided the Armenian orphanage and took the children out to be sold or killed. They even kidnapped the missionary in charge of the orphanage, a Miss Graham (62). Before the deportees were put on the road, "the horses of the Kurds galloped down all who were in their way, their hoofs sinking into the heads and bodies of scores of frightened women" (77-8). They drove off all the donkeys and horses that belonged to these women and began searching for pretty girls.

Arshaluys was kidnapped and sold to Kemal Efendi, but she managed to escape and join her mother, three sisters and two little brothers. They began to walk the death march, and she saw fellow deportees expire one by one, murdered or succumbing to hunger, thirst, or disease. She saw the Protestant pastor's widow go mad after her sick mother and her baby boy died. With her little girl sick in her arms, she was shouting, "God has gone mad, I tell you, mad—mad—mad!" (91). Havoc broke out in the caravan. Women began screaming and running; the dead children they had been holding tight in their arms, they began throwing down on the ground; others ran wild with their young children hanging onto

their skirts. Eventually, order was restored and the long caravan of wretched women and children began to move again.

The lack of water was the worst enemy. Deportees were prepared to pay villagers a high price for a cup of water. But sometimes these Muslim villagers were so cruel. They took the money, poured the water and tipped over the cup. Arshaluys saw suffering and pain; she witnessed the looting of Armenian villages along the way, and the killing, and the nightly orgies of soldiers with the Armenian girls they snatched away from their frantic mothers; she saw women stripped naked and searched for money or gold they may have hidden on their bodies. They cut open a woman's vagina, where she had hidden some gold coins, and let her bleed to death. They even ripped open the belly of Arshaluys's pregnant aunt in search of gold (95). Arshaluys pleaded with a soldier who was carrying off her older sister; her sister resisted and the soldier thrust his knife into her breast. She died in Arshaluys's arms.

As they reached Hasan Chelebi, the liquidation began. Soldiers collected the boys over eight years old, took them outside of town and killed them. Young girls of eight to twelve were also rounded up and taken away. It was rumored that they would be taken to Constantinople to be sold to rich Turks. The caravan moved on toward Arabkir and joined another caravan coming from Sivas. Among these deportees were twenty Sisters of Grace, mostly American or European. They had been violated and tortured. Two Americans, Sister Sarah

and Sister Esther, unable to bear the disgrace, had killed themselves (99).

There was another spree of slaughter and rape at Arabkir. About 2,000 Armenian men from Sivas were killed there, and some 200 young girls, mostly students of a prestigious religious school, were repeatedly raped until they were exhausted to death. The soldiers left them in the big building that came to be known as Kasab-Khana (slaughterhouse), in the same rooms where they had left the bodies of the murdered men.

Then Arshaluys was kidnapped again, this time by a group of Kurdish horsemen who came down upon the deportees' camp. They took the girls away on their horses to a remote place, stripped them naked and raped them (103-4). After they had done what they wanted with the girls, they took them to Egin, to a large building in which nearly 400 young Armenian women in the same pitiable condition were gathered from various places. One by one they were presented to Kiamil Pasha and his servants who viewed the naked girls, stooped in their shame and humiliation, and then offered them the option of converting to Islam and being spared. Many of them accepted; Arshaluys refused. But the beating and torture were intolerable. More girls gave in. Arshaluys lost consciousness under extreme pain; still she did not submit. There were about twenty girls like her. The rest were sent to Kiamil Pasha's estates to regain their health and beauty so that they could be distributed among Turkish political leaders, friends of his. The regiment of soldiers accompanying him, known as Kasab Tabouri,

the "butcher regiment," began to slaughter the rest of the deportees (109). Arshaluys and the remaining girls were taken to join another caravan of about a thousand deportees coming from Bayburt, mostly consisting of older women and very small children. There were no babies; they had all died along the way; the girls and young women had been taken by Kiamil Pasha; the boys had been stolen by Circassians.

The caravan settled on the outskirts of Malatya, which Arshaluys describes as the city of death. Along the road there were sixteen crosses of rough wood with sixteen naked Armenian girls crucified on them. Vultures had gathered to start their feast. The girls were warned by soldiers that this was what awaited them if they did not give in (113). Arshaluys heard dreadful stories of torture and murder. The students of a German school for the daughters of mostly well-to-do Armenian families were stolen away, tortured, violated and murdered.

Arshaluys slipped out of the camp and began looking everywhere for her mother and siblings. Soon she found herself at the door of the American consul in Malatya. But the Turks spotted her and demanded that Miss McLaine turn her over to them. The *kaimakam* (mayor) had issued strict orders against sheltering Armenians. Miss McLaine went to the mayor and begged him to let Arshaluys stay with her. The only favor the mayor granted was to send the girl to the Turkish house where apostate Armenian women and their children were kept and not harmed. Soon, however, a band of soldiers arrived at the house and began to collect the children

older than five, even those of the "turned" women. Arshaluys heard that the boys were thrown over the cliff outside Malatya and left to die and the girls were taken to Turkish towns to be raised as Muslims (121).

The refugees were moved again, now in a long line of 15,000 women and children. The group of Islamized women whom Arshaluys had joined was guarded better than the others against the Turkish villagers and the Kurdish horsemen who attacked the caravan and robbed and killed. The terrible things she saw along the way remained with her as an indelible memory.

After walking for almost two weeks, the caravan stopped at Shiro, a town on the way to Damascus. Arshaluys, together with many other women, was taken to Haji Ghafour's house in Geulik. There the pretty ones were selected, bathed, dressed, and taken to a large and opulent hall where, in Haji Ghafour's presence, the poor girls, exhausted and half-alive, were forced to make their first prayer to Allah. Torture and death awaited those who disobeyed. The servant's whip came down a hundred times, cutting into the flesh of a maiden who refused to submit. She screamed, then moaned, and then she was silent. The servant picked up her bleeding body and carried it out, hanging limply over his shoulder. Then the girls saw the dead body of another girl hanging upside down by her feet from a rope, her arms tied behind her back, her mouth bound with a cloth to stifle her screams. This was too frightening, and Arshaluys submitted. The night of her "betrothal," as the Turkish concubines referred to a girl's first night with Haji

Ghafour, was unspeakably torturous. But she resolved to endure while she planned her impossible escape, and finally she escaped.

Arshaluys had heard of an ancient monastery a great distance away, where the monks took in refugee girls and protected them. She and another girl named Arousiag (Arusiak) found their way to the monastery after days of walking the perilous roads. They were taken in and given a fortnight's respite. The Kurds respected this particular monastery and did no harm to it, but the Chechens, hearing about the "treasures" kept there, raided the place, killed the monks, and took the prettier girls to sell in the slave markets of Diyarbekir. The rest they killed, including Arousiag whose arm was broken when she resisted her captor and who was now of no further use to the Chechens.

Having no permission to enter Diyarbekir, they camped outside the city. It was full of refugees who had not been liquidated yet. Arshaluys shuddered at the dreadful stories she heard about Nail Pasha, the Vali of Diyarbekir; for example, that his soldiers had forced Russian prisoners of war to take the bodies of hundreds of little Armenian children they had killed, mix them with cement, and use the mix to mortar the stones of a house they were building (146). Not finding a good market for their girls, the Chechens sold them to German officers stationed in the city.

Unprecedented in the memoirs I have read is the experience of Arshaluys and other stolen girls at the hands of these German officers. They were as brutal and

as lustful in their orgies as the Turks. It was only because of a sudden order to leave the city that officers freed the girls, that is, abandoned them, but this time to the whims of the *zaptiehs* who caught them.

The suffering continued. Arshaluys was now part of a caravan coming from Erzerum and going toward Urfa, and what she describes as her experience during the march is jolting. With fear and abhorrence one thinks, how was this young girl able to endure? It was a miracle that she found her mother, two little brothers and one of her sisters among the refugees of an incoming caravan. Her other sister had been thrown off a precipice by a soldier weary of her inability to keep up (173–4).

The reunion was short-lived. Arshaluys was stolen away, this time by the famous slave trader Bekran Bey, and sold “for one *medjidieh*—85 cents!” (181) to the servant of a rich Turk who turned out to be Djevdet Bey, the former Vali of Van, then commander of the Turkish army operating against the Russians. Girls were presented to Djevdet Bey’s head servant who asked them to accept the holy religion of Islam, since Sultan Abdul-Hamid’s decree prohibited the enslavement of Armenian and other Christian girls in Turkish households unless they were Islamized. Arshaluys refused and was sent on to the house of Ahmed Bey as a gift from Djevdet.

There in the house of Ahmed Bey, Arshaluys became aware of the old man’s interest and intentions in the young Armenian girls not so much on his own behalf, as for the children they could bear his sons, “children in whom the blood of the noble Armenian race might be

blended with that of a savage Turk, and who might live to perpetuate and improve the blood of his family” (182). I have discussed this phenomenon in my previous work, and it was revealing to see it repeated as an astute observation in the memoir of a young girl. Henry Morgenthau wrote of this intention to improve the race and Osman Köker wrote about the hidden purpose or the ulterior motive in absorbing Armenian survivors, that is, young women and children, into Muslim households.³⁸

Arshaluys spent days in the dungeon of Ahmed Bey’s house taking punishment for her refusal to convert. Part of her torment was to witness the bey’s servants slaughter her mother, sister and two brothers whom they had located in the nearby refugee camp and brought to the house. One night in the dungeon she heard a familiar whistle, the call to sheep coming down from pasture. It was Old Vart’abed (Vardapet) who had been the Martikians’ shepherd back in Ch’emish-Gezek’. He had somehow survived and was now in the service of Ahmed Bey. Arshaluys was able to make contact with him and he facilitated her escape, knowing for certain that he would lose his life over it. And so it happened.

Vartabed secreted her out one night and guided her toward the house of a friendly Kurd. From there she was given a small supply of food and water and put on the road to take her farther away from the bey’s estates. Over the next few months she worked as a laborer in the Kurdish town of Dersim, doing a man’s job, but she was

³⁸ See Perroomian, *And Those Who Continued* (2008), pp. 105–6.

treated cruelly by both men and women, and when she became so weak that she could not work anymore, they cast her out.

Walking by night and hiding by day, Arshaluys reached Erzerum just days before the city was captured by the Russians. She found her way to a house marked by an American flag, and famished and exhausted, collapsed at the door. The person who rescued her and cared for her for days until she regained consciousness was Dr. McCallum, an American missionary who had just returned to Erzerum to bring relief to Armenian refugees. There was an extensive campaign to retrieve Armenian women and children from Muslim households, or to buy them (for about one U.S. dollar apiece), and the Armenian hero General Andranik was the spirit behind it all. He grew so fond of Arshaluys that he gave her the ring that had been passed down from his grandfather to his father, and entrusted her with the mission to tell the American people that "Armenia is prostrate, torn and bleeding, but that it will rise again—if America will only help..." (199). And so, after two years of suffering, she began her long journey to New York, and freedom.

Arshaluys Martikian's memoir made a tremendous impact on American readers, especially those involved in relief work in the Middle East. The American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief offered to sponsor a film based on the book to benefit Armenian and Syrian orphans and refugees.

Hundreds of frames were shot picturing scenes described in the book, and their authentic quality was confirmed by Viscount James Bryce, former British Ambassador to the United States (1907–13) and President of the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, as well as by Henry Morgenthau, former U.S. Ambassador to Turkey (1913–16).³⁹ The result was a silent film, the first movie ever made on genocide, which press reports at the time praised as "an epoch-making film" and one that "every person should see." The *New York Times* reported on the film's exclusive premiere for a distinguished audience in New York and the subsequent discussion of its suitability for public viewing. The consensus was that, "although some of the scenes are more harrowing than ever before shown in a moving picture, they were necessary to awaken people to a full realization of the conditions existing in Armenia."⁴⁰

³⁹ Both diplomats had witnessed Turkish atrocities. In fact, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915–16* (1916), edited by Arnold Toynbee and with a Preface by Viscount Bryce, and *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (1918) are among the best sources on the Armenian Genocide.

⁴⁰ "Show 'Ravished Armenia'; First Public Exhibition of Official Motion Picture Today," *New York Times* (February 17, 1919). This article and other memorabilia related to the film's debut are reproduced in the online exhibition, "Auction of Souls," by the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/online_exhibition_6.php (accessed December 16, 2011).

Produced in Los Angeles and directed by Oscar Apfel, the film was released in 1919 and shown in London and New York as well as major cities in the U.S. and Latin America. The titles *Ravished*

A typical example of the relief committee's announcement of a screening of the film reads:

It is the verdict of many noted experts in the production of the most spectacular and absorbing motion pictures that "RAVISHED ARMENIA," THE STORY OF THE GIRL WHO SURVIVED, is the greatest motion picture achievement in theme, human

Armenia and *Auction of Souls* were used interchangeably. While Anthony Slide, the film critic and compiler of the book *Ravished Armenia* (1997), believes the title was changed to *Auction of Souls* in order to make it sound more dramatic (p. 8), I would suggest the intention was to remove the name Armenia in order to give the film a more universal appeal and to emphasize its focus on the sexual violence, nudity, brutalities, and barbaric tortures never before seen on the silver screen.

The film was initially banned in Great Britain because its horrifying scenes were said to be unsuitable for a general audience; after being censored by Scotland Yard, it was shown again and then banned again. In 1920, the original book, *Ravished Armenia* by Mardiganian and Gates (1918), was removed from American and British libraries. According to Slide, the British Foreign Office was "concerned that the film might arouse anti-Turkish sentiments in Britain," and furthermore, that it "might result in strong anti-British sentiment throughout the Muslim world..." (p. 11). The film disappeared completely, and the ceaseless inquiries by many filmmakers and film historians remained unanswered.

In 1994, a short segment of the film, about 18 minutes long, was found by Eduardo Kozanlian of Argentina. The segment was enhanced and elaborated by Richard Kloian (Armenian Genocide Resource Center of Northern California), who in 2009 produced a 24-minute DVD that includes the restored segment with an introduction, a musical score, and 125 English subtitles, as well as a slideshow of production stills. The Genocide Museum of Armenia acquired a copy of the DVD and distributed it along with a booklet of historical background and information.

interest, seriousness of purpose and thrilling development of dramatic conception ever attempted.⁴¹

The book and the film made a tremendous impact, not only because of the horrifying reality they portrayed, but also because Arshaluys herself played the leading role in the film and afterwards appeared in various forums, speaking in public, giving interviews, and taking part in fundraisers. In the long run the entire project benefited the filmmakers, the relief committee, and the refugees,⁴² but it compounded the victimization of Arshaluys who experienced a nervous breakdown as a result and who never had a chance to recover from the initial trauma which apparently overshadowed the rest of her long life.

Although representative of the genre, the memoirs that I studied in preparation for this book constitute not a large number compared to the entire legacy of Armenian Genocide memoirs left to us today. My selection was absolutely random. I chose none from any preference or for any motive. I wish I could read them all. It is impossible. Sokrat T'ertzian, *Hacheni Diuts'aznamartē* (The

⁴¹ This announcement is reproduced in "Auction of Souls," the online exhibition cited in the previous note, http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/online_exhibition_6.php.

⁴² The announcement referenced in *ibid.* associates the screening of the film with the relief committee's "national appeal for funds with which to rescue and save the lives of the Armenian Refugees who now are crying for bread, medicine and help, from the wastes of the deserts in Asia Minor." According to Slide in *Ravished Armenia* (1997), p. 7, this proved to be a half-truth.

heroic battle of Hajin) (Athens, 1937); Elizabeth Caraman, *Daughter of the Euphrates* (New York, 1939); Hakob Guyumjian, *Ariunot anapat* (Blood-soaked desert) (Boston, 1949); Khoren Davidson, *Odyssey of an Armenian of Zeitoun* (New York, 1985); Hannah Kalajian, *Hannah's Story* (Belmont, Massachusetts, 1990); Shahan Gatoyan, *Giughē Kordvats lemerum* (The village in the mountains of Kordvats) (Fresno, California, 1997); Noubar Makaroff, *Le Déporté de Deir-ez-Zor* (Paris, 1998); Suren Papazian, *Odyssey of a Survivor* (New York, 2002); Gevorg Sarafian, *Epratits' Rio de la Plata* (From the Euphrates to Rio de la Plata) (Yerevan, 2002); Vahram Tatryan (Vahram Dadrian), *To the Desert: Pages from My Diary* (Princeton, 2003), and the Armenian original (Beirut, 1945); *Ts'kians nahatakut'iun* (Martyrdom for life), which includes the testimonies of a number of survivors (Ainchar, Lebanon, 2005); Hovhannes Karapetian (Onnik Yusuf), *Veratsnvats kiank' mē* (A life reborn), subtitled, "Between the imaginary and the real horrors: The memoirs of a survivor" (Yerevan, 2010).... These books were piled up on my desk, their stories waiting to be discovered. I just could not get to them even though they were readily available. And there are still so many others that I could have acquired. I feel guilty about it. I hope that my random sampling serves as a sketch of the landscape and brings out the general idea.

Revelation of a gloomy landscape

These simple verbal encodings of personal traumatic experience, of which I have presented and discussed only

a few examples, may not do justice to the horrors of genocide. It is the cumulative power of the genre that makes an impact, that tells the story of a colossal calamity and inspires the next generations as they express themselves in various art forms. John Minassian was aware of the limited scope of what he could offer. "[T]his book is not complete," he noted in the Appendix to *Many Hills*,

for there is no way to measure the depth of the sorrow, the misery, and suffering of the human heart. Words cannot adequately explain the pain, deprivation, and humiliation suffered by the thousands of victims of the cruel force of military might.⁴³

Through these memoirs, however, we hear the slaughtered nation speak. Each tells the story of a life experience that is broadly similar to that of others, no matter where their story originates, be it Sivas, Konya, Kharbert, Mezireh, Husenig, Erzerum, the Black Sea coast, or elsewhere. First the men are rounded up, killed, or exiled. Then begins the deportation of women, children, and elderly men. In cities and towns, Turkish neighbors loot Armenian houses even before the occupants are deported. Deeper in the countryside, *chetes* and Turkish and Kurdish villagers attack the caravans. They loot and kill, they snatch the children and smash the skulls of infants, they kidnap the pretty girls, rape the women, young and old, they even rape the corpses. They

⁴³ Minassian, *Many Hills Yet To Climb* (1986), p. 251.

tear open the bellies of pregnant women and throw the fetuses into the air or smash them against the rocks. The victims scream in pain and horror. They beg for mercy. The *zaptiehs* look on with pleasure or at best indifference. They too take part in the carnage. They torture men of the church to make them abjure their faith. They pull out their hair and twist their fingers and toes (the favorite Turkish torture). The Kasab Tabouri (butcher regiment) commits the unspeakable, snatching babies from their mothers' arms and throwing them over the cliff to their comrades below who catch the babies on their bayonets, as many as they can, and the mothers jump down to save themselves and their babies while the soldiers hit them with heavy stones or hold out their bayonets for the wretched women to roll onto. The valleys look like open graves with thousands of bodies left unburied and the rivers running red. These are the scenes that are commonly described in memoirs. And there is more: lice, typhus, diarrhea, and hunger take their toll. The journey is torturous, and the first sight of a putrefying corpse signals a fated end. The miracle is the author's escape from that hell and survival to tell the story.

These commonalities testify to the truth of the Genocide. At the same time, however, the unique details of each personal narrative light up a dark corner of the overarching calamity of the Armenian Genocide. William Zinsser encourages people to write their memoirs: "If

you still remember them," he says, "it's because they contain a universal truth."⁴⁴

The smooth style of narration

What most of these memoirs have in common is a smooth flow and straightforward narrative style in which chronological order is followed faithfully. Writing decades after the event, the memoirists rarely have difficulty expressing themselves. They are not deterred by the contradiction between the impossibility and the necessity of writing the atrocities—an obstacle that poets and writers before them encountered. They do not confess to any incapacity or paralysis of language, as was the case with the few surviving writers who were eyewitnesses to the tragedy.⁴⁵ Characteristically, however, the inadequacy of language is felt by those like Vitali Ianko who strive to reconcile creative writing, that is, artistic expression, and memoir-writing. As the author of Nargiz Zhamkochian's memoir, he is committed to reproducing the life story that she told him, and he grasps for ways other than words to describe her tragic experience during the years of the Armenian Genocide.

[W]hen the sense of humanity is completely lost, man's speech has no value; it does not work. Words, even the most colorful and extraordinary, do not sound, sentences, though very keenly twisted, fall flat.

⁴⁴ William Zinsser, *Writing About Your Life* (New York: Marlowe & Co., 2004).

⁴⁵ I have discussed this phenomenon in chapter 1 *supra*; see p. 50, n. 49.

A story of an incredible survival becomes dim as the moon in a well. The Yeghern or The Massacre of the Armenians was beyond anything that could be related by usual words. The catastrophe needs another language, maybe one without words at all. Perhaps we should use a language which instead consists of raw sounds of suddenly bursting sobs, moaning pains inhabiting the defiled body, screaming nightmares, mad outcries for the lost children and doleful muttering of remembering the deaths of the ones.⁴⁶

Of course, this is because Ianko aims to create a work of art, a "fictionalized memoir."

The genre of memoir, on the other hand, requires an ordinary person with an adequate mastery of the language to write down what he or she remembers, without need of vivid images, imaginative twists, metaphoric expressions, or flashbacks. The only difficulty is the notion of representation inherent to the subject. As Christine van Boheemen-Saaf puts it, "The trauma victim, instead of reflecting on the trauma in a narrative account, lives out and repeats the event which always escapes conscious articulation. Only through repetition and replay may the event which caused the trauma eventually crystallize into experience and narrative."⁴⁷

The survivors of the Armenian Genocide had long years to play and replay their traumatic experiences in

⁴⁶ Ianko, *The Promise at the Sea* (2004), p. 108.

⁴⁷ Christine van Boheemen-Saaf, *Joyce, Derrida, Lacan, and the Trauma of History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 23.

their mind before they penned them for posterity. This condition defines the difference between diaries kept during the Event and memoirs written years later. In the former, traumatic experiences seem to be raw, undigested. The recordings are not strictly linguistic representations, the narrative is not necessarily clear (although chronological order is followed as per the normal requisite of a diary). But as Judith Lewis Herman explains in *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), the recordings annotate moments and images that will remain permanently encoded in the writer's mind.⁴⁸

A clear case in point and an evocative example is the diary of Hrant Sarian which has been translated into French by his daughter, Louise Kiffer, and posted online under the title, *Le journal de mon père*.⁴⁹ According to Kiffer's notes to the translation, her father, born in 1901 in Adabazar, began to keep a diary in Armenian in July 1915 at the age of fourteen. The translation only goes up to November 28, 1922, the day the American Red Cross gathered all the Armenian orphans in Constantinople and put them on the Italian ship *Cornaro F[iu]me* bound for Corfu.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Herman cited in Marian M. MacCurdy, "From Trauma to Writing," in *Writing and Healing: Toward an Informed Practice*, ed. Charles M. Anderson and Marian M. MacCurdy (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 2000), p. 165.

⁴⁹ Sarian, [Diary, 1915–23], (2008).

⁵⁰ The diary continues through April 3, 1923. Kiffer (<http://choisy.pagesperso-orange.fr/>) also posted her translation of an obituary by A. Gabents that appeared in the French Armenian newspaper *Haratch* on August 30, 1939. According to Gabents,

There are two major characteristics to a diary such as this one, recorded en route day by day, week to week, month to month. First of all, unlike memoirs written decades later, here the name of every village, large or small, is recorded along with the date and sometimes even the hour the caravan passed by or through it. Yervand Kyureghyan's memoir is, of course, the exceptional counter-example, given his impeccable and unparalleled memory that retained such minute details after so many years.⁵¹

The second major characteristic is the style of writing which is raw, unedited. This is evident in Hrant Sarian's original Armenian manuscript with its less than perfect language, spelling and grammatical errors, many repetitions, dialectal expressions mixed with literary language, and a plethora of Turkish words. These are, of course, mostly ironed out in the process of translation.⁵² Kyureghyan's memoir is a match for Sarian's diary in

Hrant's diary was first published in *Haratch*. At the time of his death, his dream of pursuing an education had collapsed. He was a traveling salesman supporting his mother, his wife, and his four children. He was only 38 years old. "May the earth be light on you, dear Hrant."

⁵¹ Kyureghyan's descriptions note the geographical position of each and every village, the distance between them *and* the distance the deportees were made to travel, their population, ethnic makeup, standard of living, attitudes toward the Armenian refugees, etc.

⁵² For example, the Armenian original, translated literally, begins, "The world war began on June 24, 1915." The French translation reads, "La guerre a fait irruption chez nous en juin. 1915." The addition of "chez nous" (in our place or city) finesses the error regarding the date WWI began.

terms of language, in particular the mixture of dialectal idioms with literary language. In my view, however, this "flaw" does not diminish the value of these two documents which are true, spontaneous, and unembellished portrayals of a reality which, even if it does not always line up with other documentation of historical events, is a perception of reality by the individuals affected. These recordings are the truth as seen, experienced, and lived by the victims of those events.

Against the urge to speak out

But why is it that, given the relative facility with which these survivors have written their memoirs decades after the Event, we do not have a plethora of such writings?

Many of the survivors refrained from speaking of their horrible experience, especially to their children, let alone putting it in writing for everyone to read. There was the inexplicable sense of self-reproach for having survived while other members of the family met a torturous death. More real than that was the sense of shame about the circumstances of their survival. They kept it secret, even if an external sign, such as a tattoo or a circumcision, offered a clue to the secret they tried to hide.⁵³ And if they kept a diary or jotted down rough,

⁵³ For an Armenian male under the regime of Islam, regardless of his age, circumcision was mandatory as a true sign of Islamization. As for women and girls, the tattoos on their hands and face were proof that they had been taken into a Kurdish or Arab household as a wife or concubine, or merely as the chattel of a tribe.

diary-like notes of their traumatic experience, they hid it and never shared it with others. But why did they write their stories if they were not to be shared? Was this a subconscious effort on the part of the survivor to begin the process of healing? In their Introduction to *Writing and Healing*, Charles Anderson and Marian MacCurdy have this to say:

By writing about traumatic experiences, we discover and rediscover them, move them out of the ephemeral flow and space of talk onto the more permanent surface of the page.... [T]he chief healing effect of writing is thus to recover and to exert a measure of control over that which we can never control—the past.⁵⁴

Indeed, in writing or speaking about their traumatic experience, that is, in somehow articulating their story, the survivors were subconsciously exorcising the trauma that was entangling their mind and preventing them from grasping “normal” reality.

Nargiz Zhamkochian lived with the guilt of having abandoned her little brother Hagop and crawled away to save herself. She could not forget the terrified look on his face when he was picked up by the gendarme and tossed into the sea. Despite her stinging guilt, and in contrast to many who kept their secrets to themselves, Nargiz did not keep silent. She felt the urge to tell her story and she wanted the world to know. That was a kind of challenge

⁵⁴ Anderson and MacCurdy, Introduction, in *Writing and Healing* (2000), p. 7.

to the forgetting conveniently adopted by the post-Genocide world.

Forgetting the past and living in the present and looking toward the future was, on the other hand, the reaction of most of the second generation, tired of their parents' sad stories of murder and suffering. To take the example of Nargiz, her son Nishan, a typical representative of the second generation, reproached his mother for having “needlessly pained” him with “those terrors.” He objected to her insistence on telling her story to Vitali Ianko. “Mairig, these people came to our town and rented an apartment in our house to have fun... and you are depressing them with old, tiresome stories. Stop telling these stories! Please!... What will change, Mama, if one more person becomes familiar with your dead relatives?”⁵⁵

Bertha Nakshian Ketchian, her mother, and her sister began to tell their story as soon as they arrived in the United States; they told it “many times to [their] surviving Armenian relatives and new friends.”⁵⁶ But when Bertha was ready to put their ordeal into writing, her older sister Elmas, who remembered more of the details, refused to help. “I don’t want to think about it,” she told Bertha. “I want to forget the pain and despair of those years.” But could she forget? “Of course not,” was Bertha’s answer to her own question.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ianko, *The Promise at the Sea* (2004), p. 39.

⁵⁶ Ketchian, *In the Shadow of the Fortress* (1988), p. ix.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. x.

Besides the sense of shame and guilt and the futile struggle to forget, preventing them from speaking of their ordeal, some survivors had an inner compulsion to leave everything behind and live in the new environment, to integrate into the mainstream like everyone else. They feared that if they told their story it would set them apart, and this is especially true in European and North American communities where discrimination and prejudice against the newcomers was common. There was also the burden of the daily struggle for survival in an unfamiliar new world: "Victim of America who / escaped the Turkish Genocide," as David Kherdian writes of his mother.⁵⁸ Beyond this, there was the intention to spare their children, to protect them from the paralyzing memories with which they themselves were condemned to live. Whatever the reasons, they lived outside life. In mainstream society they felt like a foreigner, never able to adjust. Their response to the Genocide was silence. Their stories were buried with them, never to reach a receptive ear, never to fill a small gap in the awesome tapestry of the Armenian tragedy.

⁵⁸ David Kherdian, "A Family of Four," in *On the Death of My Father and Other Poems* (Fresno, California: Giligia Press, 1970). The lines are used to artistically characterize this group of survivors. It should be noted however, that Kherdian's mother entrusted her memoir to her son who crafted it into a work of art titled, *The Road from Home* (1979). This work will be discussed in a future volume, in a chapter devoted to the responses of the second-generation survivors.

The straightforward account versus the attempt to explain

Some memoirists simply describe, like Kerop Bedoukian who wished "to remain true to the memories of a young boy." He notes that, writing decades after his ordeal, he could have provided "the political, economic, and religious factors" pertaining to the annihilation of the Armenian population in the Ottoman Empire, but he prefers to leave the interpretation of these factors to historians and social commentators and to describe what he himself went through as accurately as possible.⁵⁹

Hrant Sarian and Yervand Kyureghyan demonstrate the category of memoir in which people and places are described and events meticulously recorded without any attempt to interpret or analyze.

Other memoirists, such as Bertha Nakshian, while describing their ordeal, also seek an answer to the question of "why," a question to which all of the survivors evidently keep returning all of their lives. Bertha settles for this answer: "Perhaps we were overly peace-loving and trusting."⁶⁰ She even brings in examples of German conspiracy to facilitate the annihilation of the Armenians and of economic motives for their action.⁶¹

Abraham Hart'unian's incentive for writing his life story is epitomized in the title he chose: *Neither To Laugh*

⁵⁹ Bedoukian, Foreword, *Some of Us Survived* (1979), n.p.

⁶⁰ Ketchian, *In the Shadow of the Fortress* (1988), p. 15.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

Nor To Weep, quoting Spinoza's famous remark, "I have determined neither to laugh nor to weep over the actions of men, but merely to understand them." By writing his memoir, Hartunian was hoping to understand the minds of the perpetrators of the Crime, how they were able to commit the Crime, and what was in their minds when they did. His Protestant Christian outlook governs the narrative throughout. Significant is the Author's Note in which he expresses his desire for people to know that "in [his] heart there is neither hate nor revenge," and he especially has "no wish to poison minds against the Turks." He suggests no action because he believes that, "finally, in this world, God's power will prevail, and justice will conquer might."⁶² Nevertheless, his son Vartan Hartunian, himself a survivor of the Genocide, attests that Abraham believed that the story of his life might help and encourage people in an unjust world. He strove to reach beyond the limited pool of Armenian readers and tell the world about an exemplary experience that could teach lessons. That is why he asked his son to translate his story into English and make it available to a wider readership.

John Minassian, having been a young man of nineteen when his narrative begins, and having contemplated the turmoil over a longer period of time, expresses his own

⁶² Abraham H. Hartunian, *An Odyssey of Faith: Neither To Laugh Nor To Weep; A Memoir of the Armenian Genocide*, trans. Vartan Hartunian (3rd ed., Belmont, Massachusetts: Armenian Heritage Press, 1999), p. v. The book was first published in 1968, thirty years after the author's death.

observations and reasoning throughout the work. In one instance, thinking of his "Tashnag"⁶³ friend, he reasons,

Many thought that the revolutionaries had caused the deportation. They did not know that the revolutionary parties were only being used as an alibi. The fact is that the Turks had sold us to the German government and they decided our destiny. Young Turks were desperate for power. They jumped in to join the Central Powers, and, before they knew it, they were involved in World War I. The Germans, sure of their success, wanted weak allies for their expansion, and they wanted the country without the Armenians.⁶⁴

But why? He has no answer: "Only politicians and the generals could give the answer."⁶⁵ Then again, in his disappointment by the indifference of the Great Powers toward the Armenian cause after the Armistice, he argues,

In order for our small nation to be heard by the great powers, we had to be unified, to put the nation's interests above all else. But selfish politicians seeking power caused disunity and disharmony. All of our wonderful plans perished in the internal struggles for power.⁶⁶

⁶³ A member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF, or Dashnaktsutun).

⁶⁴ Minassian, *Many Hills Yet To Climb* (1986), p. 142.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 197.

Vahram Papazian, too, ventures to interpret international events before and during the War. In order to prove that, contrary to Turkish belief, Ottoman Armenians did not play a role in instigating the atrocities against themselves,⁶⁷ he makes a long digression in which he describes the treatment of the Armenian issue by the Allied Powers and the internal policies of the Young Turks, all of which culminated in the extermination of the entire population of innocent men, women, and children. He also discusses the German conspiracy and mentions some film footage, approximately 6,000 feet altogether, shot by German soldiers. Armenian leaders in postwar Constantinople somehow got hold of the footage and entrusted it to an American reporter who took it to London via Athens and handed it over to Lord James Bryce.⁶⁸ Papazian attests to having watched the film, and the scene that most struck him was the rape of a two-year-old Armenian girl by two Turkish soldiers in rags, with rifles on their backs. More than this outrageously inhuman "murder," Papazian was taken aback by the indifference of the German soldier who callously stood there and filmed the scene. And he wonders, instead of filming this despicable atrocity, shouldn't the German soldier have killed the Turks in the act? Papazian believes that the Germans received God's

⁶⁷ Papazian, *Ser, ser, ser* (1962), p. 84.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

punishment during World War II, when millions of Germans and Jews died.⁶⁹

Vivid descriptions of people and places that are no more

Most of these memoirists were young during the massacres: orphans on their own or in company with the surviving remnants of their families. They survived and somehow they reached freedom. Writing decades after the massacres, they still remember their birthplace clearly and in detail. They describe it vividly with fervor and a sense of longing for the happy, carefree childhood they had. Their descriptions approach an abstract portrayal of

⁶⁹ According to Papazian, the American reporter published articles about the footage in the American press, and Papazian translated the articles into Armenian and published them in *Chakatamart* in 1919–20 in Constantinople. He also attests that articles about the footage were published in the *Times* and especially in the *Daily Telegraph*; that these papers published letters to the editor protesting against the screening of the footage in British movie theaters without warning that it might be offensive to some audiences; and that the film was even shown in the British Parliament, in the House of Lords in particular. In 1927 or 1928—Papazian does not recall the exact date—the footage was shown in a hall right next to the Turkish pavilion at an international industrial exposition in Brussels. (According to Wikipedia, the Brussels International Exposition was held in 1935. The date given by Papazian is either a mistake or perhaps, though less likely, it was the date of a smaller-scale industrial fair held in Brussels in 1927 or 1928.) Papazian writes that the Turkish media responded harshly, claiming that the footage was a hoax staged and fabricated by Armenians to damage Turkey's reputation. See Papazian, *Ser, ser, ser* (1962), p. 103.

an imagined homeland. Their style tends toward an artistic expression inspired by a torrent of yearning for a childhood that was brutally murdered. The memoirist becomes an artist, and his/her recollections of the past, an artifact of a nostalgic kind.

Few survivor-memoirists were adults during the Genocide; their detailed accounts of places, with their peoples and institutions which they name and describe, come close to documentation. John Minassian was nineteen when the massacres began. His description of his birthplace, Sivas, is realistic, but he becomes emotionally possessive, yet still assertive, toward the end of the chapter describing the bathhouse, the market its myriad Armenian shops, merchants, and craftsmen, the oriental rugs made by young Armenian girls, the schools, the church, the several ancient Armenian villages surrounding the town, and even the girls' chorus. "Yes," he concludes, "Sivas has always been considered the center of culture for Armenians and commerce for all."⁷⁰

Minassian then dedicates a chapter to Gurun where his family later settled. Here again, he provides a realistic description of life in Gurun, the production of shawls famous throughout the country, the four churches (two of which were Protestant), the "four policemen, a mayor, and one empty jail" — this in a city with an Armenian population of 15,000, a majority compared to the Turks in Gurun. Contrasting the Apostolic and Protestant communities, he highlights the free and easy ways of the

⁷⁰ Minassian, *Many Hills Yet To Climb* (1986), p. 27.

former, gossiping and playing cards, and the puritanical ways of the latter. However, he adds that he owes his Armenian identity and his knowledge of the Armenian language and history to the Orthodox Armenian school he attended and to the profound impression made upon him by Bishop Khoren Timaksian (Dimaksian), a spiritual and national leader.⁷¹

Vahram Papazian's memoir makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the infrastructure of the Constantinople Armenian community before 1915 and in the immediate aftermath of the massacres. He provides information on schools, organizations, orphanages, political parties, and most importantly, the inception of the athletic journal *Marmnamarz*, the first of its kind in the Ottoman Empire, and the organization, despite the prejudice and censorship of the authorities, of athletic activities involving Armenian youth.⁷²

Yervand Kyureghyan does not venture to provide an answer to the "why" concerning Turkey's treatment of its

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 33–7.

⁷² Papazian, *Ser, ser, ser* (1962), devotes a chapter to the prehistory of *Homenet'men*, acronym of *Hay Marmnakrt'akan Ėndhanur Miut'iun* (Armenian General Athletic Union), from the launch of *Marmnamarz* by Shavarsh K'risian in 1911 to the efforts to unite the small athletic clubs in Constantinople, a goal that was materialized only after the war, in 1918, without the participation of Krisian who was a victim of the Genocide. Papazian explains that the goal of all Armenian athletic activities in Ottoman Turkey and of *Marmnamarz* and *Homenet'men* was the dissemination of Love among the youth without controlling their spirits (pp. 23 and 119). He believes Love to be the ultimate objective, hence the title of his memoir, *Love, Love, Love*.

Armenian population. His narration is straightforward and exceptionally important, not only on the massacres of 1895, when he was already seven years old, but also on the defense of Van in 1915 and, in general, the Armenian armed struggle against the Turkish atrocities. His memory of the smallest village he passed through or fought for, and the names of his comrades-in-arms, all recorded decades later at an age when others have succumbed and given up life, is simply unmatched. As if fearing the reader might not trust his memory, Yervand continually reiterates that he remembers it all as if it happened yesterday. "Now, what I relate, everything is in my mind; it is all before my eyes."⁷³ The editors of his memoir state with amazement that not only can the events he describes, with place names and dates, be verified through historical research, but they supplement information that might otherwise be unclear and give it added depth. They are also to be commended for the addition of biographical notes on each personage as well as the encyclopedic information they provide on most of the places Kyureghyan mentions. This is especially important for place names that have been changed over time, some more than once, such that the original names have become unrecognizable. For example, the village named Ch'anakhch'i became Sovetashen in 1948, and was then renamed Zangakatun in 1991, in memory of Paruyr Sevak. With these additions, Kyureghyan's memoir approaches the quality of a history written from

⁷³ Kyureghyan, *Im housheri chanaparhov* (2009), p. 46.

the vantage point of a peasant and soldier. Hrant Sarian's diary has a similar quality.

The key to survival

Indirectly revealed in each memoir is the key to survival, always equated to nothing less than a miracle. Kerop Bedoukian owes his survival to his mother's shrewd planning. She was an organizer, a hard worker, and a stubborn woman who kept fighting the odds, always busy thinking ahead, managing her family's situation and helping others get by.

Alice Muggerditchian Shipley attributes the survival of herself and her siblings to their mother's tremendous devotion to her Christian faith. She made her children memorize every Psalm relevant to their predicament and she often spoke of God's mercy toward the sufferers. Every time the family was on the verge of giving up in the face of an insurmountable danger, she made them kneel down and pray in order to lift their spirit of resistance. With unshakable faith she resorted to Jesus Christ even in the most stressful situations, such as when she learned of her son's arrest. This occurred on the day after the funeral of Dr. Atkinson, who ran the American Medical Mission hospital in Mezireh where she and her children had earlier taken refuge. Dr. Atkinson contracted typhus from his patients and died on December 24, 1915 (which happened to be Alice's eleventh birthday). Enver attended the funeral, but again, his real motive was to spot young Armenian men still in hiding. The pallbearers—all young Armenian men—

were arrested, and Alice's brother was among them. "[W]e knelt down together to give thanks for past and present experiences and testings." This time Psalm 91 was the source of consolation.⁷⁴

Some months earlier, when four members of the Muggerditchian family had been jailed, including Mother, she had held her Bible tightly and prayed, even when their pastor from Kharbert, the Reverend Vartan Amirkhanian, who happened to be in jail too, "told her to 'put that book away' because God had forgotten our nation and those words were directed to the Jews."⁷⁵

Mother's Christian faith was more sincere than that of the Reverend Bedros Garabedian, pastor of the Protestant church in Mezireh. During their escape together through Kurdistan in August 1916, he showed himself to be false and selfish when he cheated the Muggerditchians and left them half-way along the secret route, moving ahead with his family and two Kurdish guides.⁷⁶ Further along the way, when they were traveling with other Kurdish guides who they feared were leading them astray, Mother told them to mentally recite Psalm 91:11-12. "Never a day passed during which Mother did not find something for which to thank." Once they reached the Russian side of the border and tensions eased, Mother thought things were getting too easy. "The Lord is giving

⁷⁴ Shipley, *We Walked, Then Ran* (1983), pp. 106-7.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 102.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 115-27.

us another test to strengthen us to face more difficulties awaiting," she said. "So we'd better thank Him again."⁷⁷

In her eighth decade, looking back, Alice explains this fervor: "Even though all the Old Testament verses were directed to the Jews, yet in our simplicity we claimed every word for our own and used them as our invisible shield against all conspiracies."⁷⁸ Her interpretation suggests a certain skepticism about her mother's extreme devotion to the Bible, but does not reject that devotion as the key to her family's survival.

John Minassian's memoir reveals a similar attitude toward the Protestant approach to the Bible. His father had joined the Protestant congregation in his mature years and was devoted to the faith. Hovhannes (John), although raised in an atmosphere of Christian piety, became rather critical as he walked along the formidable road of deportation. Kurdish villagers had raided the caravan, plundered the deportees and killed many of them, and left their corpses strewn on the mountain pass. A small Bible lay on the ground, its pages fluttering in the breeze but remaining open to the same spot. With a sense of bitter irony, he read, "Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow and Death... I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me."⁷⁹ The verse was an ironic contradiction to the reality at hand. And again, on the first Sunday after the deportees had left their homes in Gurun, the wretched remnants knelt down to pray and

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 132-6.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 69.

⁷⁹ Minassian, *Many Hills Yet To Climb* (1986), p. 65.

ask forgiveness. "But the Jehovah of Israel was angry! Or was there a God after all?" Minassian wonders if it was all in vain.⁸⁰

Religious fervor, and the resort to God's mercy in extreme situations, is more frequent in memoirists with a Protestant upbringing. Abraham Hartunian's memoir, *Neither To Laugh Nor To Weep*, is a case in point. As a devoted Protestant and a pastor for most of his adult life, he describes his own disposition on November 2, 1895, as a massacre was underway in his hometown of Severek:

[I] presented myself to my Heavenly Father. I poured out my condition to him, besought his help, assured him that I wanted his will to be done, and pleaded that, if it were possible, he save me, but if not, he prepare me for martyrdom. And my Father heard. He sent down his angel from above—that same angel who brought strength to One about to die in Gethsemane—and strengthened me. I had new peace, a new calm. I saw God the Father and his only Son, Jesus, standing at his right hand.⁸¹

During the turbulent years of World War I, Hartunian was in Marash in charge of his Protestant flock, and going through tremendous difficulties to save as many of them as possible, with the help of uncanny interventions by Ismayale Kemal Pasha, the governor of Marash. He felt lucky and privileged to enjoy the governor's special protection, and prayed to God, asking, "Why, at the risk

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 71.

⁸¹ Hartunian, *Neither To Laugh Nor To Weep* (1999), pp. 12–13.

of his own life, does he protect and preserve me?" This was the answer he received:

I have commanded him to do thus, and he is constrained. I shall protect you in all ways. I shall protect, but not deliver you from temptations, but lead you through terrible trials, that you may understand me well and become a living witness of my Power and Salvation.⁸²

Alice Muggerditchian's family had another resource to facilitate their survival, perhaps more effective than the Bible, and that was the money their father regularly sent from Egypt. Mr. Davis of the American consulate in Mezireh kept their money in his safe and "trickled out very little of it to [them] for fear the Turks would confiscate it."⁸³ This was a family that, despite all the hardships, never suffered a shortage of funds. In fact, money opened doors and bought them their survival on many occasions when they faced the danger of imminent death, whether at the hands of the gendarmes or the frenzied mob.

To a lesser extent, the same resource worked for John Minassian's family. When they reached Aintab in July 1915, they were in the most deplorable situation, hungry, dirty, and in rags, and the coins John's mother had sewn into a belt that his little sister Anoush wore bought them

⁸² Ibid., p. 72.

⁸³ Shipley, *We Walked, Then Ran* (1983), pp. 106.

their way from Aintab to Killis (Kilis), Gatma (el-Qatma), and finally Aleppo.⁸⁴

Notwithstanding the strong Protestant faith that sustained him throughout his struggle to survive the disastrous times, he feels that he owes his survival to his mother's resolve not to let him join her when they separated in Aleppo, and he took Anoush and Vahan and she kept the two little twins. Some months later he received a postcard from her, apparently in Hama, but that was the last he heard from her and he never saw her or the twins again.⁸⁵

It is amazing how Hovhannes Mughditchian managed to stay alive, never losing hope, always devising a means of escape, getting caught, tortured, and escaping again, time and again. It is amazing, too, how he conceived an otherworldly understanding of his losses. Of the night when his little daughter died of starvation, he writes that "a supernatural phenomenon" occurred:

At exactly midnight, an arc-shaped light appeared suddenly. Like a rainbow, it reached down to her. Bewildered, I began to pray. In a short time, the light disappeared. And at that moment, our little one stopped breathing. Her sinless soul surely had soared with the light of that rainbow.⁸⁶

He believed that in those moments when he thought everything was finished, that this was truly the end, God

⁸⁴ Minassian, *Many Hills Yet To Climb* (1986), pp. 63, 80-2.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 90-1, 96-7.

⁸⁶ Mughditchian, *To Armenians with Love* (1996), p. 66.

sent him a sign, and a miracle was performed. In one of such instance, he lifted his eyes toward heaven and prayed for help from God.

Suddenly I saw a shooting star, wonderfully bright and moving swiftly. It took on the shape of a letter as it sped across the sky—the letter h. I called out to my companions, "Look, boys! In the sky! There is the letter h. That stands for *hye* (Armenian). It is a symbol that Armenians will live and be free. Believe it. Have faith, never give up hope."⁸⁷

His optimism and his faith in God's mercy never diminished. "We had to believe in miracles, and the vision of the shooting star was indeed a miracle."⁸⁸ It gave him the necessary will and stamina to endure and survive.

Dirouhi Kouymjian Highgas deliberates on the reasons why most of her family stayed alive. "I really don't know what guardian angel God had sent to us...." There was an element of art involved, such as her grandfather could deploy: "He had a way of 'getting around' the gendarmes; he knew how to talk to them in just the right, friendly, persuasive manner."⁸⁹ At bottom, however, she says they owe their survival to divine intervention: "It is only by a miracle of God that I and

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 72.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Highgas, *Refugee Girl* (1985), pp. 53-4.

some members of my family survived the nightmare of the Armenian Genocide."⁹⁰

Trust in God was the only support and encouragement that kept Arshaluys Mardiganian going. Caught in the most dreadful situations, where her life depended upon her uttering one single word, "Allah," to show her readiness to convert, she surrendered herself to the will of God and her strong Christian faith whence she found the courage to say no and still survive. During such fateful moments she did not think of staying alive in order to tell the world her story and the story of Armenian suffering. It was only at the end of her road, when she had reached freedom in Erzerum, that General Andranik entrusted her with a mission. This Armenian Joan of Arc, as she was called in America, survived the Turkish atrocities, reached America, and fulfilled that mission. In a note placed at the beginning of her memoir under the title, "My Dedication," she wrote,

To each mother and father, in this beautiful land of United States, who has taught a daughter to believe in God, I dedicate my book. I saw my own mother's body, its life ebbed out, flung onto the desert because she had taught me that Jesus Christ was my Saviour. I saw my father die in pain because he said to me, his little girl, "Trust in the Lord. His will be done." I saw thousands upon thousands of beloved daughters of gentle mothers die under the whip, or the knife, or from the torture of hunger and thirst, or carried away into slavery because they would not renounce their

⁹⁰ Ibid., Prologue, n.p.

glorious crown of Christianity. God saved me that I might bring to America a message from those of my people who are left, and every father and mother would understand that what I tell in these pages [is] told with love and thankfulness to Him for my escape.⁹¹

She signed the dedication in Armenian (Arshaluys Martikanian) and dated it December 1918.

Nargiz Zhamkochian survived the Genocide, but personal survival did not satisfy her. In Vitali Ianko she found a receptive ear and a potential channel to ultimate survival. In the seaside town of Sukhumi where she had spent all of her adult life, Ianko made a promise to her, "the promise at the sea," that he would write a book about her family ordeal.⁹² She saw the book as the externalization in literature of the ordeal of a murdered nation. This was her understanding of the concept of survival as an Armenian despite the genocidal aims of the enemy. Nargiz did not live long enough to see the book published, but her wish came true. In an important sense, she survives.

Vahram Papazian evaded arrest and exile many times during the war. Indeed, his expertise in telephone technology spared him from being drafted into the army or arrested and deported, and thereby saved his life. However, it was not just his profession but how he utilized it to outwit the authorities, for instance, by

⁹¹ As quoted in Slide, *Ravished Armenia* (1997), p. 21.

⁹² Ianko, *The Promise at the Sea* (2004), p. xi.

holding up an urgently needed repair until he could gain a favor in return, or by sabotaging the work of Hungarian technicians brought in to replace the Armenian staff, until they were driven out and the Armenians stayed put.

In yet another instance, and one with a comical turn, a Turkish commander's telephone was not working and he threatened to incarcerate Papazian and his two Armenian assistants if they failed to fix it. Papazian figured out that the batteries had gone dry, and since the necessary solution to revive them was not available, he ordered his assistants to urinate on the capacitor, and it worked. "*Vallahi!*" (My God!), the commander exclaimed. "We Turks still need the Armenians, even their urine."⁹³

Another incident had a tragic outcome. Papazian describes the maneuver he used to restore function to the telephone of Bedri Bey, the chief of police in Constantinople: he switched chief's damaged line with the working line to the mansion of one of the Sultan's wives. Later on, as Papazian learned, it was via this line that the chief ordered the arrest and exile of Armenian intellectuals on April 24, 1915. "It was with the same hand holding this pen today that I repaired the line cursed by Providence, the line through which, in only a few days, the order would be sent to arrest the best intellectuals of my race." He then relates what happened at his operational center on the evening of April 23. The police chief of Galatasaray and his squad raided the

⁹³ Papazian, *Ser, ser, ser* (1962), p. 72.

center and ordered him to dismiss the operators. Under the impression this was an urgent internal matter, he obeyed, and he even distracted the operators in order to give the police a free hand, not realizing that they were relaying orders to arrest Armenian leaders. "My sons have forgiven my unwittingly committed guilty act, but I do not know if my revered nation would do the same."⁹⁴ His compunction tortured him all his life.

Papazian lived in deplorable conditions and under constant threat of arrest or execution, but he overcame these difficulties with his determination to survive. In an expression epitomizing the genius of his race, he writes, "We, the survivors, owe our existence not to the mercy of the enemy, but solely to the sharp and creative Armenian mind which can squeeze water out of a rock." Determination and shrewdness are part of the key to survival, but Papazian repeatedly credits Providence for his escape from certain arrest. "I believe in Providence which is not fate but God's protection, the reward of a chosen one."⁹⁵ Time and again it is Providence that lights up his mind and enables him to find a way out of an impossible situation. At one point, he was facing indictment on the basis of a serious accusation laid against him by an Armenian informer. Providentially, he happened to be present when the Sultan's son-in-law tripped and fell overboard during a boat ride. He dived into the sea and rescued him. The accusation against him

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 73-5.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 66-7.

was withdrawn. He even received a medal of honor by the hand of Talaat himself.

It was Providence that guaranteed his survival. Indeed, Papazian keeps asking himself how he always managed to stay alive when millions of innocent Armenians were dying in the desert. And the answer is always Providence. In fact, he thinks it was due to a providential premonition that he remained with his family and among his people during the war years, against his wish to go to the United States where he planned to continue his education in electrical engineering at Michigan University, a wish that was never fulfilled.⁹⁶

Hampartzoum Chitjian learned to absorb his encounters with danger and death "one day at a time, instinctively." Survival was his only priority. "I must have learned to store each terrifying incident as far back in my mind as possible and prepared myself for the next moment." It was only after he had reached safety that the horrifying images began to emerge in his nightmares and on the margins of his daytime thoughts to haunt him for the rest of his life. He lived for two and a half years "like a hunted dog," like all Armenians throughout Turkey "whose main goal was just to survive."⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 15.

⁹⁷ Chitjian, *A Hair's Breadth* (2003), pp. 115, 143.

Coming to America: A dream come true

Most of the memoirs written in the United States, and especially those by Protestant Armenians with close ties to American missionaries, are testimonies to a dream come true. Coming to America, the thriving land of freedom, was the ultimate goal of these survivors and of their family, if they still had any. John Minassian expresses this aspiration straightforwardly:

When I took the boat for the New World, I realized a dream of my childhood. I had had a close association with Americans through my school and church, and I admired their ideals, their humanitarian efforts to serve, to help and to uplift.... Nothing could stop me from coming to see and live among these people.⁹⁸

Hovhannes Mugrditchian, a teacher, intellectual, and leader in his own right, was ready to sacrifice anything to end seven years of torture and suffering and reach safety in America. "I shall break this staff of mine and leave it here.... In America, I shall be ready and pleased to do the most menial tasks to provide for my wife and child." And in fact, his first job in America was peeling potatoes and washing dishes in a restaurant, and it was a struggle. "In those circumstances, I regretted having come to America."⁹⁹

Coming to America was an attractive proposition for Dirouhi Kouymjian. In fact, her marriage in Aleppo to a

⁹⁸ Minassian, *Many Hills Yet To Climb* (1986), p. 251.

⁹⁹ Mugrditchian, *To Armenians with Love* (1996), pp. 97, 107.

well-to-do Armenian American businessman opened up a new era in her life. But she confesses, "the black shadow" of her childhood suffering followed her everywhere. "Even today, I feel guilty at having even a little luxury. How can I, even today, eat cake when my people were denied even a crust of bread?"¹⁰⁰ She came to America carrying a burden of memories that traumatized her for the rest of her life. But at least she felt at home. When she first arrived in New York in 1929, she was overwhelmed by the scene at Grand Central Station where thousands of people were hurrying to their own destinations. "I looked at them, and realized that all of these people, or their forebears, had come here like me.... I no longer felt like a refugee girl. I had the strangest feeling—as if I had been away for a long, long time, and had just arrived... home."¹⁰¹

America offered these immigrants not only the safe haven they longed for, but also the promise of a new beginning, the chance to build a new life. Despite this, the story they told did not attract much attention and remained an Armenian story with a limited readership because, as Lawrence Wilson writes, "the Armenian story was not in fashion any more than a hymn of patriotism" which the American public had learned to ridicule as pretentious and unsophisticated.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Highgas, *Refugee Girl* (1985), Prologue, n.p.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 177–8.

¹⁰² Lawrence Wilson, Preface, in Minassian, *Many Hills Yet To Climb* (1986), pp. ix–x.

Arshaluys Mardiganian never dreamed of coming to America. She was rescued and brought to what she called "this beautiful land of the United States." But she acknowledged the fact that here she was able to accomplish something beyond her own imagination. She became the messenger of Armenian suffering, and the silent film that was based on her own story became the most efficient tool for relief organizations raising funds to help save the survivors of the Armenian Genocide. Contrary to the stories of other Armenians published somewhat later, hers was widely read at the time of its publication. It was wartime and the turmoil in the Middle East and the atrocities being committed against the Christian minorities there were at the center of attention. The Armenian story was actually "in fashion." As for the film, it greatly benefited the cause as well as the filmmakers, but Arshaluys's total immersion in the process of making the film traumatized her and left her with incurable psychic wounds.

She did have an urge to tell her story, yet she did not think anyone would believe her because she knew that what she had gone through was beyond human imagination.

I have often wondered since I came to America, where life is so different from that of my country, if any of the good people whom I meet could imagine the sufferings

of that night while I lay in the moonlight, my hands fastened and my feet haltered to the restless animal.¹⁰³

These were her thoughts the night she and a group of young girls were kidnapped by Kurdish horsemen, stripped naked and violated several times, and then tied to the horses so that they could not escape.

The good Turk

It is common to find accounts in these memoirs of the intervention of good Turks or Kurds and their attempts to save the victims or at least to sympathize with them. The memoirists have not forgotten these individuals and they express their gratitude toward them. We have encountered such persons in the autobiographies discussed in chapter 2 of this book as well. However, to a reader of these memoirs, overwhelmed and flabbergasted by the unspeakable brutalities committed by the executioners and the participating mobs, these testimonies concerning the righteous ones weigh very little and may even go unnoticed. Perhaps it would have been more appropriate here to emphasize the commonly noted participation of ordinary Turks and Kurds, men, women, and boys—not to speak of the Cherkess, the *chetes*, the Laz, and the gangs of the Special Organization—which made the execution of the government's plans of annihilation so thorough.

For example, Arshaluys Mardiganian recalled an unnamed Turkish woman who took her in, gave her food

¹⁰³ As quoted in Slide, *Ravished Armenia* (1997), p. 103.

and guided her exit from Diyarbekir, telling her to go alone, hide among the rocks, and not go near the Armenian refugee camps outside the city because the people in them were to be killed sooner or later. The woman even gave Arshaluys some money which she used to bribe the gendarmes to let her pass.¹⁰⁴ How to compare this Turkish woman with the wealthy Turkish lady whom Arshaluys described in her memoir, collecting little Armenian girls to put them up for sale? This woman had spotted a girl who seemed to be pretty and was forcing the girl's mother to surrender her, and when the mother resisted, the woman took a *zaptieh's* pistol and shot her dead; then she dragged the girl away, ignoring her plea to be allowed to kiss her mother good-bye.¹⁰⁵ Incidentally, this was a dreadful instance of separation that could certainly have caused a profound and life-long anxiety disorder for the girl who was "rescued" from certain death to live as a Muslim.¹⁰⁶

The fact is that this behavior did not end with the demise of the Ottoman Empire but continued into the Kemalist era. These memoirists are witnesses to the participation of the populace in renewed massacres by the Kemalist army aided by civilians, in the celebrations that greeted Kemal and his army, in the sudden change

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 154–5.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 162–3.

¹⁰⁶ I discussed this psychological condition in chapter 2 with regard to Surmelian and other members of the orphan generation; see p. 132 n. 53 *supra*.

of attitude from that of a vanquished people to that of bigots threatening to kill the Armenian remnants.

However, for the sake of presenting as thorough an analysis as possible of the genre of Armenian Genocide memoirs, I dwell briefly here on the subject of intervention motivated by the will to save the victim.

In an emotionally laden chapter, Vahram Papazian refers to Turkish individuals in Constantinople who disapproved of the government's actions against Armenians as "the best and the wiser Turks who mourn the loss of Armenians, and there are those among them who curse the perpetrators of the Great Catastrophe."¹⁰⁷

Nargiz Zhamkochian recalled how she was rescued by a mullah who knew her grandfather well. She also remembered the Turkish women who wailed and cursed the gendarmes who prevented them from giving succor to the little Armenian children heaped in a pile on the shore preparatory to being thrown into the sea.

Vahaj Efendi, the Turkish Mason who was a member of the same Blue Lodge as Alice Muggerditchian's father, twice helped the family escape when local authorities were hot on their heels and arrest and exile were imminent.

Yervand Kyureghyan vividly remembers when Khurshud Agha of Vostan and Husein Agha of Mulk, with their *ashirets*, attacked the village of Kerts. It was "the first Sunday in June of 1895, and our village was in

¹⁰⁷ Papazian, *Ser, ser, ser* (1962), p. 92.

turmoil."¹⁰⁸ He reports that two friendly Kurdish brothers living in the village, Jibo and Ahmed, gathered all the Armenians into their barns to protect them from assault while the village was being plundered. Yervand speaks so tenderly of his father's friend Mullah Tahir, the mullah's wife Aisheh, and their two sons. The mullah came down to Kerts and took Yervand and his mother back to Abzeini to live with his own family until things quieted down. This was the same Kurdish mullah who, as the honored guest at Yervand's wedding in 1908, summoned Jibo before he returned to Abzeini and told him,

There are ten Kurdish households in Kerts. Keep them under your control. You should all live like brothers with the Armenians, as your fathers did. You should understand that this land belonged to us and the Turks divided us to take over our land. I would not want to hear of any differentiation or discrimination between you.¹⁰⁹

Then there was Kaleh, a young Kurdish man drafted into the Turkish army like Yervand. The two of them swore to be brothers for life. Together they escaped from the army and together they stayed, even fighting as *fedayees*.

Reverend Abraham Hartunian fondly remembered Ismayale Kemal Pasha, the governor of Marash and a personal friend: "Conscientious, kind, and justice-loving, this man was never in sympathy with the perpetrators of

¹⁰⁸ Kyureghyan, *Im housheri chanaparhov* (2009), p. 49.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

the crimes against my people. He tried by every possible means to save us and always was friendly toward us." Hartunian explains that if Ismayale went along with the orders of massacre and deportation, it was only because of extreme pressure from Constantinople.¹¹⁰

In Bertha Nakshian Ketchian's narrative there was an old Turkish man (or Ottoman Arab) who had lived among Armenians all his life. He had seen them go and had watched their houses being torn down, and he kept repeating, "*Duniah, duniah, bu na zulum duniah*" (Oh world, oh world, what a cruel world). "His words remain fixed in my memory to the present day," she writes. Then there was Bayaz Khanum, a woman who had moved into their neighborhood in Husenig and lived alone. "This kind woman always sensed when we had not had anything to eat for a long time and did not wait to be asked."¹¹¹

Virginie-Jija Mesropian, who was six years old in 1915, started walking the deportation route with her mother and baby brother, from Erzerum to Kharbert. Her father and older brothers were murdered. At one point she found herself all alone, then she was reunited for a short time with her mother who, in a desperate moment, agreed to give her up to a Turkish officer, Colonel Tahsin Bey. She remembers how she cried in that Turkish house, but the colonel's wife was patient and generous. The lady put up with all the tantrums and screaming spells the

¹¹⁰ Hartunian, *Neither To Laugh Nor To Weep* (1999), p. 62.

¹¹¹ Ketchian, *In the Shadow of the Fortress* (1988), pp. 55–6.

child experienced. Virginie lived with this family for more than a year. She traveled with them to Lebanon and Palestine, always accompanied by a soldier serving as their bodyguard. She describes the family's magnificent houses and lavish lifestyle, and remarks how well-respected they were. But one day in Beirut she met an Armenian who convinced her to go with him. She was taken to an Armenian orphanage and she never saw the Turkish family again, but she remembers them with affection and gratitude.¹¹²

When Hampartzoum Chitjian first escaped from the Turkish *mekteb* where Armenian boys had been gathered to be Islamized or killed, it was Korr Mamoe (Blind Mamoe) who sheltered him. Korr Mamoe was not happy with the treatment of Armenians. "May those who were responsible for the plight of the Armenians be cursed and damned for ever," he kept repeating.¹¹³ Hampartzoum

¹¹² Virginie-Jija Mesropian, *J'avais six ans en Arménie... 1915* (I was six years old in Armenia), ed. Pierre Anhoury and Claire Mouradian (Paris: L'inventaire, 2007), npp. Virginie did not know her name or her patronym, but she knew that her father's name was Mesrop (in one of the orphanages where she spent most of her childhood, a patronym was devised from her father's name). She also knew that she was born in 1909 and that she had three brothers, but she did not know what happened to them. In her mid-twenties she began working as a nanny for the Anhoury family. She cared for three generations, practically becoming a member of the family. The book includes a transcription of the interview she gave to Pierre Anhoury six months before she died in 2003 (a DVD of the interview comes with the book). Claire Mouradian has added important historical information that corroborates the events Virginie describes.

¹¹³ Chitjian, *A Hair's Breadth* (2003), p. 107

stayed with Korr Mamoe for about a year. They would go searching the vacant Armenian houses for food and stuff. They always found something, even though the houses had already been swept clean by other Turks. Korr Mamoe was always good to Hampartzoum. He advised him never to steal, although that was what he had taught him to do. He needed the boy. It was a two-way agreement. Indeed, when the two were escaping the Kurds in the spring of 1916 and Hampartzoum seized the opportunity to hide and finally to escape from Korr Mamoe in order to join other Armenian survivors, the Turk threatened to find him "and cut [him] up into small pieces."¹¹⁴ Was it altruism or convenience that motivated Korr Mamoe to take Hampartzoum in without forcing him to convert to Islam?

Who were these men and women who found the courage to stand up against the government's orders of annihilation? Richard Hovannisian has sought to discover the motivation for such interventions and rightfully notes that, since the rescuers themselves are long gone, and since, in the prevailing atmosphere of denial and antagonism in Turkey, it is not feasible to interview their descendants—which might have brought to light recollections or stories passed down to them—the main source of information is the testimonies of Armenian survivors.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 124.

¹¹⁵ Richard G. Hovannisian, "Intervention and Shades of Altruism during the Armenian Genocide," in *The Armenian Genocide*:

Hovannisian proceeds to investigate the motivations of rescuers based on data from 527 oral history interviews of Armenian survivors, among whom 183 mentioned an intervention. The most challenging aspect, he finds, is the qualification and quantification of these motivations. Aside from "a few clearcut cases of sexual exploitation, bribery, forced labor, piety or moral sentiment, and adoption by childless couples,"¹¹⁶ he categorizes the rescuers' motivations as economic, religious, and humanitarian. He admits that these categories do not do justice to the complexity of the material, and that many factors should be considered, such as the risk, cost, and burden of harboring Armenians, or serious moral issues as in the case of childless Turks wholeheartedly adopting an Armenian child.

Hovannisian lists the humanitarian factor as the primary motivation in over half (51.5 percent) of the interventions reported. However, if we are looking for pure altruism, that is, humanitarian intervention without profit, we must discard all interventions in which the "rescuer" was seeking a wife or a child, a concubine or a sex slave, or additional labor at home or in the field, in which cases conversion to Islam was always a precondition, even in the case of earnest adoption. Add to that the government's initiative to collect Armenian orphans in special orphanages and raise them as Muslims, as well as

History, Politics, Ethics, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), pp. 173–207.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 179.

offering the option of Islamization in lieu of deportation to entire families or their remaining women and children. With these considerations, perhaps the application of the term "good Turks," or findings of genuine altruism as the motivation for their interventions, would be limited to a very small number of cases.¹¹⁷

Orphans: The leftovers from the carnage

Many of the survivor-memoirists speak of their own ordeal as orphans left to their fate, or the orphans wandering in the desert, or those sheltered in Turkish or Kurdish households, working as shepherds or slave-laborers. Kerop Bedoukian remembers how the Armenian volunteer groups collected orphans in Aleppo. Some of the children had grown used to their adoptive "parents" and did not want to leave. They were not forced.¹¹⁸

Who can tell how many of them stayed in Turkish or Kurdish households? They were converted to Islam and given a Turkish name. They grew up either knowing about their origin or completely unaware of it. In any case, they were lost to the Armenian nation. But for those who were aware of their origin, psychological trauma must have accompanied them all of their lives. There

¹¹⁷ Examples of intervention and discussion of the motives involved are also discussed in 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).

¹¹⁸ Bedoukian, *Some of Us Survived* (1979), pp. 153–6.

were young women who were undecided, like Loosentag whose story Kerop recounts. She cried and cried because she did not know what to do: leave her Turkish "husband" who had been good to her, or return to her roots, her nation. Loosentag ultimately decided to stay.¹¹⁹ How many of these women chose to stay? How many were never even discovered?

Some of these orphans were sent to the refugee receiving center in Aleppo called the *keshla* (barracks), where about a thousand women and children were housed when Kerop, his mother, two older sisters, and younger brother were there (only nine of the sixty members of his extended family had survived). Orphans were brought in every day, registered, and sent on to the orphanages.

Some children knew their names; a few gave their Turkish names. Half knew where they had been born, but none knew the date.... If they did not know their name, one was given them. If they did not know where they had been born, the nearest city to where they had been picked up became their place of birth. As for the date, the year was guessed at by their size, but the day and the month given were the date of their arrival in the *keshla*....¹²⁰

Kerop describes the orphanages in Aleppo, in two of which he himself lived for some time. He remembers the dire conditions in the first one. It was an eight-room

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 136.

¹²⁰ Ibid., pp. 155–6.

house sheltering about eighty boys, "lavatory clogged, no running water, no soap, no towel, no change of clothes," and outside, "the Turks and the Arabs lurking, ready to pounce."¹²¹ The boys slept two to a mattress that was never changed, even when one of them wet the bed. There was never enough food and they were always hungry. The situation was a little better in Saboon Khan, which he believed to be the best orphanage in Aleppo. It housed some 2,000 boys, but no physician ever visited, even though many were infected with trachoma or suffering from scabies. They were terrified by the itchy blistering rash spreading all over their body which they thought was leprosy.¹²²

Kerop remembers the day Saboon Khan was attacked: the outside threat constantly hanging over the children came true.¹²³ They were instructed to barricade themselves in their rooms; Garabed Efendi, director of the school, and one of the *myrigs* (mothers, i.e. house-mothers) were killed defending their charges. Later one of the boys marked the date as September 19, 1919. Hrant Sarian, a day-student at Saboon Khan, apparently witnessed an earlier attack on the same establishment in February 1919.

John Minassian was deeply involved in the orphanage set up in a rented house in Aleppo by Reverend Eskijian and supported by funds from the

¹²¹ Ibid., pp. 157-160.

¹²² Ibid., pp. 164, 176-7.

¹²³ Ibid., pp. 177-84.

American consul.¹²⁴ The administrator was Hovhaness Juskalian, "an amazing man" who recruited orphans and provided food, interfacing with outsiders of all ranks and ethnicities. Although the orphanage was supposed to be for Protestant children only, Hovhaness Efendi welcomed all Armenian orphans regardless of denomination. Very soon it reached the permitted capacity of eighty. The authorities watched closely to ensure that this limit was not exceeded and that the permitted age group was respected. "They were especially interested in how many young girls were there above sixteen years of age," says Minassian.¹²⁵ Police investigators would visit the orphanage and take these older girls for their superiors or "pick one for themselves."¹²⁶ For this reason, he notes, Mrs. Eskijian kept many of these girls in her own home and tried to place others with Armenian families in the city.

These young women, orphans of the Genocide, were not safe anywhere:

[W]ar left no woman safe, nor unspoiled. All over the world, sisters and wives, or children, were robbed, killed, raped, because war made it "legal," and made the soldier's job more attractive. These are the beautiful flowers, yet we throw them into the gutter; perhaps, sometimes we save them to curse them and call them names without daring to look at ourselves in the

¹²⁴ Minassian, *Many Hills Yet To Climb* (1986), pp. 83-97.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 97.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 105.

mirror—just enjoying the fruits of war like pigs in our “civilization.”¹²⁷

These were Minassian’s somber reflections as he reminisced about Loosin (Lousine), a young teacher at the orphanage and his first youthful love. In order to protect her from being taken by the police, she was placed in an opulent home, but she did not feel safe there either and begged him to get her out.¹²⁸

According to Minassian, Reverend Eskijian enlisted a large number of volunteers to help with everyday chores in the orphanage, teaching, healing, clothing, washing, and even mothering children who kept crying for their mothers. Each day a few died and more orphans poured in. Minassian speaks of the pastor with admiration. He was a miracle worker for the survivors who numbered over 20,000 in Aleppo. “Reverend Eskijian gave new meaning to the Christian faith with his dedication, love, and service.” These were his thoughts on the passing of this irreplaceable man who died of typhus. He had contracted the disease by staying close to the stricken, praying for them, holding their hands in consolation. He died in the spring of 1916. He was only thirty-four years old.¹²⁹

Reverend Eskijian’s death affected the entire Armenian community in Aleppo, but the orphanage suffered the most. It lost the order and discipline he and

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 117.

¹²⁸ Ibid., pp. 111–18.

¹²⁹ Ibid., pp. 105–9.

Juskalian had established. At the behest of Mrs. Eskijian, Minassian took charge of administrating the orphanage and tried to bring it back to normal operation. But police raids became more frequent, and almost all of the older girls were taken away. It was impossible to continue. He decided to quit, giving as his reasons his inability to perform his job satisfactorily due to his youth and inexperience, and the danger of his being arrested during a police raid. He was offered a teaching position in the German orphanage run by Miss Rohner. Meanwhile, life was getting tougher. The food supply was shrinking in all the orphanages, and Minassian’s little brother Vahan died of starvation in the German orphanage.¹³⁰

John Minassian also describes an orphanage that was established and funded by the British after they occupied Aleppo in 1918, and run by Professor Daghljan, where he was employed as a teacher. There were orphans of all ages, “not seedlings, but plants transferred under unfavorable conditions to strange grounds,” he writes. “We had a call to teach them discipline before we could teach them to read.”¹³¹

Alice Muggerditchian and her family temporarily took refuge in the German orphanage in Kharbert, but she also describes the orphanage in Baku where her mother sent her and her sisters out of necessity, even though they were not orphans. They arrived on December 24, 1916, coinciding with Alice’s twelfth

¹³⁰ Ibid., pp. 110–22.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 187.

birthday. Her older sister was employed as a teacher there. She notes that the orphanage was financed by Armenian oil magnates, but things took a sharp turn for the worse when "the Bolsheviks burned the oil wells and murdered their owners."¹³²

The malevolent Ottoman policies toward the Armenian citizens of the empire had necessitated the establishment of orphanages long before 1915. Hovhannes Mugrditchian entered one such orphanage in the Monastery of Sis which was founded in 1898 to house the orphans left behind after the Hamidian massacres of 1894-96. He remembers with great affection Reverend Yeznig Der Sarkisian (Yeznik Ter Sarkissian) from Hajin, the superintendent at Sis, who treated the orphans like the true father they had lost.¹³³ Mugrditchian completed his primary education there and his secondary education at another Armenian orphanage in Aintab, the Nersissian National School.¹³⁴ After the Cilician massacres of 1909, more orphanages were opened in Sis (modern Kozan) and Adana. Mugrditchian, being locally educated, was a much sought-after teacher, organizer, and administrator.

He also speaks of the orphans in Aleppo after the 1915 deportations. Those who were not fortunate enough to be taken into an orphanage, and to have at least a half-full stomach, were left to wander about, begging for a crust of bread, and die of starvation in the street. He recalls that in the kitchen of the German military hospital

¹³² Shipley, *We Walked, Then Ran* (1983), pp. 160-1, 169.

¹³³ Mugrditchian, *To Armenians with Love* (1996), p. 10.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-22.

where he was working, leftover food was thrown out through an opening in the wall into a hole in the ground just outside. Being in charge of clean-up, he arranged for a group of orphans to pass by with their tins or pails every day and he would fill them, one by one, through the opening.¹³⁵

Hovhannes Mugrditchian was also involved in retrieving Armenian orphans from Turkish homes in Osmaniye where he and his wife Beatrice resettled after the war. This was in early 1919, when Cilicia was under French control. The commander, Colonel Bremond, issued a decree ordering the Turks to turn over all the Armenian women and children they had kidnapped. Mugrditchian remembers how some children cried and wanted to go back to their mothers, that is, their Turkish mothers. Others who were brought out tried to escape and return to their adoptive Turkish families. One fifteen-year-old girl was in the same predicament, wanting to return to the Turkish home where she felt safe and secure. Mugrditchian and his wife persuaded her to stay and married her off to an Armenian gendarme. Fortunately, the marriage turned out to be a happy one.¹³⁶

Vahram Papazian describes the orphanages in Constantinople, and how the newly founded Armenian General Athletic Union (*Homenet'men*) not only took it upon itself to provide food and clothing for the orphans,

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 92-3.

but its members played the role of big brothers. They consoled the children and calmed their fears of being found and taken back by their previous Muslim owners. The *Homenetmen* athletes tried to involve these poor little kids in various athletic activities in order to take their minds off the horrible memories that tormented them.¹³⁷

Papazian attests that in the summer of 1920, *Homenetmen* received a letter from Nikol Aghbalian, Minister of Education in the newly born Republic of Armenia, asking the organization to send athletes and scouts to train the children gathered in orphanages in Yerevan, Alexandropol (Giumri), and Kars. The country was suffering a shortage of food and all kinds of other deprivations, but the tens of thousands of orphans had to be trained and educated for the future of the country. Papazian remembers that 150 young Armenians volunteered, among them Vahan Ch'eraz, a co-founder of *Homenetmen* and founder of the athletic and scouting movement in Armenia. Onnik Yazmajian and the K'ajuni brothers were also among the volunteers dispatched to Armenia.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Papazian, *Ser, ser, ser* (1962), pp. 108-9.

¹³⁸ Ibid., pp. 110-11. After the Sovietization of the Republic of Armenia on December 2, 1920, *Homenetmen* was banned. Vahan Ch'eraz himself fell victim to Bolshevik terrors. With the change of regime in Turkey in 1922, the *Homenetmen* chapters in Constantinople were also forced to disband. *Homenetmen* is active today with a multitude of chapters throughout the Armenian Diaspora and has been re-established in the post-Soviet Republic of Armenia.

There are accounts of two orphanages established by American missionaries in Kharbert and Mezireh in Bertha Nakshian Ketchian's memoir.¹³⁹ Although she herself was not an orphan, having a mother beside her and a father in America, their circumstances forced her mother to put her in the orphanage at Kharbert run by the renowned American missionary, Mr. Riggs. The family had lost contact with Bertha's father after 1915 and was living in the most deplorable conditions, with her mother, weak and malnourished, going door to door seeking work in Turkish and Armenian houses. It took a while for Bertha to get used to being separated from her mother and sister and living in the orphanage. But then she was happy with the games they played and the songs they learned to sing there, that is, until an epidemic of dysentery swept through. Bertha was near death when her mother arrived and began treating her with a concoction of herbs, including sumac, until she recovered.

Bertha writes of another orphanage under American missionary administration at Mezireh, where outside children were allowed to attend the school that was set up for orphan boys. In the summer of 1922, she writes, the American missionaries left Turkey and took the orphans with them. She attests that they had to pay "five gold pieces per person to the Turkish government for permission to allow the Armenian orphans to be taken

¹³⁹ Ketchian, *In the Shadow of the Fortress* (1988), chapter 10, pp. 77-88, 101-2.

out of the country," and that "a similar ransom in gold was paid for each of us civilians by the missionaries and the Near East Society."¹⁴⁰

Bertha does not mention the German orphanage on the outskirts of Kharbert. That is described in Hampartzoum Chitjian's memoir. He locates it on "Pahpooryoly, the main road that went directly up to Upper Mezreh [Mezireh]." He remembers how he used to go into Dr. Hagopian's gardens opposite the orphanage and pick fruits and vegetables and throw them over the wall to the orphans who would stand there waiting for them. He would see the children when their caretaker took them out for a walk. "They were all cleanly dressed, but they were noticeably very thin and malnourished."¹⁴¹

Hampartzoum writes of another orphanage in Kharbert, the famous Yeprat (Euphrates) College which was turned into an orphanage after the Genocide. Dr. Hagopian took Hampartzoum's younger brother Kerop there after the neighbors informed the government that he was sheltering two Armenian boys, when he was only allowed to have one.¹⁴²

Hampartzoum dearly remembers Bishop Giut Mkhit'arian who came to Kharbert after the war and, with much sacrifice, established an orphanage for Loosavorchakan Armenian orphans. Hampartzoum and his friends moved there from the German orphanage

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 123.

¹⁴¹ Chitjian, *A Hair's Breadth* (2003), p. 150.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 157.

turned American, because it was for Protestants only and there was always the danger of being expelled from it.¹⁴³ But they found no peace there. Soon an epidemic of typhus knocked them down and they were transferred to the American hospital.

Harrowing memories never loosen their grip

Often a particular sound, a place, or a smell is enough to trigger the resurfacing of a memory, happy or sad, associated with a past experience. All of the survivors speak of such sensations linked to their harrowing ordeal during the Genocide. Earlier in this study, I discussed the mechanism of these triggering sensations as described by Marian MacCurdy, who writes that trauma creates an iconic image, "a mental picture that is stored deep within the brain in the limbic system and is not easily available to the cerebral cortex," but "pop[s] up sometimes unbidden when we smell, hear, see, or touch something that takes us back to the time the traumatic event occurred."¹⁴⁴

In 1915, Hampartzoum Chitjian was startled by the sight of the frozen corpse of an Armenian boy with whom he had worked in a Kurdish house. He and an Armenian woman were trying to give the boy a Christian burial, digging with their hands in the ice-covered earth. Sixty-five years later, on January 6, 1980, observing his wife handling a frozen chicken to prepare for dinner on

¹⁴³ Ibid., pp. 193-5.

¹⁴⁴ MacCurdy, "From Trauma to Writing" (2000), p. 162.

the Armenian Epiphany, Hampartzoum experienced the same feelings all over again; his suffering was renewed and he felt the same pain in his soul. "Akh, akh try to forget...."¹⁴⁵

Although Nargiz Zhamkochian spent all of her adult life in Sukhumi on the beautiful shore of the Black Sea, she was never able to reconcile herself to the sight of the sea. To her, its seemingly indifferent waters held

the bodies and souls of the perished Armenians, the drowned and unborn, their tears and cries felt through the salt and bitterness of the dark water and nightly laments of its waves, and their pains and fears which still drive me mad if I dare to come close to the sea after so many years!¹⁴⁶

Nargiz first experienced this violent alienation from the sea when she was nine years old, waiting on the beach near Kutora for the Laz smugglers who would take the remnants of her family across the sea to Batumi, in Russia. The sight of the sea made her uneasy, but when she took off her sandals and socks and felt the warm sand under her feet, she took off running, sobbing, screaming, hysterical:

The whole of my body was stricken.... I turned into that small Nargiz, a dirty, thirsty creature, crawling away in fear from the pile of naked Armenian children swarming on the hot sand.... I also felt the trembling of my little brother Hakop's hand on my shoulder. I tried

¹⁴⁵ Chitjian, *A Hair's Breadth* (2003), pp. 135–6.

¹⁴⁶ Ianko, *The Promise at the Sea* (2004), p. 221.

to throw it off and... then I ran somewhere, screaming.¹⁴⁷

With Hakop's name on her lips, she collapsed in the arms of her family. It was then that her mother and grandmother realized how deep in her psyche was the impact of that darkest memory of her past which had resurfaced in that moment and would torment her all her life. At the time, Nargiz herself experienced "a total failure of memory—oblivion." But in the following days, during their unplanned voyage to Constantinople after having been rescued from the sea, she began to understand

why there was so much fear in me, the fear of this otherwise beautiful greenish-blue surface, such deep repulsion for its salty smell and waves' gleaming. The thorny pieces of that hot day on the small dirty square near a mooring lane—the pile of naked children, the trembling of feeble Hakop, the *zaptieh* with his long, punishing stick—began to pop into my head.¹⁴⁸

For the first time she felt the guilt and shame of abandoning her brother, and that memory stayed with her. She knew that it would never die. It lives hidden in your soul, in your heart, in your skin, and in Nargiz's case, in the soles of her feet, that is, the association of the memory with the feeling of warm sand underfoot.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 152–3.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 172–3.

Decades later, when she is a grandmother living a comfortable life with her son and his family, the past continues to revisit her in her sleep and her waking hours. Her son is aware of her predicament, of how she tries to avoid those painful nightmares, like her mother and grandmother whom she never saw asleep. Once her mother blurted out a hint: "Why go to sleep when you know you will see again the same terrible scenes you have experienced in real life?"¹⁴⁹ Indeed, Nargiz confides,

[W]hen the fever drives me mad, it usually drives me back to exactly the same place, the small square near the port pier. Again I am pressing myself to the burning sand. [One] more time I am stubbornly crawling away from the [heap] of children burnt by the merciless sun.¹⁵⁰

She was there in that place, and there she returns when the subconscious begins to override the conscious.

But Nargiz can also imagine places she has never been. She can relive the ordeal her mother and grandmother experienced on the death march: "Today, I saw myself in that column of deported women and children. Really sick imagination!"¹⁵¹ Is it unnatural, as Nargiz thinks? I think not. Elie Wiesel confirms the authenticity of the feeling: "Yes, one can die in Auschwitz after Auschwitz."

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 86.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

It is quite clear from Ianko's textualization of Nargiz's multilayered, multifaceted story that no matter how things worked out for the remnants of her family, the past had already done its irreversible damage. One might feel that Ianko unnecessarily spins out the storyline with seemingly endless details. It may seem as though, after the climatic narrative—the testimony of pain, suffering, and the unbearable, unspeakable experience of the massacres and the death march—he leads the reader on through a lengthy anti-climax. Then one begins to realize that what Ianko has faithfully portrayed is the overlapping stories of the remnants, the continuing saga of their physical, moral, and psychological destruction as they drag out their lives to the end. And these endless stories, half-told and re-told, demonstrate the dislocation of the natural course of the family's life, the effects of their ordeal weighing so heavily on their emotions, their behavior, and their ability to deal with each other and with the outside world. Life can never return to its "normal order."

Nargiz's Uncle Simon, who survived the war and the massacres only by taking refuge in a Kurdish mountain village, is a typical example. Never a strong character to begin with, he soon loses the ability to live the life of an ordinary man. His outlook is odd. He is terrified of associating with women. Could it be that he was sexually violated, and that the lasting effects of his violation dictate his strange behavior? Toward the end of the tale we learn that Simon was circumcised as a precondition to his conversion to Islam, which at the time was the most

shameful act for a Christian Armenian. An intimate relationship with a woman would reveal this secret. Nargiz never spoke of Simon having been subjected to sexual violence, or she was not let into this secret of her uncle's life. But for both of her uncles, "the world had lost its order forever,"¹⁵² and the family never succeeded in marrying off either one of them. "[H]ow confused and irrational my family members were. How vulnerable they were! The recognition of this fact made me sad."¹⁵³ But isn't this typical of many families like the one Ianko describes? Nargiz concludes, "If a person survives through a terrible ordeal but then is unable to be happy, where is the sense in staying alive? Was anyone among us, survivors of our family, really happy? I doubt it."¹⁵⁴

It is impossible to forget. The survivors of the Armenian Genocide are tainted for good. Life is not for them to enjoy, even if the New World provides them with new opportunities and a comfortable family life.

Dirouhi Kouymjian Highgas is another example. She wishes she could erase the gruesome scenes that revisit her every so often.

My grandmother had told me time and again, back in Konya, that we must forget the past, that it would do no good to keep remembering all of the bad things. But how could I forget? I wished there was a magic potion

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 117.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 201.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 221.

I could drink that would erase the gruesome parts of my past from my mind.¹⁵⁵

She can still hear gunshots,

and the tortured screams and cries of my people. I can still hear, as if it were yesterday.... I would like to erase all of the horrors that I witnessed, all of the nightmares I endured as a child. I would like to forget all of the suffering that I saw. But the sights, the sounds, are ineradicably and forever etched into my mind, my heart, my soul, my very being.¹⁵⁶

For Armenian survivors, the traumatic past was like a filmstrip playing over and over, showing nightmarish dreams with the same horrible scenes, the same details. "I often see all this in my dream," Nargiz recalls, seventy years after she and her little brother Hakop were rounded up on the shore on a summer day in 1915.

*What kind of apparatus is inserted into my poor head? It works like a movie projector which I cannot control—to destroy or even just to stop it. Maybe I am being foolish, but there must be a reason why I have been watching this dream thousands of times during my last seventy years. Someone is in charge of this machine, and wants something from me. I am old, yet I must know.*¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Highgas, *Refugee Girl* (1985), p. 143.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., Prologue, n.p.

¹⁵⁷ Ianko, *The Promise at the Sea* (2004), p. 4.

Describing the scenes that have nestled in his memory for life and that startle him now and then, Hampartzoum Chitjian exclaims, "If you have not witnessed such atrocities, your mind could never perceive that such savagery could be committed by human beings!" He was traveling with his Turkish savior, Korr Mamoe, when on the outskirts of Perri he came face to face with the first evidence of the Turkish carnage, hundreds of slaughtered Armenians. "The ravine and both banks of Perri River were totally covered. The limbs of babies were sticking here and there. Gradually, I became aware of the putrid odor of the decaying bodies." The road took them to another scene of carnage as they approached the village of Khooshee. The bridge that led to the village was impassible, with bodies piled up on it, "some headless, some with their guts hanging out.... Just try to forget this image! Akh, akh...." And Korr Mamoe kept saying, "May God punish those who were responsible for that heinous act."¹⁵⁸

Virginie-Jija Mesropian depicts her horror when she found herself lying on a pile of corpses, his father and little brother among them. Her father was covered with blood. "Save yourself, brother," she heard him say. "You cannot help me." Left alone on the pile of cadavers, she couldn't stop crying. It was a scene she would never forget, and her father's last words would resound in her ears all her life. The next morning she saw a big fire and walked toward it. There she encountered another

horrible scene that was etched in her mind. Men were dragging the corpses and throwing them into the fire. She spotted her father and brother.

Virginie was lucky to be taken in by a generous Turk and she had a good life with his family. One day, in the neighborhood of their house, she saw her cousin Khazvart, the little girl she had always played with when she used to live in her family's opulent home in Erzerum. Khazvart stopped and spoke to her, but Virginie didn't even understand her. Then Khazvart went away and entered a Turkish house. Perhaps that was where she lived. Did she have a good life like Virginie? "*Jusqu'à ce jour, je regrette d'avoir laissé passer cette occasion.... C'est un souvenir très dur pour moi.*" (To this day I regret letting that chance go by.... It's a very difficult memory for me.) Virginie went through a lot in her childhood and youth, and her experience affected her so badly that she chose never to marry. "*Je voulais être seule, souffrir seule, sans craindre de laisser un enfant orphelin.*" (I wanted to be alone, to suffer alone, without fear of leaving an orphan child behind.)¹⁵⁹

Arshaluys Mardiganian did what no other memoirist had done with their harrowing experience of the Genocide. It began with writing her memoir as early as 1918, when no other survivor dared yet to confront their past. But that was not enough. She relived the entire traumatic experience not only while writing her memoir but also while playing the role of her own character in

¹⁵⁸ Chitjian, *A Hair's Breadth* (2003), pp. 111-12.

¹⁵⁹ Mesropian, *J'avais six ans en Arménie...* (2007), n.p.

the movie based on her memoir, and meanwhile took on speaking engagements. Anthony Slide has rightfully presented her as a young woman terrorized in her own country, then brought to the United States and mercilessly exploited by the film industry.¹⁶⁰ The result was a broken woman who remained in the grip of the harrowing scenes she had described so well: the line of naked, crucified Armenian girls—including the close-up of herself on a cross, staged for the film—and the torture, the rape, and the beating. “I can feel them now, those steady cutting slashes with the whips the Turks use on convicts whom they bastinado to death.”¹⁶¹ Recounting another harrowing scene of torture, rape, and murder, she attests, “I saw terrible things that night which I cannot tell. When I see them in my dreams now I scream, so even though I am safe in America, my nights are not peaceful.”¹⁶² This was too great a burden to bear all her life. In fact, as Anthony Slide writes, because of the sexual violence committed on her, for long years she would not let a man touch her.¹⁶³ Yet in 1929 she married and moved to Los Angeles.¹⁶⁴ Toward the end of her life,

¹⁶⁰ Slide, *Ravished Armenia* (1997), p. 6.

¹⁶¹ As quoted in *ibid.*, p. 110.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 125.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁶⁴ Anahid Meymarian and Araxie Haroutounian, as members of the Armenian Relief Society, offered to help Aurora when she was 91 years old and no longer able to take care of herself. Meymarian, in a chapter of *Im surb hayrenik* (My sacred fatherland) (Los Angeles: Navasart, 2005), pp. 223–9, dedicated to Aurora Mardiganian, writes of her visit to Aurora’s apartment in Van Nuys, California. She

when she fell seriously ill, she was transferred from an old-age home to the County General Hospital where she died in 1994. And since her body was unclaimed, it was cremated by the hospital and her remains were buried in a mass grave with the remains of 2,098 others.¹⁶⁵

All of these survivors who found the courage, the strength, and the stamina to leave their traumatic memories for posterity—and those who did not—are gone today, none with peace of mind. None of them was able to integrate the unforgettable experience and return to normal life. When they lay on their deathbed, bidding this world farewell, did they return to those dark and gloomy days of pain, blood, and tears? Did they see Turkish horsemen coming to take them away, as Leonardo Alishan’s grandmother did?

found her in the most deplorable state, in a room full of cardboard boxes, the curtains drawn to keep the room dark and shield it from outside dangers. According to Meymarian, Aurora’s husband had passed away and her son, Martin Hovanian, had married a non-Armenian who did not care for her mother-in-law and even prevented her son from visiting his grandmother. Anahid and Araxie convinced Aurora to move to an Armenian old-age home and they visited her there once in a while. They learned of her passing long after it happened and were unable to find out where she was buried.

¹⁶⁵ Melkon Armen Khandjian, after years of searching, located the mass grave marked “1994” and laid upon it a yellow ribbon, Aurora Mardiganian’s favorite hair ornament. Khandjian collected and edited documents, newspaper clippings and other material pertaining to Aurora and published them under the title, *The Summer of 1915, Ravished Armenia: The Diary of Arshalouys “Aurora” Mardiganian* (Encino, California: Narazoon, 2009).

Inundated by the Literature of Atrocity

In lieu of a conclusion to this intermediary volume

Before my eyes and etched in my mind is a map of places, of thriving Armenian villages, then lines of people wobbling along, covered in dust and filth, makeshift tents, that is, rags on wooden sticks, that is, concentration camps, impassible gorges, open mass gravesites with unburied corpses scattered around, little boys and girls starving and sick, curled up on dirty street corners. The horrifying landscape covers the entire Ottoman Empire from east to west, north to south.

I know a map with red dots, large and small, showing the places where massacres occurred. But these dots do not speak the language of pain and suffering that I read in the literature of atrocity; they do not represent all of the places, the towns and villages where the deportees passed by, leaving their dead behind. The red dots on the

map of my mind are moving; they begin to walk the death march and cover the entire country. Turkey is painted in red, the color of Armenian blood. That is what the Armenian Genocide is. That is what the Armenian Genocide has done to Turkey.

I tried to study the Armenian literature of atrocity as much as I could, to read as many stories as my nerves could tolerate. No, it is not easy to read these stories. These macabre scenes of cold-blooded murder and rape, starving children, and unspeakable orgies of Turkish officers feasting on Armenian maidens can leave the reader depressed and bewildered for a long time. These are books that, as Kafka said, "come upon us like ill-fortune and distress us deeply, like the death of one we love better than ourselves, like suicide. A book must be an ice-axe to break the sea frozen inside us."¹ I follow Kafka's thoughts and I see it as an obligation to communicate with the trauma of the past, which is not really the past, but our present. As Kafka put it, we have to read these books that ask more of us than we are willing to give.

I see this literature, responses to the Armenian Genocide, as a monument erected to the memory of that Genocide, to the Armenian aspiration to become a nation again, not a nation of victims but one with a tragic past that has been acknowledged and duly redressed. That is

¹ Quoted in Alvin Rosenfeld, *A Double Dying: Reflections on Holocaust Literature* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 18.

the way to resolve the burden of the past in order to make national survival and perpetuation possible.

But more importantly, I see this literature, the entire corpus of perhaps over 20,000 pages of material that I have tried to bring under scrutiny, and many many more that were beyond my capacity to engage, as the foundation upon which the post-Genocide, or rather, the second-generation and the third-generation and perhaps the fourth-generation Armenian literature is constructed. Without an understanding of this literature, this artistic history of the Armenian Genocide, the responses of the next generations of survivors—fiction, historical novels, metaphysical poetry—must seem fantastical, unreal, like figments of the imagination of twisted minds. With an understanding of this literature, the responses of the next generations will be construed as the cry of a nation—with an unparalleled Trauma in its past—for ultimate redress, for healing that will be possible only when both the victims and the perpetrators of the Trauma engage. Until such time, in the words of Margaret DeCanio, "time cannot quench the bitterness of the memories."²

I would hope my readers now value my passion in the statement I made at the beginning of this book, in response to Turkish historians suggesting unconditional reconciliation as a solution to all conflicts and a cure to all historical wounds: "When the Turks are not ready to face the past, when injustice still continues to hold so strong a

² Margaret DiCanio, *Memory Fragments from the Armenian Genocide: A Mosaic of Shared Heritage* (New York: Mystery and Suspense Press, 2002), p. 8.

grip upon the Armenian nation, when the crime is not duly recognized, how can there be reconciliation? How can Armenians think of coming to terms with their past and with the unyielding and unremorseful perpetrator of the crime?"

To be continued

Bibliography

- Anderson, Charles M., and Marian M. MacCurdy, eds. *Writing and Healing*. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 2000.
- Antonian, Aram. *Ayn sev orerun* (In those dark days). Boston: Hairenik Press, 1919.
- . *The Memoirs of Naim Bey*. In *The Turkish Armenocide*, Documentary Series no. 2. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Armenian Historical Research Association, 1965.
- . *Mets vochirě* (The great crime) (1921). 2nd ed., Beirut: Ghukas Karapetian, 1977.
- Arehart-Treichel, Joan. "Adult Separation Anxiety: Often Overlooked Diagnosis." *Psychiatric News*, vol. 41, no. 13, July 7, 2006.
- Asadourian, Hagop. *Hovakimi t'omerě* (Joachim's grandchildren). Beirut: Atlas, 1965.
- At'majian, Mari. *Haverzhakan ughinerov* (Through eternal roads). Paris: G. Doniguian & fils, 1974.

- Bedoukian, Kerop. *Some of Us Survived: The Story of an Armenian Boy*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1979.
- Beledian, Grigor. "Une tentative de communauté littéraire: La revue *Menk*." *Revue du monde arménien moderne et contemporain*, vol. 2, 1995-96.
- Boghigian, Ap'o. *Azagpghtsut'ian t'eman "Menk" i groghneru grut'iunneru mej* (The theme of incest in the writings of the "Menk" writers). Unpublished paper, 1986.
- Boyajian, Levon, and Haigaz Grigorian. "Psychosocial Sequelae of the Armenian Genocide." In *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1986.
- Chitjian, Hampartzoum Mardiros. *A Hair's Breadth from Death: The Memoirs of Hampartzoum Mardiros Chitjian*. Trans. Zaruhi Sara Chitjian. London and Reading: Taderon Press, 2003.
- . *Mazi ch'ap mahin mot, Yeghemen veraproghi husher* (A hair's breadth close to death: Memoirs of a Genocide survivor). London and Reading: Taderon Press, 2004.
- Ch'it'uni. *Aysor u erek* (Today and yesterday). *Hairenik* quarterly, vol. 3, no. 9, 1970.
- Cohen, Bernard. *Sociocultural Changes in American Jewish Life as Reflected in Selected Jewish Literature*. Rutherford, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1972.
- Dabaghian, A. *Polisen der Zor* (From Constantinople to Deir el-Zor). *Hairenik* quarterly, vol. 3, no. 9, 1970.
- . *Polso vanets'i khohararnerē* (The Vanetsi cooks of Constantinople). *Hairenik* quarterly, vol. 3, no. 9, 1970.
- Danielian, Jack. "A Century of Silence: Terror and the Armenian Genocide." *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, vol. 70, no. 3, 2010.
- Darbinian, Ruben. *Hay k'aghak'akan mtk'i degerumner* (The quests of Armenian political thought). *Hairenik*, vol. 1, nos. 1-12, 1922.
- . "Hamastegh." *Hairenik*, vol. 2, no. 5, 1924.

- Davis, Christopher G., et al. "Self-Blame Following a Traumatic Event: The Role of Perceived Avoidability." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, vol. 22, no. 6, June 1996.
- Demoyan, Hayk. *Haykakan sportē ev marmnakrt'ut'iunē Osmanian Kaisrut'iunum* (Armenian sports and athleticism in the Ottoman Empire). Yerevan: Tigran Mets, 2009.
- Der Yeghiayan, Zaven. *Patriark'akan hushers, Vaveragrēr ev V kayut'iunner* (My Patriarchal memories: Documents and testimonies). Cairo, 1947.
- . *My Patriarchal Memoirs*. Trans. Ared Misirliyan. Barrington, Rhode Island: Mayreni, 2002.
- Destegul, Neshan. *Tirojē aygiin mej* (In the proprietor's garden). *Hairenik* monthly, vol. 3, nos. 9, 10, and 12, 1925.
- DiCanio, Margaret. *Memory Fragments from the Armenian Genocide: A Mosaic of Shared Heritage*. New York: Mystery and Suspense Press, 2002.
- Esayan, Zapel. *Averaknerun mej* (Amid the ruins) (1919). Reprint, Beirut: Etvan, 1957.
- Gabrielian, Vazgen, ed. *Sp'iuḥ'ahay patmvatsk'ē* (The Diasporan Armenian short story). Collected by Gegham Sevan. Yerevan: Yerevan University Press, 1984.
- Galaijian, Mary. *Vordekoruys mayrē* (The Mother who lost her child). *Hairenik*, vol. 2, no. 7, 1924.
- . *Gharibis* (To my exile). *Hairenik*, vol. 2, no. 11, 1924.
- Hamalian, Leo. "The Armenian Genocide and the Literary Imagination." In *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1986.
- Hamastegh. *Zruyts' shuni mē het* (Conversation with a dog). *Hairenik*, vol. 6, 1927.
- . *Patmvatsk'ner ev Hek'iat'ner* (Short stories and tales). Beyoglu: Hermon Matbaasi, 1963.
- . *Erker, A, Giughē ev Andzrev* (Works, I: The village and the rain). Beirut: Hamazkayin, 1966.

- Hamblett, Wendy C. "Guilty of Innocence, or, Nobody Remembers the Armenians." *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 7, no. 1, March 2007.
- Hart'unian, Abraham H. *An Odyssey of Faith: Neither To Laugh Nor To Weep; A Memoir of the Armenian Genocide*. Trans. Vartan Hartunian. 3rd ed., Belmont, Massachusetts: Armenian Heritage Press, 1999.
- Hayg, Vahé. *Haireni tskhan* (The paternal hearth). Fresno: Nor or. Beirut: G. Donigian & fils, 1941-70, 5 vols.
- Haykaz, Aram. *Mankut'ian hishatakner* (Childhood memories). *Hairenik*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1924.
- . *Shapin Garahisar u ir herosamartē* (Shapin Garahisar and its heroic battle). Beirut: Mshak, 1957.
- . *Aram Haykaz, kiank'n u gortsē* (Aram Haykaz: His life and work). New York: Hay grakanut'ian barekamneru miut'iun, 1962.
- . *Ch'ors ashkharh* (Four Worlds). Beirut: Mshak, 1962.
- . *Pandok* (Hotel). Beirut: Mshak, 1967.
- . *Ch'ors tari K'iurdistani lemerun mej* (Four Years in the Mountains of Kurdistan). Ed. Poghos Snapian. Antelias, Lebanon: Hrat. Gevorg Melitinets'i Grakan Mrts'anaki, 1972.
- . *Aprek' erekhek'* (Live, children!). Beirut: Hamazkayin, 1977.
- . *Ts'eghin dzaynē* (The voice of the race) (1949, 1954). 2 vols. Reprint, Montreal: Horizon, 1987.
- Highgas, Dirouhi Kouymjian. *Refugee Girl*. Watertown, Massachusetts: Baika, 1985.
- Horowitz, Mardi Jon. *Stress Response Syndromes*. 2nd ed., New York: Jason Aronson, 1986.
- Hovannisian, Richard G. "Intervention and Shades of Altruism during the Armenian Genocide." In *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.

- . "The Armenian Question in the Ottoman Empire, 1976-1914." In *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian, vol. 2. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.
- Ianko, Vitali. *The Promise at the Sea*. New York: Vintage Press, 2004.
- Ishkhan, Mushegh. *Kiank' u eraz* (Life and dream). Beirut: Onibar, 1949.
- . *Hats'i ev luysi hamar* (For bread and light). Beirut: Hamazkayin, 1951.
- . *Miayn 1500 toghov* (In only 1500 lines). Paris: Ereboundi, 1970.
- . *Mnas barov mankut'iun* (Farewell childhood). Beirut: Hamazkayin, 1974.
- Ketchian, Bertha Nakshian. *In the Shadow of the Fortress: The Genocide Remembered*. Ed. Sonia I. Ketchian. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Zorian Institute, 1988.
- Khan-Azat, Ruben. *Hay heghap'okhakani husherits'* (From the memoirs of an Armenian revolutionary). *Hairenik*, vol. 5, no. 8, 1927, through vol. 7, no. 7, 1929, with intervals.
- Khandjian, Melkon Armen. *The Summer of 1915, Ravished Armenia: The Diary of Arshalouys "Aurora" Mardigian [Mardigianian]*. Encino, California: Narazoon, 2009.
- Kherdian, David. *On the Death of My Father and Other Poems*. Fresno, California: Giligia, 1970.
- Kyureghyan, Yervand. *Im housheri chanaparhov* (Through my memories). Ed. with Introduction and Commentary by Sergey Vardanyan and Lousineh Sahakyan. Yerevan: Lousakn, 2009.
- Langer, Lawrence L. *The Age of Atrocity*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1978.
- . *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*. New Haven, Connecticut, and London, UK: Yale University Press, 1991.

- Mardiganian, Aurora. *Ravished Armenia: The Story of Aurōra Mardiganian, the Christian Girl Who Lived through the Great Massacres*. Interpreted by H. L. Gates. New York: Kingfield, 1918.
- . *Hoshotvats Hayastan*. Trans. Gurgēn Sargsyan. Los Angeles: Nor Hayastan, 1995.
- Melkonian, Ashot, Arman Yeghiazaryan, et al., eds. 1946-1948, *Hayrenadardzut'iunē ev dra daserē, Hayrenadardzut'ian himnakhndirn aysor* (The 1946-1948 repatriation and its lessons: The issue of repatriation today). Yerevan: Limoush, 2009.
- Mesropian, Virginie-Jija. *J'avais six ans en Arménie... 1915* (I was six years old in Armenia... 1915). Ed. Pierre Anhoury and Claire Mouradian. Paris: L'inventaire, 2007.
- Meymarián, Anahid. *Im surb hayrenik* (My sacred fatherland). Los Angeles: Navasart, 2005.
- Minassian, John. *Many Hills Yet To Climb: Memoirs of an Armenian Deportee*. Santa Barbara, California: Jim Cook, 1986.
- Mintz, Alan. *Hurban: Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.
- Mkhit'arian, Onnik. *Vani ink'napashtpanut'iunē* (The self-defense of Van). *Hairenik* monthly, vol. 2, 1924, through vol. 3, no. 7, 1925.
- Morgenthau, Henry. *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page, 1918.
- Mugrditchian, Hovhannes. *To Armenians with Love: The Memoirs of a Patriot*. Trans. Dr. Arra S. Sevakian. Ed. Christopher Gilson and Paul Martin. Hobe Sound, Florida: Paul Mart, 1996.
- Narduni, Shavarsh. *Menk'... Menk'... Menk'...* (We... We... We...). *Menk'* (Paris), 1, 1931.
- . *Eritasardut'iun hayots', dun kananch' tarik', on andr hasparez* (Armenian youth! You in your green age, forward into the arena). Tehran: Alik, 1954.

- . *Grakan ts'olk'er* (Literary reflections). Beirut: Hamazkayin, 1975.
- Nat'alie, Shahan. *Vrezhi avetaran, Girk' a* (The gospel of revenge, Book I). New York: Armenia, 1918.
- . *Vrezhi avetaran, Girk' b* (The gospel of revenge, Book II). Boston: Hairenik, 1918.
- Nourigian, Beniamin. *Aigekut'k'* (Harvest). New York: Baykar, 1937.
- Oshagan, Hagop. *Sp'iuḡk'ē ev irav banasteghtsut'iunē, Vahan T'ek'eyani arit'ov* (The Diaspora and the true poetry: On the occasion of Vahan Tekeyan). Jerusalem: St. James Press, 1945.
- . *Vkayut'iun mē* (A testimony). Aleppo: Nairi Press, 1946.
- . *Oshakani khosk'ē mahen heto* (Oshagan's words post mortem). *Nor Kir*, no. 1 (37), 1948.
- . *Hamapatker arevmtahay grakanut'ian* (Panorama of Western Armenian literature), vol. 2. Jerusalem: St. James Press, 1953.
- . *Hamapatker arevmtahay grakanut'ian*, vol. 6. Beirut: Hamazkayin, 1968.
- . *Hamapatker arevmtahay grakanut'ian*, vol. 9. Antelias, Lebanon: Cilician Catholicosate Press, 1980.
- . *Hamapatker arevmtahay grakanut'ian*, vol. 10. Antelias: Cilician Catholicosate Press, 1982.
- . *Kayserakan haght'ergut'iun* (Imperial song of triumph). Ed. Poghos Snapián. Beirut: Altapress, 1983.
- Ovanessian, Arby, ed. *Mek arar: Haykakan t'aterkashar* (Anthology of Armenian one-act plays), 2 vols. Paris: Armenian Theatre Association, in collaboration with "Spiurk" Publications, Yerevan, 2001.
- Pahlavuni, Yeghisheh. *Yeghisheh Pahlavuni, Hushamatian* (Yeghisheh Pahlavuni: Book of memories). Ed. Norayr Pahlavuni. Yerevan: Moughni, 2006.

- P'ap'azian, Vahram. *Ser, ser, ser* (Love, love, love). Beirut: Sevan, 1962.
- Park, Robert E. *The Immigrant Press and Its Control*. New York: Harper & Bros., 1922.
- Partevian, Suren. *Kilikian arhavirk'ë* (The Cilician catastrophe). Constantinople: Nshan Papikian, 1909.
- . *Haiuhin* (The Armenian woman). Constantinople: P. Palents Bookstore, 1911.
- Peroomian, Rubina. "A Cursory Survey of Shahan Shahnur's Literary Creations." *Hromkla Yearbook*. Los Angeles: Armenian Apostolic Church of America, Western Prelacy, 1982.
- . *Eghernë veraprogh vorbats'ats serndi hetk'erov, Vazgen Shushaniani het* (Tracing the orphaned generation that survived the Catastrophe: The case of Vazgen Shushanian). *Asbarez*, April 20–22, 1985.
- . "Armenian Literary Responses to Genocide: The Artistic Struggle To Comprehend and Survive." In *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.
- . *Literary Responses to Catastrophe: A Comparison of the Armenian and the Jewish Experience*. Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1993.
- . "How To Read Genocide Literature: The Problematics; The Search for a Canon." *International Network on Holocaust and Genocide*, April 1996.
- . "Hairenik: A Periodical in the Heart of New England." In *The Armenians of New England*, ed. Marc A. Mamigonian. Belmont, Massachusetts: Armenian Heritage Press, 2004.
- . *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.
- . "The Tears and Laughter of Cilician Armenia: Literary Representations of Destruction and Revival, 1909–1918." In

- Armenian Cilicia*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian and Simon Payaslian. Costa Mesa, California: Mazda, 2008.
- . "The Poetics of Violence in Literary Responses to the Adana Massacres." Paper presented at the International Conference Commemorating the 100th Anniversary of the Adana Massacres, Armenian Genocide Museum, Yerevan, April 20–21, 2009.
- P'oladian, Garo. *Zruyts'* (Conversation). Paris: Arax, 1952.
- . *Artsivnerë anapatin mej* (The eagles in the desert). Paris: Araxes, 1958.
- . *Kraké shapikë* (The shirt of fire). Beirut: Sevan, 1966.
- . *Kë hrazharim hayut'ené* (I resign from Armenianness) (1949). Beirut: Hamazkayin, 1978.
- Rosenfeld, Alvin H. *A Double Dying: Reflections on Holocaust Literature*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1980.
- Sarafian, Nikoghayos. *Ishkhanuhi* (Princess). Paris: N. Sarafian, 1934.
- . *Ch'ap'atso erker* (Works in verse). Ed. with Preface and Introduction (Addendum) by Harut'iun K'iurk'chian. Antelias, Lebanon: Georg Melidinets'i Literary Award, no. 17, 1982.
- Sargsian, Ep'rem. *Patmakan oreri depk'er ev demk'er, Erevanë 1917-in* (Events and faces of historical days: Yerevan in 1917). *Hairenik quarterly*, vol 3, no. 9, 1970.
- Sarian, Hrant. [Diary]. Trans. Louise Kiffer as *Le journal de mon père*. <http://choisy.pagesperso-orange.fr/> (accessed April 14, 2008).
- Sarinian, Sergey, et al., eds. *Hay nor grakanut'ian patmut'iun* (The history of modern Armenian literature), vol. 5. Yerevan: Armenian SSR Academy of Sciences, 1979.
- Schwartz, Murray M., and David Willbern. "Literature and Psychology." In *Interrelations of Literature*, ed. Jean-Pierre Barricelli and Joseph Gibaldi. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1982.

- Sevan, Gegham, ed. *Vazgen Shushanian*. Yerevan: Armenian SSR Academy of Sciences, 1968.
- Shahnur, Shahan. *T'ert'is kiraknoria t'ivē* (The Sunday edition of my paper). Beirut: K'rik'or K'oseian, 1959.
- . *Bats' tomar* (Open calendar). Paris: Haratch, 1971.
- . *Haralezneru davachanut'iunē* (The treason of the spirits). Paris: Haratch, 1971.
- . *Krakē koghk'is* (The fire on my side). Paris: Haratch, 1973.
- . *Nahanjē aqants' ergi* (Retreat without song) (1929). 4th printing, Beirut: Sevan, 1981.
- Shant, Levon. *Inch' ē azgut'uinē* (What is nationhood). *Hairenik* monthly, vol. 1, no. 2, 1922, through vol. 1, no. 4, 1923.
- Shipley, Alice Muggerditchian. *We Walked, Then Ran*. Phoenix, Arizona: A. M. Shipley, 1983.
- Shirinian, Lorne. *Writing Memory: The Search for Home in Armenian Diaspora Literature as Cultural Practice*. Kingston, Ontario: Blue Heron Press, 2000.
- Shushanian, Vazgen. *Amran gisherner* (Summer nights). Cairo: Husaber, 1930.
- . *Vazgen Shushanian, Dzon tarabakht Vazgeni Hishatakin, mahvan 1 tarelits'in art'iv ir barekamnerun koghmē* (Vazgen Shushanian: Tribute to the memory of the ill-fated Vazgen from his friends, on the occasion of the first anniversary of his death). Paris: Araxes, 1942.
- . *Garnanayin, Siro hez namakner* (Of spring: Humble love letters). Beirut: Etvan, no. 23, 1956.
- . *Siro ev arkatsi tghak'ē* (The boys of love and adventure). Beirut: Etvan, no. 33, 1957.
- . *Erkir hishatakats'* (Land of memories). Ed. with Preface by A. T'op'ch'ian. Yerevan: Hayastan, 1966.
- Siamanto. *Amboghjakan erker* (Complete works). Antelias, Lebanon: Daniel Varuzhan Literary Fund-8, Catholicosate of Cilicia, 1989.

- Staub, Ervin. "Healing and Reconciliation." In *Looking Backward, Moving Forward*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London, UK: Transaction Publishers, 2003.
- Surmelian, Leon Z. *I Ask You, Ladies and Gentlemen*. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1945.
- . "The Sombrero." In *Pow Wow: Charting the Fault Lines in the American Experience – Short Fiction from Then to Now*, ed. Ishmael Reed with Carla Blank. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Da Capo Press, 2009.
- T'ap'arakan, S. *Erani mi or* (I wish one day). *Hairenik*, vol. 45, no. 9, 1967.
- . *Tundardzi ughis* (My homecoming road). *Hairenik*, vol. 45, no. 9, 1967.
- T'ek'eyan, Vahan. *Hayergut'iun ev hatēntir k'ert'vatsner* (Armenian songs and selected poems). Beirut: Etvan, 1958.
- . *Sacred Wrath: The Selected Poems of Vahan Tekeyan* (bilingual ed.). Trans. Diana Der Hovanessian and Marzbed Margossian. New York: Ashod Press, 1982.
- T'ek'eyan, Vahan, and Leon Z. Surmelian. *Vahan T'ek'eyani namaknerē Levon Zaven Surmelianin, Luys Zvart' grets' Levon Zaven Surmelian b. Tpagrut'iun* (Vahan Tekeyan's letters to Levon Zaven Surmelian; Joyful light, written by Levon Zaven Surmelian). New York: Nor Kir, 1950.
- Ter Minasian, Ruben. *Hay heghap'okhakani mē hishataknerē* (The memoirs of an Armenian revolutionary). *Hairenik* monthly, vol. 1, no. 2, 1922, through vol. 9, no. 11, 1931, with intervals.
- T'ölölian, Minas. *Dar mē grakanut'iun* (A century of literature), vol. 2. New York: Armenian Apostolic Church of America, Eastern Prelacy, 1980.
- Toynbee, Arnold J., ed. *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915–16: Documents Presented to Viscount Grey of Fallodon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, by

- Viscount Bryce*. Preface by Viscount [James] Bryce. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1916.
- Tsarukian, Andranik. *Mankut'iun Ch'unets'ogh Mardik* (Men without childhood) (1949). 1952, reprint, Beirut: G. Doniguian & fils, 1980.
- Updegraff, John A., et al. "Searching for and Finding Meaning in Collective Trauma." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 95, no. 3, 2008.
- Van Boheemen-Saaf, Christine. *Joyce, Derrida, Lacan, and the Trauma of History*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Varuzhan, Daniel. *Banasteghtsakan erker* (Poetic works). Antelias, Lebanon: Daniel Varuzhan Literary Fund-1, Catholicosate of Cilicia, 1986.
- Vorbuni (Orbuni), Zareh. *Vartsu seniak, Patmvatsk'ner* (Room for rent: Short stories). Paris: At'machian, 1939.
- . *Ev eghev mard* (And there was man). Paris: Z. Vorbuni, 1964.
- Young, James E. *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1988.
- Zardarian, Hratch. *Erb eraznerē kushanan* (When dreams come late). *Hairenik*, vol. 2, no. 9, 1924.
- . *Tseruk Ruson* (Old Rousseau). *Hairenik*, vol. 3, no. 6, 1925.
- . *P'arizi aghjikē* (The Parisian girl). *Hairenik*, vol. 4, no. 3, 1926.
- Zarian, Gostan. *The Traveller & His Road*. Trans. Ara Baliozian. New York: Ashod Press, 1981.
- Zinsser, William. *Writing About Your Life*. New York: Marlowe & Co., 2004.

Index

- Abdul Hamid II, Sultan, 9, 10, 322, 356-7
- Abov, Gevorg, 144
- Abzeini, 305, 365
- Adabazar (modern Sakarya), 108-9, 119, 268, 270, 272, 274, 333
- Adorno, Theodor, 28
- African Americans, 231
- Afyon Karahissar (Karahisar), 270
- Aghbalian, Nikol, 378
- Aharonian, Avetis, 12
- Ahekan, 41
- Ahmed Bey, 322-3
- Aintab, 246-7, 257, 261, 263, 351, 376
- Aleppo, 30, 78, 85, 87, 104-5, 112, 126, 128, 153, 196, 235, 246, 248, 255, 258-9, 263, 265-6, 271, 273-4, 281, 303, 352, 359; under British control, 116, 250-1, 375-6; orphanages, 119, 247, 252, 270, 391-2, 374-6
- Alexandria, 227
- Alexandropol (Gyumri), 102, 310, 312; orphanage, 308, 378
- Alishan, Leonardo, 391
- Allied Powers, 20, 26, 28, 342
- Amanus Mountains, 261
- America. *See* United States of America
- American Armenian(s), 38, 151, 360
- American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, 324-5. *See also*, Near East Relief
- American Consulate in Malatya, 319

- American Medical Mission, 240, 347. *See also* Mr. & Mrs. Henry Atkinson, Dr. Crawford, Dr. McCallum, Miss Campbell
- American Missionaries and orphanages, 244, 280, 379; Sisters in Grace, Sarah, 317, Esther, 318
- American Red Cross Near East Relief, 275, 333
- American social movement of the 60s and 70s, 231-2
- American Teachers College, 244
- Amirkhanian, Vartan, Rev., 348
- Anahit (goddess), 212
- Anderson, Charles, 336
- Andranik (General, Ozanian), 42, 60, 306, 324, 354
- Andriasian, Andranik (Antreassian Antranig), 49
- Ankgh, 307
- Antep. *See* Aintab
- Antonian, Aram, 48, 58, 69
- Arabkir, 317, 318
- Aram (Manukian), 40
- Arax River, 304, 311
- Archangel, 237
- Arctic Ocean, 237
- ARF. *See* Armenian Revolutionary Federation
- Arlen, Michael (Sr.), 79, 188-9
- Armash, 102, 107
- Armenakan (Party), 26
- Armenian General Athletic Union (*Homenet'men*), 377
- Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), 118
- Armenian minority (*millet*), 9
- Armenian Revolutionary Federation, 144, 147, 154, 195, 215, 305; members, 33, 341
- Armistice (October, 1918), 185, 242, 258, 281, 341
- Arp'arian, Arp'iar, 12, 14, 25
- Asadourian, Hagop, 103-4, 107, 118, 165, 220
- Astrakhan, 237
- Atchaz, 271
- Athens, 328, 342
- Atkinson, Henry, Dr. 240, 347
- Atkinson, Mrs. (Tacy), 240
- Auschwitz, 28, 384
- Aydun, 263
- Babeuf (François-Noël), 87
- Baghché (Bahçe), 261
- Baghdad, 250, 303
- Baghdasarian, Tigran, 307, 309-10
- Baghesh, 60
- Bail, Ulrike, 15
- Baku, 237, 242, 375
- Balkans, 78
- Bardzravank'*, 14, 21, 27
- Barsamian, Meruzhan, 23
- Bashgarnets'i Mamikon, 309
- Batumi, 102, 382
- Baudelaire, Charles, 174
- Bauer, Yehuda, 5
- Bayaz Khanum, 366
- Bayburt, 319
- Bedouk'ian, K'erop', 232-6, 252, 339, 347, 370-2
- Bedri Bey, chief of police in Constantinople, 356

- Beirut, 30, 34, 41, 78, 156, 276, 303, 367
- Bekran Bey, 322
- Berberian, Shahan, 21
- Berlin, 52
- Bilecik (Bilejik), 270
- Birecik (Birejik), 235, 257
- Bitlis, 302
- Black Hasan, 261
- Black Sea, 101, 108, 285, 292, 329, 382
- Boghigian, Ap'o, 171, 175
- Boheemen-Saaf, Christine, van, 332
- Bolshevik(s), 242, 311, 376; Armenian, 310-1; regime, 310
- Boseyra, 105, 107
- Boston, 30, 37, 52
- Boyajian, Levon, 78, 89, 124
- Bozanti, (Bozanta or Pozanti), 255, 270
- Bremond, Colonel, 377
- Bryce, James, Lord, 325, 342
- Buchukhanian, Prof., 239
- Bulgaria, 236
- Bursa, 91
- Cairo, 30
- Campbell, Miss, 240
- Canada, 232, 236-7
- Caraman, Elizabeth, 328
- Card, Claudia, 8
- Caucasus, 308
- Cemal (Jemal), Pasha, 9
- Central Powers, 341
- Ch'anakhch'i (Sovetashen, now Zangakatun), 346
- ch'apahas vorber* (adult orphans), 129
- Ch'apahas Vorberi Miut'ium* (Union of Adult Orphans), 118
- Ch'arsanjak. *See* Perri
- Ch'emish-Gezek', 315-6, 323
- Ch'eraz, Vahan, 378
- Ch'it'jian, Hampartzoum, Mardiros, 293-303, 358, 367, 380, 388
- Ch'it'jian, Zaruhi Sara, 293
- Ch'it'uni, 229
- Ch'omakhlu, 103, 220
- Chakatamart, 22
- Cham. *See* Aleppo
- Cilicia, 17, 19, 110-1, 270; British control, 116; French control, 266, 377
- Cilician massacres of 1909. *See* Pre-1915 massacres
- Cohen Silver, Roxane, 57
- Communist, 33
- Communist regime. *See* Soviet Armenia
- Constantinople, 21, 41, 113, 198, 208, 210-1, 239, 247-8, 275-7, 304, 317, 345, 364, 366; Scutari, 160; arrests, 13; Kedronakan Varjarian (Central School), 80, 236; orphanages, 24, 29, 333, 377; Esayan orphanage, 80, 119, 150; Katekiugh (Kadi-köy) orphanage, 275; Guru-Ch'eshmé, 24; Ortagiugh (Ortaköy), 13, 24; under Allied Powers, 20-1, 23-7, 91-2, 94, 102, 182, 186, 236, 251-2, 275-6, 292, 342, 393; House of Armenian Arts,

- 26; in turmoil, 28-9, 92, 275; demise of, 31, 187, 292
- Constitutional Revolution, 1908. *See* Young Turk revolution
- Corfu, 275, 333
- Cornaro F[iu]me, 333
- Crawford, Dr., 99
- Dabaghian, A., 229
- Daghlian, Prof. (British orphanage, Aleppo), 375
- Dali Ghazo, 305, 309
- Damadian, Mihran, 12
- Damascus, 78, 92, 122, 126, 128, 271, 273, 320; orphanage, 119
- Danielian, Jack, 75
- Darbasia, 248
- Darbinian, Ruben, 32, 45, 222, 224-5
- Dashnak, Dashnaktsutun. *See* Armenian Revolutionary Federation
- Davidson, Khoren, 328
- Davis (Leslie), American consul in Kharbert, 351
- DeCanio, Margaret, 395
- Deir el-Zor, 85, 113, 123, 128, 149, 197, 229, 263, 265-6, 271-2
- Der Sarkisian, Yeznig, Rev., 376
- Der (Ter) Yeghiayan, Arch. Zaven, Patriarch, 20, 24, 28
- Dersim, 237, 323; Kurdish insurgence, 296-7
- Destegul, Neshan, 43-5, 219, 225
- Dilijan, 310
- Dinelaris, Alexander 69
- Diyarbakir, 237-9, 321, 363
- Djevdet (Cevdet) Bey, 322
- Draa (Adra'), 271
- Egin, 318
- Ehman, headmaster, German orphanage in Kharbert, 301
- Ejmiatsin, 308, 310
- Ellis Island, 267
- England, 78, 188, 239. *See* also Great Britain; U.K.
- Enver (Pasha), 9, 102, 239, 241, 247
- Ereili (Eregli), 270
- Erzerum, 237, 322, 324, 329, 354, 366, 389
- Erzinjan, 237
- Esayan orphanage. *See* Constantinople
- Esayan, Zapel, 12, 48
- Eskijian, (Gulenia), Mrs., 246, 250, 373, 375
- Eskijian, (Hovhannes), Rev., 246-8, 372, 374
- Euphrates College in Kharbert, 239, 243, 380
- Euphrates River, 93, 124, 235, 263
- Europe, 14, 33, 36, 96, 182, 185, 238
- Fatherland Tax, 24
- Flaubert, Gustave, 174
- France, 38, 78, 96, 116, 139, 153, 160-2, 191, 195, 213, 215
- Frankl, Victor, 57
- Freud, Sigmund, 172
- Fundujak, 263
- Galajian, Mary, 227-8

- Galatasaray, 356
- Garahisar. *See* Shapin Garahisar
- Garabed Efendi, 372
- Garabedian, Bedros, Rev., 348
- Gatma. *See* K'at'ma
- Gatoyan, Shahen 328
- Gavafian, Gegham, 21
- German orphanages; in Kharbert, 241; Miss Rohner, headmaster, 300-1, 375, 380; under American control, 301; in Aleppo (Rev. Aharon Shernazian, headmaster), 246, 248
- Geulik, 320
- Gharbiyet el-Gharbiyeh, 271
- Ghat'ma. *See* K'at'ma
- Ghazar. *See* Dali Ghazo
- Glchian, Alexander 46
- Goebbels, (Josheph), Dr., 189
- Graffen, Miss, principal of the American Protestant missionary school, 243
- Graham, Miss, 316
- Great Britain, 237, 238
- Greece, 78; Greek army, 91
- Grigorian, Haygaz, 78, 89, 124
- Gurjian, Mik'ael, 12, 13
- Guru-Ch'eshmé. *See* Constantinople
- Gurun, 119, 243, 344, 349
- Gyumjian, Hakob, 328
- Hagopian, Mik'ahil, Dr., 299, 380
- Hairenik', 32, 37-8, 40-1, 44-5, 52, 94
- Haji Ghafour, 320
- Hajin, 328, 376
- Hama, 272-3, 352
- Hamalian, Leo, 189
- Hamastegh, 45, 48, 201, 218, 221-6
- Hamazasp, commander of Armenian volunteer army, 307, 311
- Hambartsumian, Kostis, 308
- Hamidian massacres. *See* Pre-1915 massacres
- Haratch, 38
- Harpout. *See* Kharbert
- Harpout College. *See* Euphrates College
- Hart'unian, Abraham, 339-40, 350, 365-6
- Hart'unian, Vartan, 340
- Hasan Chelebi, 317
- Hassan Agha, 116
- Hayastani Ognut'ian Kazmakerput'iun (HOK, Organization of Assistance to Armenia), 267
- Hayg, Vahé, 49, 148, 150
- Haykaz (Haygaz), Aram, 49, 93-6, 107, 118, 133, 137, 198-9, 218, 221-2
- Hayots' Dzor, 304, 308
- Heidelberg (university), 241
- Herman, Judith Lewis, 333
- Hnchak Party, 13, 40; members of, 14, 26, 33
- Hoghdar, 223
- Holocaust (Jewish), 2, 4-5, 28; literature, 3, 28
- Holman, E. Alison, 57
- Homenet'men. *See* Armenian General Athletic Union
- Homs, 271

- Horowitz, Mardi Jon, 57
 House of Armenian Arts. *See* Constantinople
 Hovannisian, Richard, 368-9
 Hovhannisian, Hovhannes, 12
Hurriyet. *See* Young Turk revolution
 Husein Pasha, 315
 Husenig, 278-80, 329, 366
 Ianko, Vitali, 282-6, 297, 331-2, 337, 355, 385-7
 Ihsaher, 271
 Intilli, 263
 Iran, 302, 304, 311
 Ishkhan, Mushegh, 24-5, 45, 49, 88-93, 117-8, 121, 154, 236
 Iskenderun, 259
 Islahiye, 271
 Ismayale Kemal Pasha, governor of Marash, 350, 365
 Ismayil, 294
 Ittihad Party. *See* Young Turks
 Jackson, J. B., American consul in Aleppo, 247
 Jerusalem, 30, 118
 Jibo and Ahmed brothers, 365
 Juskalian, Hovhannes, 247-8, 373, 375
 K'ajuni brothers, 378
 K'aradasht, 307
 K'at'ma (el-Qatma), 85, 112, 255
 K'erts, 304
 K'uyumjian Dik'ran (Tigran Guyumjian). *See* Arlen, Michael, Sr.
 Kafka (Franz), 394
 Kalajian, Hannah, 328
 Kaleh, 365
 Karapetian, Hovhannes (Onnik Yusuf), 328
 Kars, 312; orphanage, 378
 Kasab Tabouri (butcher regiment), 318, 330
 Katekiugh (Kadi-köy). *See* Constantinople
 Kedronakan Varjaran. *See* Constantinople
 Kemal. *See* Mustafa Kemal
 Kemal Efendi, 316
 Kemalist (army, forces, movement), 28, 78, 91-2, 102, 160, 266, 292, 310, 363
 Kemalist era. *See* Republic of Turkey
 Khan-Azat, Ruben, 40
 Kharbert, 237, 294, 299, 301, 315, 329, 348, 366, 379, 380; British consulate, 315, 375; German orphanage, 300-1, American takeover, Henry Riggs headmaster, 280, 379-80; Euphrates College into orphanage, 380; Armenian orphanage, 380
 Kherdian, David, 338
 Khurshud Agha, 364
 Kiamil Pasha, 318
 Kiffer, Louise, 333
 Killis (Kilis), 352
 Köker, Osman, 323
 Konya (Konia), 85, 254, 258, 270, 329, 386
 Korr Mamoe (Blind Mamoe), 297, 367
 Kouymjian Highgas, Dirouhi, 253-9, 292, 353, 359, 386

- Kurdish rebellion (1916). *See* Dersim
 Kurdistan, 94, 241, 348
 Kutora (Kotyora, modern Ordu), 285, 288, 290, 382
 Kuzul Aghaj, 261
 Kyureghyan, Yervand, 303-14, 334, 339, 345-6, 364
 Langer, Lawrence, 3, 74
 Lapajle, 261, 262
 Lebanon, 155, 328, 367
 Levon Pasha, 306
 Lloyd George, David, 237
 Liverpool, 13, 236
 Lort'o, 305
 Los Angeles, 303, 390
 Lulejian, Prof., 239
 MacCurdy, Marian, 89, 336, 381
 Makaroff, Noubar, 328
 Malatya, 319
 Marash, 263, 350, 365
 Mardigianian, Aurora, 314-24, 327, 354-5, 361-3, 389
 Mardin, 248
 Marmara, Sea of, 85
Marmnamarz, 345
 Maronyan, Seda, 293
 Marseilles, 88, 109, 140, 153, 200, 275, 303
 Martin, Paul, 260
 Martikian, Arshaluys. *See* Mardigianian, Aurora
 Massacres of Armenians (1894-96). *See* Pre-1915 massacres
 Massacre of Armenians in Adana (1909). *See* Pre-1915 massacres
 Massacres in Bab Ali (1895). *See* Pre-1915 massacres
 McCallum, Dr., 324
 McLaine, Miss, 319
Mchian, 21, 41
 Mehian, Garo (Karo), 49, 127
 Melik'-T'angian, Nerses, Arch. Prelate, 302
 Melik'ian, Armenak, 51
Menk', 41, 172, 176, 183-4, 186, 217, 218
 Meskené (el-Maskana) concentration camp, 73, 264-5, 272, 274
 Mesopotamia, 98
 Mesropian, Virginie-Jija, 366-7, 388-9
 Metaxas, Dr., 101
 Mexico, 303
 Mezireh (modern Elazig), 240, 278-80, 329, 347-8, 351; orphanage, 379-80
 Michigan University, 358
 Middle East, 34, 36, 121, 154, 197, 238, 324, 361
 Mik'aelian, K'ristap'or, 40
 Military tribunals (1919-20), 26
 Minassian, John (Hovhannes), 242-52, 329, 340-1, 344, 349-52, 359-60, 372-5
 Mintz, Alan, 46
 Mkhit'arian, Giut, Bishop, 380
 Mkhit'arian, Onnik, 39
 Morgenthau, Henry (US Ambassador to Turkey), 247, 323, 325
 Moscow, 32
 Mosul, 112

- Mudanya, 91, 92
 Muggerditchian Shipley,
 Alice, 237-42, 347-9, 351,
 364, 375
 Mugrditchian, Beatrice, 262,
 264-8, 377
 Mugrditchian, Hovhannes,
 260-8, 352, 359, 376-7
 Mulk, 364
 Mullah Tahir, 305, 365
 Murad River, 299
 Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), 10,
 28, 236, 258, 275, 290, 363
 Nail Pasha, Vali of Diyarbekir,
 321
 Nakshian K'etchian, Bertha
 (Berjouhi), 278-82, 337, 339,
 366, 379-80
 Narduni, Shavarsh, 48, 107-9,
 119, 139, 142, 184, 213-5,
 219
 Narekats'i, 177, 179
 Natalie, Shahan, 48, 54-5, 59-
 61, 66-70
 Near East Relief, 275, 314
 Nemesis (Operation), 61
Nergaght. See Repatriation
 Nersissian National School in
 Aintab, 261, 376
New Age, 189
 New York, 33, 242, 324, 360
New York Times, 325
 Nissibin (ancient Nisibis,
 modern Nusaybin), 248
Nor Kir, 33, 41
 North America, 38, 230
 North Sea, 237
 Nourigian, Beniamin, 48, 151,
 202
 Olympics, 1912, Stockholm,
 Sweden, 276
 Openheim, von, Max, Baron,
 238
 Oshagan, Hagop, 21-3, 30, 33,
 41-2, 45-6, 48, 58, 61, 71, 73,
 143, 146, 165, 181-2
 Osmaniye, 262-3, 266, 270, 377
 P'ap'azian, Suren, 328
 P'ap'azian, Vahram (actor), 25
 P'ap'azian, Vahram, 275-7,
 342, 345, 355-8, 364, 377-8
 P'esandasht, 306
 P'oladian, Garo (Karo or
 Karapet Polatian), 49, 79,
 110, 113, 153, 161-2, 195-7,
 199, 203, 215, 220
 Pahlavuni, Eghisheh, 307
 Palestine, 367
 Pan-Turanism, 10
 Park, Robert, 36
 Paris, 30, 38, 41, 52, 87-8, 107,
 109, 116, 118, 121, 140-1,
 146, 160, 162, 167, 172, 181,
 183, 186, 189-91, 200, 208,
 210-1, 217, 223-4
 Part'evian, Suren, 12, 48, 59,
 71-2
 Partridge, Ernest, principal of
 the American Teachers Col-
 lege in Sivas, 244
 Perchuhi, 52
 Perri (Berri), 294, 296-7, 299,
 388
 Persia. See Iran
 Peshikt'ashlian, Neshan, 25
 Phenix, 51
 Pre-1915 massacres of Arm-
 enians, 8-9, 11, 13-8, 20, 25,

- 54-5, 59, 68, 77, 234, 243,
 261, 276 (Bab Ali), 278, 304,
 346, 376
 Ragga (Rakka, el-Raqqa), 265
Ramkavar Azatakan Kusaks'u-
t'iun (the Armenian Demo-
 cratic Liberal Party, ADL),
 26; members, 33; *Sahma-*
nadir Ramkavars, 26
 Reformed Hinchakists, 26
 Remzi Sami Bey, 97, 98
 Repatriation (1944-46), 150-2,
 155, 199, 215
 Republic of Armenia (1918-
 20), 34, 303-4, 311, 378
 Republic of Turkey, 28, 363
 Riggs, Henry, headmaster
 orphanage in Kharbert,
 280, 301, 379
 Roberts College, 275
 Rodosto (modern Tekirdag),
 85
 Rohner, Miss. See German
 orphanage in Kharbert
 Rostov, 102
 Ruben (Ruben Ter Minasian),
 40
 Russian Revolution, Retreat of
 Russian army, 101, 298,
 308; the Red army, 310-1
 St'ep'anian, Aslan, 309-10
 Sabanja (Sapanca), 268
 Saboon Khan Orphanage in
 Aleppo), 274, 372
 Samsun, 252
 Sarafian, Gevorg, 328
 Sarafian, Nikoghayos, 49, 140-
 2, 176, 185
 Sardarabad, 309
 Sargsian, Ep'rem, 230
 Sarian, Hrant, 252, 268-75,
 333-4, 339, 347, 372
 Saroyan, William, 77
 Sasun, 82, 152, 153
 Scutari. See Constantinople
 Sebuhi, commander of the
 Eighth Army, 310
 Serengulian, Vartkes, 262
 Serob Aghbiur, 40
 Shahnur, Shahan, 49, 79, 127,
 143, 146-7, 158, 160, 164-5,
 167, 175-9, 181, 190, 205-7,
 209, 212-3, 217
Shant (Lightning) weekly, 23
 Shant, Levon, 33-5, 44
 Shapin Garahisar, 93-5
 Shatakh, 305, 308
Sheitan Delik (Devil's Hole),
 290
 Shernazian Aharon, Rev. See
 German orphanages
 Shirinian, Lorne, 38
 Shiro, 320
 Shukri and Mahmut, 97
 Shushanian, Vazgen, 49, 79,
 84-6, 117, 121, 127, 131, 134-
 7, 157-8, 163, 165, 167-9,
 171, 175, 197, 204-5, 216-8
 Siamant'o, 12, 15-9, 68, 79
 Simonian, Azat, 308
 Simonian, Simon, 152
 Sis (modern Kozan), 261, 376;
 monastery, 376
 Sivas (Sebastia), 233-4, 243-4,
 251, 317-8, 329, 344; Ameri-
 can Teachers College, 244
 Sivrihisar, 90, 91
 Slide, Anthony, 390

- Smyrna (Izmir), 10, 275
 Sofian, Vahram, 46
 Sos-Vani, 53
 Soviet Armenia, 31-3, 102, 142-3, 148, 150-5, 159, 199, 204, 209, 215, 230-1, 260, 267-8; leaders, 32; literature, 6, 144
 Soviet Union, 231
 Spinoza (Baruch), 340
 St. James, Monastery (Seminary) in Jerusalem, 118, 261
 Stalin, 195, 268
 Staub, Ervin, 282
 Sublime Porte, 10, 72
 Sukhumi, 290-1, 355, 382
 Suleiman Efendi, 306
 Surmelian, Levon (Leon) Zaven, 80, 82, 89, 96-7, 99-102, 107, 118, 129-32, 138, 165, 183, 186, 191, 220,
 Surmelian, Onnik, 97, 101, 186
 Surooje (Sürüc), 257
 Syria, 259; Syrian Armenians, 152; Syrian orphans, 324
 Sykes, Mark, Sir, 238
 Syrian desert, 112, 289
 T'ap'arakan, S., 229
 T'ek'eyan, Vahan, 12-5, 21, 25, 29, 48, 61-5, 74, 80, 183, 192
 T'erzian, Sokrat, 327
 T'lkatints'i, 222
 T'ölolian, Minas, 49
 Tabriz, 302
 Tahsin Bey, Colonel, 366
 Talaat, Pasha, 9, 238, 262, 277, 358
 Tarson. *See* Tarsus
 Tarsus, 85, 247, 259, 270
 Tatreat (Dadrian), Vahram, 328
 Tashnag. *See* Armenian Revolutionary Federation
 Taurus Mountains, 245, 255, 270
 Tbilisi, 87, 102, 237
 Tenikejian, Prof., 239
 Tfilé, 107
 The Tatler, 189
 Tigranian, Armenuhi, 52
 Timaksian (Dimaksian), Khoren, Bishop, 345
 Trebizond, 80, 96, 98-9, 101-2, 165, 220
 Tsarukian, Andranik, 49, 117, 119, 128-9, 143-4, 177-8
 United States of America, 36, 55, 78, 94, 133, 138, 151, 192, 198, 202-3, 222, 225, 237, 239, 241-2, 244, 247, 251-3, 267-8, 280-1, 295, 303, 314, 324, 337-8, 354-5, 358-61, 379, 390
 Updegraff, John A., 57
 Urfa, 257, 322
 Vahaj Efendi, 240, 241, 364
 Van, Vaspurakan, 39, 302-4, 308, 31-12, 322; the defense of Van and the short-lived Armenian administration, 306-8, 312, 346
 Varag Monastery, 307-8
 Varna, 236
 Vartkes. *See* Serengulian
 Vartkes
 Varuzhan, Daniel, 12, 15-7, 19, 79
 Vladikavkaz, 102

- Volga River, 237
 Vorbuni, Zareh, 49, 127, 172-3, 176
 Vorperian (Vorberian), Prof., 239
 Vostan, 364
 Voto, Bernard, de, 2
 Vramian (Arshak), 40
 Wiesel, Elie, 384
 Wilson, Lawrence, 360
 Yazmajian, Onnik, 378
 Yeghoyan, Rev., 241
 Yeprat College. *See* Euphrates College
 Yerevan, 87, 102, 143, 231, 267-8, 310-2; orphanage, 378
 Yerushalmi, Yosef, Hayim, 4
 Young Turk revolution (1908), 9, 13, 15, 17, 238, 304
 Young Turks, 10, 14, 17-8, 98, 189, 341-2. *See also*, Ittihad Party
 Zahleh, 275
 Zardarian, Hratch, 48, 189
 Zarian, Kostan (Gostan), 21, 26-7, 48, 56, 72
 Zavarian, Simon, 40
 Zefanoz, 97, 98
 Zeitun, 262
 Zenger, Mrs., 244
 Zinsser, William, 330
 Zhamkoch'ian, Nargiz, 282-92, 297, 331, 336-7, 355, 364, 382-7
 Zhoghovurdi dzayn, 21, 81, 183
 Zohrab, Grigor, 262

Note

Diacritics are used to differentiate between the following Armenian sounds and only on first mention of a noun. The table is based on the New Library of Congress Transliteration Scheme and the phonetic values of Eastern Armenian. In cases where an author's preferred Romanized spelling is that of Western Armenian, that variation is also provided.

պ - p	փ - p'	
ե - e	ը - ě	Ը - Ě
չ - ch	չ - ch'	
կ - k	ք - k'	
ց - ts	ց - ts'	
ի - ē	(only for 3 rd person present indicative)	
Է	(only for the first letter of a capitalized word)	
ռ - r		

Summary in Armenian
ՀԱՅԵՐԷՆ ԱՄՓՈՓՈՒՄ

Հայոց Ցեղասպանութիւնը
գրականութեան մէջ

կամ՝

Ցեղասպանութեան ընկալումը

այն սերնդի կողմից,

որ այդ աղիտալի տարիները ապրեց

Ինչպէս նախորդ աշխատութիւններին մէջ, այստեղ եւս՝ ուսումնասիրութեանս դաշտը ցեղասպանութեան գեղարուեստական գրականութիւնն է: Նրա ծալքերում է պատկերւում թուրքի ձեռքով վառուած դժոխքից անցած հայ մարդու հոգեկան իրավիճակը, ապրած ահռելի տեսարանների ու կրած սոսկալի տառապանքի բացած վերքը՝ իբրեւ անդամալի դրոշմ նրա ու նրա սերունդների հոգու վրայ:

1915-ի ցեղասպանութիւնը վերապրած սերունդը գրական հարուստ ժառանգութիւն չթողեց: Հայոց գրականութեան հսկաները, որոնք պիտի կարողանային իրենց անձնական փորձը յաւիտենականութեան յանձնել, նահատակուեցին. իսկ փրկուողներից քչերը փորձեցին դժոխքի կրակից արուեստ ստեղծել: Հարուածը մեծ էր ու անմիջական. ժամանակի ու տարածութեան որոշ հեռաւորութիւն էր պէտք: Այս հոգեբանական արգելքին աւելացրէք նաեւ օտար ու անծանօթ միջավայրերում ամենօրեայ գոյամարտի ծան-

րութիւնը եւ կը ստանաք Աղէտը վերապրած սակայն «ընկերային մահուան» դատապարտուած եւ ստեղծագործութեան անունակ հասարակութիւն:

Այնուամենայնիւ, Հայոց Ցեղասպանութիւնը 1915-ին չսկսեց: Թուրքի հայահալած քաղաքականութիւնը շեշտակիօրէն դրսեւորուեց դեռ 1894-96-ի Համիդեան կոտորածներին ու 1909-ի Կիլիկիոյ ջարդերին: Այս նոր ժամանակների ազգային, հաւաքական աղէտների առաջին գրական արձագանքը, Մեծ Եղեռնը վերապրած սերնդի համար դարձաւ օրինաչափ ու միջոց՝ ըմբռնելու, սգալու Աղէտը ու լիարժէք վերապրումի փորձ կատարելու:

Աշխատութեանս առաջին գլխում 1915-ը վերապրած գրողների ու բանաստեղծների ստեղծագործութիւնների ընդհանուր քննարկում չեմ փորձել: Նպատակս է եղել, ընտրածս գրականութեան ընդմիջից, բացայայտել ժամանակի մտայնութիւնը, աշխարհընկալումն ու ճամբի խոչընդոտները: Այստեղ ընդգծուած է Սիամանթոյի եւ Վարուժանի ստեղծած բրտութեան լեզուն՝ որպէս Աղէտի գեղարուեստական արտայայտման անհրաժեշտ ու անփոխարինելի միջոց եւ օրինաչափ յետագայ անդրադարձների: *Literary Responses to catastrophe, A Comparison of the Armenian and the Jewish Experience* վերնագիրը կրող աշխատութեանս սեւեռումը ընդլայնելով՝ փորձել եմ քննութեան առնել եկող սերունդներին փոխանցուող գրական ազդումների, մտայնութեան ու հոգեվիճակի լիակատար պատկերը:

Պատերազմից յետոյ, աքսորից վերադարձող, ջարդից ազատուած հայութեան համար Պոլիսը յոյսի փարոս դարձաւ: Հայ մշակութային կեանքը ծաղկումի ճամբան բռնեց: Անցեալի հետ հաշուի նստելու եւ ապագայ զարգացման ուղղութիւնը մշակելու հրամայականի գիտակ-

ցութեամբ, հիմը դրուեց «Բարձրավանք» գրական շարժման: Վերակազմակերպւում էր մամուլը, վերաբացւում էին դպրոց ու որբանոց: Յուսադրիչ եւ ոգեւորող էին հայկական ջարդերի պատասխանատուների դատավարութիւնները 1919-20 թթ., Պոլսում:

Երազը կարճատեւ էր: Քեմալական ուժերի ներխուժումն ու Ղաշնակիցների հապճեպ հեռացումը նոր հալածանքներ ու կոտորածներ էին սպառնում: Արք. Զաւէն Պատրիարք Տէր-Եղիայեանը վկայում է, թէ 1922-ի Նոյեմբերին, պոլսահայութիւնը ինչպիսի խուճապի մատնուած երկրից դուրս էր ճողոպրում: Փակւում էին որբանոցները եւ որբերը երկրից դուրս էին փոխադրւում:

Սա սկիզբն էր նոր Սփիւռքի կազմութեան: Նոր իմաստով, նոր յղացք ենթադրող Սփիւռքը մեծաւ մասամբ կազմուած էր Մեծ Եղեռնը վերապրող զանգուածներից, որոնց կապը՝ պորտալարը մշտապէս կտրուած էր Արեւմտեան Հայաստանից ու կարճատեւ անկախութիւն ապրած եւ այժմ խորհրդայնացած ու երկաթէ վարագոյրի ետին փակուած Արեւելեան Հայաստանից:

Գաղթական սփիւռքահայը մեծ մարտահրաւերներ ունէր յաղթահարելիք. դրանց կարեւորագոյներից էր պայքարը ուժացման դէմ: Սփիւռքեան մամուլի եւ մանաւանդ դրանց մէջ կարեւոր դեր ստանձնած Բոստոնում հրատարակող «Հայրենիք» ամսագրի էջերը ողողուած էին այս մտահոգութիւնը արծարծող յօդուածներով եւ ազգային հարցերի քննարկումներով: Օտար երկրներում մեծացող հային հայ պահելու համար ի՞նչ անել, կղզիանա՞լ, թէ՞ բացուել օտար մշակոյթի առջեւ, անցեալի յուշերը վառ պահե՞լ, անդադար գրե՞լ ու սգա՞լ կորցրած հայրենիքի, թուրքի ջարդին ու սպանդին զոհ գնացած սիրելիների մասին. եւ դեռ աւելին,

շարունակե՞լ նախաեղեռնեան գրական աւանդութիւնները, թէ՞ նորը ստեղծել:

Այս ծիրում, ճնշող հրամայական էր մնում՝ բացատրել, իմաստաւորել եղեռական անցեալը՝ ի սէր վերապրումի: Դեռ շատ յետոյ, նացիական ճամբարներում իր իսկ անձնական փորձից ելած Վիքտոր Ֆրանքլը պիտի առաջադրէր անցեալի իմաստաւորման կարեւորութիւնը՝ որպէս վերապրումը կարելի դարձնելու գրաւական:

Այդ ճիգի մէջ, խորտակիչ ճնշումից բնազդօրէն եւ հոգեբանօրէն ազատագրուելու համար, հայ գրողը նկարագրեց Աղէտը: Շահան Նաթալին գրիչը «արեան մէջ թաթախելով» բանաստեղծականացրեց այն: Կոստան Զարեանը կրակի բոցերում այրուող եկեղեցում փակուած զոհերի աղերսների, աղօթքների, սարսափահար աղաղակների աններդաշնակ ձայների ու Աստուածամօր ու հրեշտակների եղեռնագի յորդահոս պատկերներով թատերականացրեց այն...

Բացատրութիւն գտնելու ճիգը հայ գրողին դէպի չարի աղբիւրը մղեց, ու նա դէմ հանդիման եկաւ թուրքին: Նրա առհաւական բնութեան մէջ տեսաւ սպանելու, ոչնչացնելու բնազդը (օրինակ՝ Յակոբ Օշական, «Մնացորդաց»), բայց նաեւ ընդգծեց նրա կրօնական մոլեռանդութիւնը (օրինակ՝ Օշական, «Կայսերական յաղթերգութիւն» եւ Շահան Նաթալի, «Վրէժի Աւետարան»): Սուրէն Պարթեւեանը գինեալ դիմադրութիւնը գովերգեց: Ի հատուցումն չիրագործուած լիակատար դիմադրութեան, Նաթալին վրէժ առաջադրեց: Վահան Թէքէեանը դիմադրութեան փորձը «Ըմբոստութիւն սրբազան» կոչեց ու մաղթեց որ ըմբոստութեան ոգին դեռ չլքի հայուն: Թէքէեանի դեգերումները դէպի Աստուած տարան նրան, ու նա Աստծուն ուղղեց իր աղերսանքը,

երազը, բողոքը, նոյնիսկ կասկածի մատնելով նրա մէկ ու միակ գոյութիւնը («Սրբազան Բարկութիւն» բանաստեղծութիւնների շարքը): Աստծու կամ նրա մէկ ու միակ էութիւնը ժխտելը կրկնուեց նաեւ այլ գրողների մօտ՝ որպէս հակադարձ Աղէտին: Չէ՞ որ եթէ Աստուած լինէր այս ահռելի ջարդն ու կոտորածը պիտի արգիլէր թուրքին. կամ գուցէ հայու Աստուածը տանուլ էր տուել Ալլահին, որը եւ հայասպանութիւն էր խրախուսում թուրքին:

Առաջադրուած բացատրութիւններից չբաւարարուած, հայ գրողը ներթափանց հայեացք սեւեռեց. չլինի թէ հայը ինքն էր մեղաւոր, եթէ ոչ, թուրքը ինչպէ՞ս կարող էր այսքան ահաւոր ու մարդկային երեւակայութիւնից դուրս ոճիր գործել: Կոստան Ջարեանը Բարձր Պաշան առջեւ հայու ստորաքարշութեան ակնարկելով, հաւատում էր, թէ մահ է սպասում այն ազգին, որ ստորացնում է ինքն իրեն եւ հոգին ծախում: Պարթեւեան, Օշական, Անտոնեան նոյնանման մտորումներ են կատարում: «Մեզ մատնեցինք ի կորուստ. / Ո՛վ սոսկում, մեզ կերա՛նք մենք:», ցաւագին բացականչում է Թէքէեանը: Բնակա՞ն է սա: Հոգեբանները բացատրում են, թէ երբ գոհը ոճրագործների շարունակական բարբարոս եւ անմարդկային հաւաքական ոճրին է ենթարկւում, հակում է իրեն վերագրել ոճրագործի գործած ոճրի պատասխանատւութիւնը: Զոհը սկսում է մտածել, թէ քանի որ մարդ էակը չի կարող նման մի ահռելի ոճիր գործելու ընդունակ լինել, ուրեմն ինքն է պատճառը, որ նրա մէջ այդ վատթարագոյնն է ծնուել: Պատասխանատւութիւնը շրջւում է՝ ոճրագործը ինքն իրեն գոհ է համարում, գոհը՝ պատասխանատու:

Թուրքի վառած դժոխքից անցած եւ աշխարհի չորս ծագերում ցրուած հայ գրողները չկարողացան, գուցէ եւ

անկարելի էր, Աղէտի համոզիչ բացատրութիւնը գտնել: Նոր աշխարհի ընկերաքաղաքական եւ տնտեսական ազդակների ու տարբեր մշակոյթների միջավայրում, նրանց հետեւած գրական ուղղութիւնն ու այրող թեմաներին տուած լուծումները իրենց նախորդներից չտարբերուեցին: Այդ ազդակները երեւան պիտի գային ու դրսեւորուէին նոր սերնդի, անապատի սերնդի, ցեղասպանութիւնից ազատուած որբերի գրականութեան մէջ:

Այս սերունդը իրեն վիճակուած ճակատագրին իր գրականութեամբ դիմակայում էր ամենատարբեր եւ ամենաբարդ բովանդակութեամբ: Ցեղասպանութիւնը խախտել էր նախա-եղեռնեան բոլոր սկզբունքներն ու հիմունքները: Այդ խախտումը պէտք էր ըմբռնել, ճանաչել եւ դիմագրաւել: Պէտք էր ստեղծել նոր արժէքային համակարգ, նոր սկզբունքներ՝ որպէսզի ազգային վերապրումը հնարաւոր դառնար: Ուրեմն, այդ սերնդի գրականութիւնը հասկանալու համար, պիտի ըմբռնել Աղէտը ու նրա հոգեբանական եւ ընկերաքաղաքական ազդեցութիւնը: Ինչո՞ւ են Շահնուրի հերոսները այդքան խոր դառնութեամբ պարսաւում հայ մեծերին ու ստորադատում հայ ազգային արժէքները: Ինչո՞ւ է Կարօ Փոլատեանի հերոսը այդքան յուսահատ ու անկար հրաժարում այն ամէն ինչից որ հայկական է: Ինչո՞ւ Վազգէն Շուշանեանը ամբողջ իր կեանքում չկարողացաւ ձերբազատուել որբի հոգեկան տառապագին իրավիճակից: Այս հարցումների պատասխանը գտնելու իմ պրպտումների մէջ զգացի ճնշող ու քայքայող ազդեցութիւնը Մեծ Եղեռնի եւ գրական ստեղծագործութիւնների ծալքերում փորձեցի այդ ազդեցութեան բարդ համակարգը բացել:

Մեծ Եղեռնի ընթացքում որբացած սերնդի գրական առաջին քայլերից իսկ զգալի է նախա-եղեռնեան աւանդու-

թիւններից տարբերուող նոր շունչն ու նոր ծեաբանութիւնը, վկան՝ Լեւոն Ջաւէն Սիւրմելեանի «Լոյս Ջուարթ» բանաստեղծութիւնների հատորիկը դեռ 1922-3ին: Մթնոլորտում տիրող մահազին կարօտը դէպի կորցրած մայրը, հարազատները, հայրենի տունը, բնութիւնը, պիտի մշտապէս բուն դնէր նրա վիրաւոր հոգում՝ տարիներ յետոյ ժայթքելու համար *I Ask you Ladies and Gentlemen* («Ձեզ եմ հարցնում տիկնայք եւ պարոնայք») ինքնակենսագրական հատորում:

Այդ սերնդի գրականութեան մէջ, սակայն, բացի մի քանի ինքնակենսագրական վէպերից, որոնք յայտնուել են Միջին Արեւելքի կամ ԱՄՆի պայմաններում, անապատի որբերը—կամ ինչպէս Ուիլիամ Սարոյեանն է ասել, պատերազմի տարիների այն հայ երեխաները, որոնք խաբեցին թուրքերին ու չմեռան—չփորձեցին Եղեռնը նկարագրել: Այնուամենայնիւ, Եղեռնը նրանց հոգու մէջ էր, նրանց կեանքում, յաւէտ կենդանի մանկութեան յիշատակներում:

Վազգէն Շուշանեանի կեանքում միշտ ներկայ էին անցեալի՝ հայրենի օճախի տաքուկ մթնոլորտի ու ծննդավայրի շքեղ բնութեան յիշողութիւնները: Մարդկային իւրօրինակ յարաբերութիւններ պարտադրող փարիզեան կեանքի հետ նա երբեք չընտելացաւ: Հազիւ տասներկու տարեկան, Դէյր էլ-Զոր չհասած մենակ էր մնացել ու մենակ անցել էր տարօրինակ ճանապարհներով: Մարդկանցից լքուած ու արհամարհուած, փողոցի շների հետ չոր հաց էր կիսել ու նրանց կողքին կեղտոտ առուներում գիշերներ անցկացրել: 1922-ին Փարիզ էր հասել ու ապրել՝ մինչեւ իր դեռահաս մահը՝ 1941-ին: Շուշանեանը ներկայից խուսափեց ու իր յուշերում ապաստան գտաւ: Նրա «Երկիր յիշատակաց»ը լի է այդ հոգեվիճակի վկայութիւններով ու հայելին՝

նրա նման որբացած ու որբութեան գրկանքների զոհ սերնդի ապրած կեանքի:

Շուշանեանին ոչ նման, Սիվրիհիսարում ծնուած եւ Եղեռնից յետոյ Դամասկոս եւ Բեյրութ հաստատուած Մուշեղ Իշխանը (Ճենտերճեան) մանրամասնօրէն նկարագրեց իր մանկութիւնը: Տեղահանութիւն ու աքսոր, *սեֆերբերլիք* եւ *սելքիաթ*, երկու չարաշուք բառեր, նրա հոգու վրայ սելամալի պէս կախուեցին ու նրա մտքում վառ պահեցին դրանց հետ կապուած սարսափելի տեսարանները՝ մերկ կնոջ դիակ գետի ջրերի մէջ քշուող ու մարդկային թեւ գետափի ծառի արմատներին դէմ առած, յետոյ Մուղանիայի ծովափին մորթուած կանանց ու տղամարդկանց դիակներ ու ծովից անցնող արեան վտակներ:

Այսպիսի տեսարաններ, նոյնիսկ ներկայի առօրեային չկապուող, կարող են առանց բացայայտ դրդապատճառի զոհի ուղեղում յուշեր արթնացնել ու անասելի տառապանք պատճառել: Հոգեբանները այդ երեւոյթը վերագրում են զարհուրելի փորձառութիւնից անցած մարդու հոգեկան խոցելիութեանը (“psychic vulnerability”): Նրանց կարծիքով, այս յիշատակները կամ տեսարանները, որոնց “iconic images” (պատկերային կերպարներ) են անուանում, թաղուած մնում են վերապրողի ենթագիտակցութեան խորքերում եւ սովորաբար դիւրութեամբ հասանելի չեն: Այդուհանդերձ, դրանք յանկարծ երեւան են գալիս կամքից անկախ՝ մի ծայն կամ մի բառ լսելիս, մի հոտից, մի առարկայ շօշափելիս: Ու դրանց առաջացրած զգացումը վերապրողի մէջ արթնացնում է այն բոլոր սարսափազդու տեսարաններն ու կրած տառապանքը, որ կարծում էր, թէ կարողացել է սանձահարել ու մոռացութեան մատնել:

«Մնաս բարով մանկութիւն» ինքնակենսագրութիւնում Մուշեղ Իշխանը կէս դար անց վերստին ապրում է այդ տեսարանները. յիշում է թէ ինչպէս ազատութեան մէջ անգամ մղձաւանջներ էր տեսնում, եւ սարսափահար քնից վեր ցատկում, «Թուրքերը, մամա, թուրքերը կու գան կոր մորթելու»: Եւ իրօք, «Այդ օրերուն մենք ո՛չ միայն կորսնցուցած էինք երջանկութիւնը, այլ նաեւ երջանկութիւնը զգալու մանկական ջինջ հոգին»:

Շապին Գարահիսարում ծնուած եւ Եղեռնից յետոյ Ամերիկա հաստատուած Արամ Հայկազը տասնհինգ տարեկան էր, նոյնիսկ իր ծննդավայրի հերոսական ինքնապաշտպանութեան էր մասնակցել: Նրա գրականութեան մէջ, «Մանկութեան յիշատակներ», «Զորս տարի Քուրդիստանի լեռներուն մէջ», «Ցեղին ծայնը» եւ այլն, հայրենի երկիրն է խօսում իր ամբողջ երանելիութեամբ, իր վարքերի ու բարքերի գեղեցիկ ու տգեղ կողմերով: Եւ այդ բոլորը՝ կենդանի, շնչող ու ապրող պատկերներով, ուր ո՛չ ողբ կայ, ո՛չ ճնշիչ մթնոլորտ եւ ոչ էլ երկարաշունչ նկարագրութիւններ: Սրանք Հայկազի ստեղծագործութիւնների՝ նրա ցեղասպանութեան գրականութեան, յատկանիշներն են, որ բխում են ո՛չ միայն նրա ցեղային ծիներից եւ անհատական խառնուածքից, այլ նաեւ որովհետեւ Եւրոպայի համեմատութեամբ աւելի դիւրին էր ապրել ու ստեղծագործել ԱՄՆում, ուր աւելի նուազ էին օտարների հանդէպ խտրականութիւնն ու անհանդուրժողականութիւնը եւ ուր գոյութիւն ունէին աւելի տանելի տնտեսական պայմաններ:

Նման միջավայրից է բխել նաեւ Սիւրմելեանի ինքնակենսագրութիւնը: Սիւրմելեանը նկարագրում է իր ընտանիքի աքսորը Տրապիզոնից, եւ աղիտալի այն վայրկեանը երբ մայրը նրան ամերիկացի աւետարանչին էր յանձնում ու

հեռանում: «Ուզում էի կանչել Մայրիկ, ու վազել նրա ետեւից, բայց կանգնած մնացի Մի քանի վայրկեանում իմ մէջ տեղի ունեցաւ այն խորը փոփոխութիւններից մէկը, որ փակում է կեանքի մի հանգրուան ու միւսը սկսում»: Դրանից յետոյ անդադար փախուստ՝ թրքական որբանոցից, մահուան սպառնացող ստուերից, նրան Իսլամ կրօնը պարտադրող չեթի որջից, կողոպտուած, լլկուած ու աւերուած դիակ դարձած հայրենի տնից, ապա՝ գետի մէջ քարից քար դիպչող կուրծքը կտրուած կնոջ դիակի սարսափազդու տեսարանից: Տասնմէկ տարեկան հայու տղայ Ջաւէնը՝ թուրք Ջենալ, ապա յոյն Եանքօ դարձած, դեռ երկար ճամբայ ունէր ազատութեան հասնելու:

Սիւրմելեանի ինքնակենսագրութեան մէկ կարեւոր արժանիքը կայանում է ջարդերին, սպանութիւններին, տեղահանութեան եւ ընդհանրապէս դէպքերի, դէմքերի ու վայրերի մանրամասն նկարագրութեան եւ փաստագրական արձանագրութիւնների մէջ: Նա հայ եւ թուրք ժողովուրդների իրական յարաբերութիւնը դեռ շատ մանուկ հասակում էր ըմբռնել՝ երբ հասակակից թուրքը, որին նա իր մտերիմ ընկերն էր կարծել, նրան *գեաւուր* շուն էր կոչել:

Յակոբ Ասատուրեանի ինքնակենսագրական վէպն էլ ԱՄՆի համեմատական ազատութեան միջավայրի դրոշմն է կրում: «Յովակիմի թոռները» նոյնպէս արժէքաւոր է աքսորի ճամբին կրած տառապանքների, թանկագին կորուստների, անցած ու ապրած հեռաւոր, նոյնիսկ չլսուած գիւղերի նկարագրութիւնների տեսակէտից: Եւ պատկերում են աներեւակայելի տեսարաններ, սով, համաճարակ հիւանդութիւններ եւ մահուան տիրակալ շուքը հայ գաղթականների ճամբարում: Ամէն օր տասնեակ զոհեր. արդէն մի բուռ գաղթական էր մնացել, ու վերջինն էլ Յակոբի մայրը, որ

օրերով մերժեց որդու շահած մի կտոր չոր հացը կիսել եւ սովամահ եղաւ:

Դիակների թաղման պարտականութիւնը արաբ գիւղապետը հայ տղաներին էր յանձնել. բայց հիմա նրանց թիւն էլ էր նուազել, ուժ էլ չէր մնացել: Գիւղապետը մօտակայ մի ծոր էր գտել ու կարգադրել էր դիակները այտել նետել: Տղաները օգնել էին Յակոբի մօր դիակը մինչեւ ծորը քարշ տալու: Յակոբը ամբողջ կեանքում չկարողացաւ մոռանալ մղձաւանջի տեսքով յաճախ նրան այցելող սոսկալի տեսարանը՝ ինչպէս մօր դիակը ծորն ի վար գլորուելիս գլուխը երկու անգամ ուժգին զարնուեց ցցուած քարերին ու ջախջախուեց:

Մանկութեան յուշերը այլ կերպ են դրսեւորում ֆրանսահայ գրողների մօտ: Նկարագրութիւնները հմուտ նկարչի վրձնի հարուածների պէս վերացական պատկերների, տպաւորութիւնների ու զգացումային յորձանուտների տեսք են ստանում:

Շաւարշ Նարդունին գրական փոքրաթիւ գործեր է թողել. «Ով Կաղանդ»ը վերացական ոճով գծուած նրա ինքնակենսագրութիւնն է՝ երազի մէջ կատարած մի ճամբորդութիւն դէպի մանկութեան օրեր ու հայրենի Ադաբազար: Ինքնակենսագրութիւնը շարունակում է «Ո՞ տայր ինձ գծուխն ծխանի» պատկերում, երբ նա հիմա Փարիզում է, Նոր Տարուայ գիշեր, ինչպէս լինում էր Ադաբազարում: Կարօտում է իր տունը, որ հաւաքական իմաստով նաեւ հայրենիք է ենթադրում: Հարազատ տնից ու հայրենիքից զրկուած լինելու ցաւը կրծում է հոգին: Անցեալի յուշերը, երբեմն անուշ երբեմն ահաւոր տեսարաններով, ներխուժում են անսպասելի իրավիճակներում: Նա խոստովանում է, թէ չմերուկի հոտը իրեն հայրենի գիւղն է տանում: Կարօտը

խեղտում է նրան, ու նա պատրաստ է թողնել ամէն ինչ, արեւմտեան աշխարհի կենցաղ ու քաղաքակրթութիւն, եւ իր բիւրեղ ակունքներին վերադառնալ:

Մանկութեան յիշողութիւնների ծիրից ներս, ո՞ր կարելի է տեղաւորել Կարօ Փոլատեանի «Արծիւները անապատին մէջ» (1958) եւ «Կրակէ շապիկը» (1966) վէպերը: Հեղինակը ինքնակենսագրութեան փորձ չի կատարում: Առաջին վէպը իր ժամանակաշրջանով աւելի համընկնում է նրա ծնողների անցած Եղեռնի տառապագին ճանապարհին ու պատկերում է Կիլիկիոյ անառիկ լեռներում շքեղ բնութեամբ շրջապատուած նրանց հայրենի գիւղը իր քաջարի ժողովրդով: Հեղինակի լայն պրպտումները, խոր եւ համոզիչ ուսումնասիրութիւնները եւ գեղարուեստական վառ երեւակայութիւնը այդ վէպը փաստագրութեան են մօտեցրել: Երկրորդը՝ իր սերնդի պատմութիւնն է արդէն, եւ Փարիզի ու Մարսէլի ծուլող եւ այլասերող միջավայրն է ներկայացնում:

Ինքնակենսագրական վէպերից իւրաքանչիւրը վերապրումի մի իւրայատուկ նմոյշ/պատմութիւն է, որ նաեւ մի երեսակն է Հսկայ Ոճիրի: Դրանց հաւաքականութիւնը արեան, ցաւի ու արցունքի մի ահագնատեսիլ համայնապատկեր է ներկայացնում, որ դեռ շատ թերի է իր մանրամասնութիւնների մէջ ու շատ է զիջում իրականութեանը: Իսկ այդ իրականութեան ծալքերում Հայաստանն է՝ աւերուած ու դատարկուած իր հարազատ ժողովրդից, այդ ժողովրդի մնացորդացն է՝ գաղթականներ, որբեր, որբեր՝ աշխարհով մէկ ցաք ու ցրիւ:

Արդարեւ, Ցեղասպանութեան առթած աւերը այդ որբերի հոգիներում աղբիւր դարձաւ հիւանդագին մի զգացումի, որը կարելի է որբութեան մորմոք որակել: Նրանք զրկուեցին անմեղ մանկութիւնից, տաքուկ օձախից ու մօր քնքշանքից:

Թուրքի եաթաղանից մազապուրծ, նրանցից շատերը մենակ ու մոլոր անապատներից անցնելով, թուրքի, քուրդի ու արաբի մօտ ստրուկ դարձան, կամ գիւղից գիւղ փախչելով, կիսամերկ ու քաղցած, հաց ու գթութիւն մուրալով, թափառական շների հետ քաղցած օրեր անցկացրին, անցնողների անխղճութիւնն ու վայրագ վերաբերմունքը տեսան ու համբերեցին: Այս է այն տխուր պատկերը, որ գծագրուում է մեր երեւակայութեան դաշտում երբ կարդում ենք, օրինակ՝ Վազգէն Շուշանեանի «Վասն պատրանաթափ մանկութեան եւ մնայուն աղքատութեան», Անդրանիկ Շառուկեանի «Մանկութիւն չունեցող մարդիկ», Մուշեղ Իշխանի «Հացի եւ լոյսի համար» կամ «Մնաս բարով մանկութիւն», Լեւոն Ջաւէն Սիւրմելեանի *I Ask You, Ladies and Gentlemen*, Արամ Հայկազի «Յեղին ծայնը», Յակոբ Ասատուրեանի «Յովակիմի թոռները» եւ այլ ինքնակենսագրական հատորներ:

Որքի հոգեվիճակը մնայուն մի մասնիկը դարձաւ նրանց անհատականութեան ու աշխարհընկալումի: «Չափահաս որբերի միութիւն» խմբակցութեան կազմութիւնը ապացոյցն է դրա: Բացառութիւններից մէկն է Յակոբ Ասատուրեանի անձը ներկայացնող Յարութիւնը, որ մերժեց «որբ» պիտակն ու որբանոցի կեանքը, «Ո՛չ Պարոն “Բարեգործական”, ես չեմ ուզում որբ լինել», ասաց ու դուրս եկաւ որբանոցից: Շաւարշ Նարդունին «Ո՞ տայր ինձ գծուխն ծխանի» գործում իր որբութեան դառն փորձին է ակնարկում ու նշում, «Անօթութիւնը եւ թուրքին սարսափը չէին կրնար այնքան խորտակել զիս, որքան կարօտը տունին»:

Միջին Արեւելքի զանազան վայրերում հաստատուած որբանոցները, իրենց թերութիւններով ու անբաւարարութիւններով հանդերձ, ցանկալի ապաստան էին այս փոքրիկ լճիկների համար. բայց այդ ապահով միջավայրում անգամ

շարունակական վախն ու գիշերային կոշմարները հանգիստ չէին տալիս նրանց: Դամասկոսի որբանոցում ընկած Անդրանիկ Շառուկեանը երջանիկներից էր: Երեք տարի որբանոցի կեանք ապրելուց յետոյ, մի օր ցնցոտիների մէջ մի կին երեւաց որբանոցի դռանը ու տաս տարեկան Անդրանիկն ու մայրը, իբրեւ մեծ գերդաստանի միակ փրկուածներ, ծայր աստիճան աղքատութեան մէջ, բայց ազատ, նոր կեանք սկսեցին միասին:

Աղէտը վերապրած որբերը իրենց ամբողջ կեանքում մօր կարօտով ապրեցին ու նրա հետ անդրշիրիմեան յարաբերութեան մէջ գտան իրենց սփոփանքը: Վկայ՝ Լեւոն Ջաւէն Սիւրմելեանի «Լոյս Ջուարթ»ը: Մօր ամուսնական մատանին Ջաւէնին էր հասել, ու նա իր ձկոյթ մատին կրեց այն ընդմիշտ.

Մայրի՛կ,
Հին ու մոռցուած երգի մը չափ քաղցր է խօսիլը քեզի,
Դուն մարմարէ սիրուիիս ու գլուխ պրոնգէ,
Որուն անշարժ շրթերն են բարակ ու անթերի,
Ըսէ՛,
Ինչպէ՛ս գտնեմ, ինչպէ՛ս գտնեմ
Իմ մեռելներս:

Գողանալ, խաբել, թոյլի վրայ բռնանալ, սրանք էին տիրող օրէնքները որբանոցի կեանքում ու դրսի աշխարհում: Եւ սա, ինչպէս Շուշանեանն է գրում, «Այն տարիքին երբ ուրիշները փափուկ ու տաք անկողիներու մէջ, մայրական գգուանքներով կը մեծնային»: Մուշեղ Իշխանը, կամ նրա անձնաւորումը պոյաճի Սեդրակի մէջ, գոնէ մայր ունէր. իսկ նրա ընկերները...

Վահանը, որ ամենից փոքրն էր եւ իր ընտանիքի միակ վերապրողը, յիշում է թէ ինչպէս հորը սպանեցին, քոյրը գաղթի ճամբին սովամահ եղաւ. ինքն ու մայրը քայլեցին մինչեւ Դէյր էլ-Զոր: Այնտեղ զափթիւները բաժանեցին նրանց: Մայրը ճշում էր նրա ետեւից ու յորդորում վազել, փախչել: Ու Վահանը վազեց մինչեւ Եփրատ գետը, որ միեւնոյն ժամանակ թէ՛ ազատութիւն էր խոստանում եւ թէ նոր սարսափ էր սպառնում: Եփրատը հոսող գերեզմանատուն էր հայ գաղթականների համար: Վահանը ջրի մէջ վազող, այլանդակուած դիակների մէջ էր խճճուել: Նրա այս յանկարծակի բախումը այդ սարսափելի տեսարանի հետ մի օրինակ է հազարաւոր նման ընդհարումների, որ ի վիճակի է մանկական հոգիները խորտակել ընդմիջտ... Բայց օգնութեան է հասնում մանկան հոգեկան, բնագոյային ինքնապաշտպանութիւնը (self-defense mechanism): Անտարբերութեան վարագոյրը իջնում է նրա ուղեղի վրայ: Նա նոյնիսկ խաղ է յօրինում՝ մի տեսակ մրցոյթ դիակների մէջ, թէ ո՞ր մէկը շուտ կը հասնի իր որոշած կէտին: Յաճախ կրկնուող մի սարսափելի երեւոյթի նկատմամբ այս հոգեկան անջատումը եւ աճող անտարբերութիւնը հոգեբաններ՝ Հայկազ Գրիգորեանը եւ Լեւոն Պոյաճեանը բնական են համարում, բայց եւ նշում են, թէ հակառակ առերեւոյթ անտարբերութեան, տեսարանը կամ երեւոյթը ազդում եւ անջնջելի կերպով տպագրւում է ենթակայի ուղեղում: Դա *hypertnesia*-ն է՝ անցեալի անբնականօրէն ուժեղ յիշողութիւն:

Սեդրակը, Վահանը, Արսէնը եւ շատ ու շատ այլ որբեր ապրեցին այդ հոգեվիճակով ու նրա ճնշման տակ: Հոգեբոյժ չկար (Posttraumatic Stress Disorder therapist), որ օգնէր՝ այդ սարսափելի յուշերը ենթագիտակցութիւնից գիտակցութեան դաշտ հանելու ու հաշտութեան եզր բացելու նրա հետ:

որպէսզի՝ կարելի լինի նրա խորտակիչ ազդեցութիւնը սանձել:

Հսկայ անարդարութիւն էր կատարուածը ու ոճրագործը չէր պատժուած: Հայու ո՞ր մեղքի համար, ըմբոստանում էր Իշխանի հերոսներից՝ պատանի Արսէնը եւ արդարացնում իր գողութիւնները, ուրիշ աւելի թոյլ տղաների ձեռքից նրանց օրուայ վաստակածը խլելը: Բայց երբ խմբի գնած ու Վահանին պահ տուած գնդակը գողացաւ, նրա կարծր խղճի տակ թագնուած անուշ սիրտը արիւնեց: Գնդակը պիտի ծախուէր եւ այդ դրամով բժիշկ պիտի բերուէր տաքութեան մէջ այրուող ու արդէն արիւն թքող Վահանի վրայ: Բայց ուշ էր. հիւանդութիւնը իր աւերը գործել էր արդէն, կամ Դէյր էլ-Զորն էր վերջապէս իր գոհը խլել: Սենեակ կոչուած խոնաւ ու մութ անկիւնում, հին փալասի տակ պառկած տասնմէկ տարեկան պոյաճի Վահանը մօր հետ իր մօտալուտ հանդիպումն էր երագում:

Արտաքնապէս խիստ բայց նոյն ժամանակ նուրբ ու դիւրաբէկ հոգիներով այս որբերի մէջ երկու անձ. էր բնակւում՝ չարն ու բարին միատեղ. որ կռւում էին բացարձակ տիրապետութեան համար: Նրանց մայրերը սովորեցրել էին լինել բարի ու աստուածավախ, բայց դա չէր փողոցի օրէնքը: Կեանքից, մարդկանցից ու աշխարհից կրած յուսախաբութիւնը նրանց նոյնիսկ Աստծու դէմ էր հանել: Շուշանեանի կարծիքով մարդկանց վրայ հաւասարապէս տարածուող Աստծոյ ողորմութիւնը բացարձակ խաբէութիւն էր: Ո՞ր էր Աստուած երբ ինքը քաղցած էր, հիւանդ ու անօգնական: Նրա կարծիքով միայն մէկ Աստուած կար եւ դա էլ Դրամն էր, ու եթէ էլ Աստուած կար՝ դրամին էր ծառայում:

Չարի եւ բարու կռուի պատճառած ցաւը սարսափելի էր, բայց անտանելի էր նաեւ կարօտը անդարձ կորցրած հայրենիքի: Նոր Տարուայ գիշեր է, եւ Արամ Հայկազը իր հայրենի տունը իր գիւղն է երազում «օտար այս երկինքին տակ կ'ապրիմ անբաղձալի հիւրի մը պէս»: Նոյնիսկ Սիւրմելեանի պէս ամերիկեան կեանքին ու մշակոյթին ընտելացած անձը իրեն օտար է զգում. «մեծ առանձնաշնորհում է Ամերիկայի քաղաքացի լինել բայց Կաղանդի գիշեր է եւ ես իմ հօրն եմ յիշում ու Ձեզ եմ հարցնում տիկնայք եւ պարոնայք, ի՞նչ կարող ես անել Կաղանդի գիշեր այս ուրախ ու ազատ երկրում, երբ քո խաղընկերները, դասընկերները, բոլոր, բոլորը, որոնց հետ մեծացար, քո տխրութիւնն ու ուրախութիւնը, քաղցն ու թշուառութիւնը կ'իսող եւ քեզ հետ երազող ընկերներդ կորան, այլեւս չկան»:

Յատկանշական է, որ կորած հայրենիքի կարօտը յաճախ փոխարինում է մեռած մօր կարօտով. եւ դա՝ որովհետեւ այս որբերի մտքում երկուսն էլ անմեղ եւ ուրախ մանկութիւն են յիշեցնում, սէր, խաղաղութիւն եւ ապահովութիւն են ենթադրում: Բացի այդ, երկուսի կորուստն էլ պայմանաւորուած է յղացքայնօրէն նմանատիպ վայրագ ոճրագործութեամբ. ուրեմն եւ դրանցից բաժանման ցաւը դառնում է տարփոփոխական:

Շաւարշ Նարդունին նախանձով է դիտում գերմանացի ժողովրդի հպարտ հայրենասիրութեանը: “Deutschland über alles,” երգում են գերմանացիները. իսկ հայերը հայրենիք չունեն...: Նոյն զգացումն է դրսեւորում Նիկողայոս Սարաֆեանի “14” վերնագրուած բանաստեղծութիւնների շարքում (1933), որ Ֆրանսիայի ազգային տօնի, Յուլիս 14, Բասթիլի օրուայ առիթով է գրուած: Ֆրանսացի ժողովրդի խանդավառ մասնակցութիւնը այդ տօնախմբութեան զայրացնում է նրան:

Նա ցանկանում է դուրս գալ ու ճշալ այդ հազարներին ու իր հազարաւոր անթաղ մեռելները յիշեցնել նրանց: Բանաստեղծութիւններից իւրաքանչիւրի ձակատում կրկնում է կարգախօսի տեսք առած նոյն նախադասութիւնը՝ «Կարելի չէ, կարելի չէ չը յիշել, քեզ, Օ՛ արիւն»:

Հետաքրքիր է, որ որբերի սերնդի մի մեծ մասը խորհրդային Հայաստանը որպէս հայրենիք չի ընկալում: Ամփոխարինելի է Արեւմտեան Հայաստան հայրենիքը: Շաւարշ Նարդունի, Շահան Շահնուր օրինակներ են. իսկ Անդրանիկ Շառուկեանի «Թուղթ առ Երեւան»ը մարմնաւորում է այդ կեցուածքը: Բանաստեղծութիւնը համակ ընդվզում է ընդդէմ Սփիւռքի հանդէպ խորհրդային իշխանութիւնների վերաբերմունքի: Կայ նաեւ սփիւռքահայ գրողների այն փաղանգը, որ հաշտ է խորհրդային վարչակարգի հետ, ուրեմն եւ ամենայն ոգեւորութեամբ խորհրդային Հայաստանը որպէս հայրենիք է ընդունում. օրինակ՝ Վահէ Հայկը, Մառի Աթմաճեանը, Բենիամին Նուրիկեանը:

Օտար միջավայրում տածած հայրենի կարօտը, հարազատների կորստի պատճառած ցաւը շատ պարագաներում այնքան անտանելի ու տառապագին են դառնում: Միակելքը երազների աշխարհում ապաստանել: Մուշեղ Իշխանը «Կեանք ու երազ» բանաստեղծութիւնների շարքում այդ հոգեվիճակն է պատկերում: Նրա քնարական հերոսի կեանքը երազ է, երազի աշխարհից դուրս միայն ցաւ կայ ու տառապանք: Ու երբ մահը վրայ հասնի, կեանքը չէ, որ ընդհատուի է. դա վաղուց է ընդհատուել. պարզապէս մի երազից նա անցնում է մի ուրիշին՝ յաւիտենականին: Վազգէն Շուշանեանը երազում է՝ «Ես կ'երազեմ յաճախ աչքերս բաց: Թարթիչներս խոնաւ արտասուքի կաթիլներով:

Լուռ: Խուլ: Յուզաբեկ, կործանած յիշատակներու աւերակոյտի մը մէջտեղ»:

Երագից այն կողմ նոր աշխարհի կոպիտ ու անգութ գոյապայքարի իրականութիւնն է, որին կարելի չէ համակերպուել, մանաւանդ՝ երբ ապրում ես մեռելներիդ հետ՝ անցեալում, երազներում: Ու եթէ փորձեցիր բացուել իրականութեանը, արդիւնքը յուսահատութիւնն է, յոռետեսութիւնն է հոգեբանական անկում: Շահնուրի վիպային հերոսները, տարբեր նկարագրի ու տարբեր խաւերի մարդիկ, այս հոգեբանութիւնն են մարմնաւորում: Լոխումը, նուրբ ու անուշիկ տղան, այլեւս չի դիմանում փարիզեան կեանքին, փորձում է վերադառնալ «հայրենիք»՝ Պոլիս իր մօր մօտ, թէկուզ թուրքի շուքի տակ: Բայց թուրք պաշտօնեան հեզնում է նրան ու մերժում թոյլտուութիւն տալ: Նա փորձել էր Խորհրդային Հայաստան գնալ ու գոնէ Մասիսի շունչը շնչել: Բայց Պատմական Հայաստանից մնացած այդ մի կտոր հայրենիքը իրաւունք չունէր իր գաւակներին իր գիրկն առնելու: Լոխումի վերջը խենթանոցն էր: Իսկ Տաքես Աղան, Նորայր Կարապետեանը եւ միւսները, «Յարալէզներու դաւաճանութիւնը» պատմութեան շարքում, իւրաքանչիւրին մի դժբախտ վախճան էր սպասում:

Ղրաման շարունակում է Կարօ Փոլատեանի վէպերում, Բաբկէնը անյաջող փախուստ է կատարում այն ամէն ինչից որ հայկական է («Կը հրաժարիմ հայութենէ») ... Վրէժը տուայտանք է ապրում ու ցաւով դիտում Ֆրանսիայի բարոյազուրկ հասարակութեանը, եւ ազատ ու նեխած կեանքին կուլ գնացած հայ նոր սերունդների կորուստն է վկայում: Երանի ինքն էլ կարողանար ազատուել կապանքներից որ իր դաստիարակութիւնն էր իրեն փոխանցել, ազատագրուել այն սարսափելի յուշերից, որ իր ծնողներինն էր ու հիմա

իրեն էր դարձել. բայց այդ հայկականութիւնը կրակէ շապկի պէս կպած է մարմնին ու այրում է («Կրակէ շապիկը»):

Շուշանեանի կեանքը պայքար էր դիմագրաւելու այն տխրութեանն ու յոռետեսութեանը որ իր ճակատագիրն էր դարձել ու անցեալի յուշերի կերպարանքով ստուերի պէս հետեւում էր նրան: «Օր մը առաջ, օր մը յետոյ, հոս՝ թէ քիչ մը հեռուն վերջացնենք այս անօգուտ, այս աւելորդ, այս տխուր պատմութիւնը...»: Ըստ հոգեբանների, սա ախտանիշն է հոգեկան գերընկճութեանն ու բնական երեւոյթ՝ դժոխային փորձառութիւնից անցած մարդկանց մէջ: Այնուամենայնիւ, հետաքրքիր է այդ հոգեվիճակից բխած գեղարուեստական պրտապայտութիւնները մեթաֆորիք ձեւակերպումներով: Երբեմն այդ հակազդեցութիւնը նման է վիրաւոր գազանի, որ անօգնական՝ իր վերքն է լիզում. բայց համբերութիւնն ու ցաւին դիմանալն էլ սահման ունի: Եւ սոսկալի ցաւից ու անդադար հոսող արեան տեսքից կատաղած գազանը պատրաստ է պատառոտել վերքը՝ թէկուզ եթէ կեանքը տայ այդ ճամբին: «Թերթիս կիրակնօրեայ թիւը» պատկերում Շահնուրը բացատրում է երեւոյթը իր իսկ հոգեվիճակը օրինակ ծառայեցնելով: Երբեմն անտանելի ցաւը վրէժի զգացում է առաջացնում, վրէժ՝ այդպիսի իրավիճակ պատճառած թուրքի դէմ:

Վրէժը տարբեր ձեւերով է դրսեւորւում. Օշականի կարծիքով թուրքը կարիճի բնագոյնն է, որ դարերից է եկել ու երբեք չի փոխուի: Կարծես ոճրագործին պարսաւելով ու նրա նկարագիրը աշխարհի առջեւ բացայայտելով, Օշականը վրէժ է լուծում նրանից: Սիրմելեանի մանկական պոռթկումը նրա վրէժն է թուրքից՝ տարեկից որբ տղաներով հաւաքուել ու մի թուրք համալի էին ծեծել...

Ոչ մի պարագայում սակայն, վրիժառուները գոհացուցիչ զգացում չի պարգևում. հետեւանքը լինում է այն, որ հակազդեցությունը դէպի ներս է շրջւում եւ դրսետւում է մի տեսակ կատաղութեամբ ընդդէմ հենց ինքն իրեն ու իր սիրած էակին: Այս երեւոյթին հանդիպում ենք թէ՛ Շուշանեանի մօտ («Գարնանային սիրոյ հեզ նամակներ», «Սիրոյ եւ արկածի տղաքը») եւ թէ՛ Շահնուրի հերոսների մէջ: Ոչինչ ցաւը չի թեթեւացնում. ալքովը, թմրանիքերը, անբարոյ սեռային յարաբերութիւնները ժամանակաւոր անդորր ու ինքնամոռացութիւն են բերում միայն: Բայց նոյնիսկ նման պահերին, միշտ մի ձայն ետ է կանչում: Շուշանեանի դէպքում, քոյրն է, որից բաժանուեց անապատում, ու այդ վայրկեանից նրա մէջ մեռաւ անմեղ մանկութիւնը: Քոյրը երեւում է նրան նոյնիսկ երբ մի ինչ որ Լիւսեթի կամ այլ ֆրանսուհու հետ սիրոյ համբոյր է փոխանակում. ու չգիտի քրոջն է արդեօք համբուրում («Ցայգերգ»):

Եղեռնը ո՛չ միայն մարդկային հսկայ կորուստ էր պատճառել այլ նաեւ՝ հասարակական եւ բարոյական բոլոր նորմերի խախտում: Զիգմունդ Ֆրոյդի կարծիքով, այս խախտումը համամարդկային հիմնական օրէնքի փլուզման հետեւանք է, եւ դրա հիմքում՝ սրբապղծութեան (incest) թաքուի վերացումը: «Մենք» խմբակցութեանը մաս կազմող ֆրանսահայ երիտասարդ գրողները հաւատում էին, նոյնիսկ գուցէ ենթագիտակցաբար կամ ֆրանսիական գրականութեան ազդեցութեան ներքոյ, որ սրբապղծութեան թաքուի հետ ճակատելով եւ այն գրականութեան մէջ բերելով, կարող են յետ-եղեռնեան հասարակութեան մէջ այդ խախտման պատճառած ււերը վերացնել: Զարեհ Որբունու «Վարձու սենեակ»ը, «Եւ եղեւ մարդ»ը, Շահնուրի «Բոյնուզ-լըներ»ը, Նիկողայոս Սարաֆեանի «Իշխանուհի»ն այդ

փորձի մի քանի օրինակներն են: Շահնուրի հերոսներից իւրաքանչիւրը հասարակական եւ բարոյական նորմերի խախտման մի երեսակն է դրսետւում: Օրինակ՝ Սուրէնի («Նահանջ առանց երգի») յարձակումն ու սուր քննադատութիւնը՝ հայ մշակոյթի հսկաների, պատմական արժէքների ու նախա-եղեռնեան իրականութեան:

Այդ քննադատութեան մէջ, օրինակ Շահնուրի, կամ նրա վիպային հերոսի կարծիքով Աղետի պատասխանատուն հայ նախնիքներն են ու նրանց փոխանցած քրիստոնէական ուսմունքը: Յստակ է, որ Շահնուրի այս վերաբերմունքը անհանգստութիւն պիտի պատճառէր: Օշականը այդ երեւոյթը «Աղետը երկարածգուած» պիտի որակէր, Արշակ Զոպանեանը՝ «անառողջը գրականութեան մէջ», իսկ Լեւոն Բաշալեանը պարզապէս անհեթեթ պիտի համարէր նորամուտութեան ձգտումով յայտնուած այդ գաղափարները:

Բայց անցեալի քննադատութիւնը առկայ է այլոց գրականութեան մէջ եւս: Անդրանիկ Ծառուկեանը «Հող եւ արիւն» բանաստեղծութիւնում գրում է,

Արիւնախանձ ու շատ հին ափ մը հողի համար գորշ,
Արծուաթընչից ցեղ մ'ամբողջ սըգահանդերձ ըրինք մայր...
Խաչափայտի մը համար ու խաչեալի մը քընքուշ՝
Դիւցազնավէ՛պ մը շըքեղ, ըրինք հեքեաթ մը թըշուառ...

Սիրմելեանը *I Ask you Ladies and Gentlemen*-ի մէջ հայ ժողովրդի գլխին եկած աղէտի պատճառը համարում է դիւանագիտութիւն խաղալու անկարող հայ մտաւորականների սխալ քաղաքականութիւնը: "Self-Blame Following a Traumatic Event: The Role of Perceived Avoidability" հետազօտական յօդուածը ցոյց է տալիս, թէ ինքնաքննադա-

տութիւնը որքան սխալ մարտավարութիւն է երբ ենթական փորձում է ողբերգութիւնը դիմակայել ու վերապրել:

Ենթական/ստեղծագործողը, ողբերգութեան ծանր բեռից ազատուելու ու ազատ ստեղծագործելու այլ ելքեր է փնտրում: Դա նրան տանում է դէպի նիւթեր, որոնք բոլորովին էլ հայ իրականութեան չեն առնչուում: Տիգրան Գոյումճեանի (Մայքլ Առլեն) գրականութիւնը մանաւանդ սկզբնական շրջանում հայելին է այդ դիտաւորութեան: Բայց նոյնիսկ իր հայութիւնը ուրացող այդ սառը երեւոյթով մարդը տեղի է տալիս. սառնոյցը հալչում է երբ դէմ դիմաց է գալիս հրէական ողջակիզման պատասխանատուներից՝ Եօզեֆ Գեօրգիւին, յիշում է իր ազգի եղեռնը ու ցնցւում է իր դիտաւորեալ մոռացումը զղջալով, «Դժոխքը տանի լուռ տառապելը... Դժոխքը տանի հրաժարուելը...»:

Հրաչ Զարդարեանը իր պատմութեան համար ֆրանսիական կեանքի իրականութիւններից է նիւթ ընտրում («Երբ երազները ուշանան» կամ «Փարիզի աղջիկը» եւ այլն): Սիւրմելեանի համար անգլերէնով բանաստեղծելը նրա երկու իրարամերժ ինքնութիւնների պատճառած ցաւի դարմանն է: Այդպէս, նա ինքն իրեն միատարր ու ամբողջական է զգում:

Բայց հայ գրողը որքան էլ հեռանայ հայ իրականութիւնից ու հայ լեզուից, ազգի գոյատեւումը նրա համար մնում է հիմնահարց: Շահնուրը ներկայի իրողութիւնը «Պատկերազարդ պատմութիւն հայոց» պիտակելով, ազգային յարատեւման տագնապի ահագանգն է հնչեցնում, «Մեղա՛...մեղա՛ Արարատին»: Կարօ Փոլատեանի հերոսները երեւակայա-կան ու անիրականալի միջոցներ են խորհում եւ կամ Եւրոպան լքած, Հայաստանում—թէկուզ խորհրդային—կամ Միջին Արեւելքի հայահոծ համայնքներում են

ապաստան գտնում: Արամ Հայկազը ծուլումը գտնում է բնական եւ ամփոփում է, որ եթէ իր սերունդը դեռ պահում է ինչ որ բան, թագնուած ազգային ինքնագիտակցութիւն, կամ յուշեր ու յիշատակներ, նրանից սերած երիտասարդի համար դրանք ոչ մի արժէք կամ իմաստ չեն ունենայ: Համաստեղի կամ Բենիամին Նուրիկեանի պատկերացումով հայը կորած է եթէ ապրում է կղզիացած, իր անցեալի, իր հայրենի գիւղի երազներով: Նուրիկեանի համար խորհրդային Հայաստանն է փրկութեան նաւը: Նարդունին Ֆրանսիայում ծուարած հայ գաղթականների—մեծ մասամբ կանայք եւ երեխաներ—սոսկալի իրավիճակին ականատես, այդ երեխաների ապագան բացարձակ ծուլման մէջ է տեսնում եւ դա «Հին ցեղի մը հոգեվարքը»ն է անուանում: Այնուհանդերձ, տարիներ անց, Կարօ փոլատեանին տուած մի հարցա-գրոյցում, նա հաստատում է, թէ եթէ խորհրդային Հայաստանը եւ Սփիւռքը այս խնդրում համագործակցեն, ծուլման սպառնալիքը Սփիւռքում անհետեթ կը դառնայ:

Երբ ֆրանսահայ գրողները կորցրած հայրենիքի ու մեռած մօր ու հարազատների ցաւագին կարօտն էին արտայայտում, Արամ Հայկազը, Համաստեղը եւ մի քանի այլ գրողներ իրենց կարօտը Հին Աշխարհի գեղարուեստական վերստեղծման մէջ էին թաղում: Դա ի հարկէ աղեխառն յիշողութիւնների մէջ թաթախուած նկարագրութիւն չէր. դա շատ գրողներ էին փորձել ու չէին յաջողել: Ժամանակի գրաքննադատ Նշան Դեստեգիլը նախատեսել էր դրանց ճակատագիրը եւ չէր սխալուել: Ընդունելով հանդերձ, որ այդ գրականութիւնը իր ժամանակակից սերնդի համար մի տեսակ պորտալար էր արդէն անգոյ հայրենիքի հետ եւ հայկական ինքնութեան կռուան, նա գիտէր, որ այդ գրականութիւնը ապագայ չունի: Այլ էր Սիւրմելեանի մօտեցումը:

Նա Արեւմտեան Հայաստանի մանրամասն նկարագրութիւնը փաստագրական ճշկրտութեամբ ապագայ սերունդներին էր թողնում: Իր գրականութեան մէջ վերստեղծում էր հայրենիքը՝ որ այլեւս չկար, հայկական կեանքը, որ այլեւս գոյութիւն չունէր:

«Հայրենիք» ամսագրի երկար տարիների խմբագիր Ռուբէն Դարբինեանը զգացել էր Հին Աշխարհը վարպետօրէն վերստեղծելու Համաստեղի տաղանդը: Հակառակ Դեստեգիւլին, որի կարծիքով մեծ աղէտները կարող են գեղարուեստական գլուխգործոցներ ներշնչել, նա հաւատացած էր, որ հենց այդ աղէտի անմիջականութիւնն էր, որ Եղեռնին յաջորդող տարիներին արգիլեց իրական գեղարուեստական գործերի ստեղծումը: Նրա կրծիքով արուեստագէտը պիտի ունենար մտքի հանգստութիւն եւ որոշ չափով էլ նիւթական ապահովութիւն՝ ստեղծագործել կարողանալու համար: Եւ նա այդ պայմանները տեսնում էր Ամերիկայում, որպէս ազատ մտածողութեան եւ ստեղծագործութեան «ժամանակաւոր կեդրոն»: Համաստեղը կարողացել էր այդ պայմաններում հարազատօրէն տալ նախաեղեռնեան հայ գիւղը, Եղեռնի ողբերգութիւնը եւ Ամերիկայում ծուարած գաղթականների տխուր պատմութիւնը:

Հին Աշխարհի վերստեղծումը գրականութեան մէջ դարձաւ միջոց՝ նոր սերնդին փոխանցելու հայ աւանդական սովորութիւններն ու մշակութային ու կենցաղային արժէքները: Միջոց՝ փոխանցելու մի տեսակ պատկանելիութեան զգացում դէպի վերացական հայրենիք: Այդ գրականութիւնից եւ ջարդի ու տեղահանութեան ողբերգութիւնը ապրած անձնական յուշագրութիւններից ու ծնողների պատմութիւններից ներշնչուեց նոր՝ երկրորդ եւ երրորդ սերնդի հարուստ գրականութիւնը:

Եղեռնը վերապրած սերնդից քչերը փորձեցին իրենց անձնական յուշերը թղթին յանձնել: Ցաւը թարմ էր եւ օտար միջավայրում գոյատեւելու պայքարը՝ ծանր: Ողբերգական անցեալը արտայայտուում էր կարճ ու սահմանափակ տարողութեամբ, ժամանակի պարբերաթերթերում ցրուած բանաստեղծութիւնների կամ ակնարկների ժանրերով: Եթէ նոյնիսկ զուրկ գեղարուեստական արժէքից, այդ անմիջական պոռկումները հարազատ արտայայտութիւնն էին գաղթականութեան հոգեվիճակի, Եղեռնի թողած ու չմեղմացող չարաշուք ազդեցութեան: Բայց գիտենք այսօր, որ եղել են մարդիկ, որ նոյնիկ ողբերգութեան տարիներին օրը օրին գրի են առել իրենց տեսածն ու զգացածը եւ գրառումները շարունակել են նոյնիսկ Նոր Աշխարհում: Զանազան պատճառներով, սակայն, դրանք լոյս աշխարհ չեն տեսել: Նրանց մահից յետոյ, այս ձեռագրերի մի մեծ մասը տուփերի մէջ փակուած մնացել են զաւակների տան նկուղներում: Իսկ թոռները, որոնցից շատերը այդ գրութիւնների ո՛չ լեզուն գիտեն եւ ոչ արժէքը, անպէտք իրի պէս ձերբազատուել են դրանցից:

Վերջին երեք տասնամեակներում յատուկ հետաքրքրութիւն է դրսեւորուում հանդէպ վերապրողների յուշագրութիւնները: Զաւակների կամ թոռների քաջալերանքով, յառաջացած տարիքում վերապրողները սկսում են գրի առնել իրենց յուշերը. եւ հրատարակում են դրանք: Հրատարակում են արդէն գրուած ու տարիներ անտարբերութեան մատնուած յուշերը եւս, հայերէն բնագրով բայց եւ անգլերէն կամ մի այլ լեզուի թարգմանուած:

Այս հետաքրքրութեան դրդապատճառներից յիշենք երկուսը: Նախ՝ Սփիւռքում տարուող հայապահպանման եւ Հայ Դատի պայքարի արդիւնքում, աստիճանաբար վերազարթնում ապրեցին հայ գաղթօճախները: Նոր սերնդի մի

մասը, միջավայրին համեմատաբար աւելի ընտելացած, սկսեց մերժել լացի ու սուգի իրեն հասած ժառանգութիւնը եւ ճանաչման պահանջատէրը դարձաւ: 1965-ին, Եղեռնի յիսնամեակի ոգեկոչումները ամենուրեք անկիւնադարձ եղան: Ապրիլ 24-ին, սովորական սգահանդէսների փոխարէն ցոյցեր ու քաղաքական հաւաքներ կազմակերպուեցին: Նոյն ժամանակ, որպէս առաջինը Խորհրդային Միութեան պատմութեան մէջ, այլախոհ մտաւորականների դրոյմամբ եւ առաջնորդութեամբ, փողոց դուրս եկած բազմութիւնը «Մեր հողերը... Մեր հողերը» կարգախօսը բարձրացրեց ու հայոց պատմական հողերի վերադարձը պահանջեց:

Հայ համայնքների ազգային գիտակցութեան զարգացումը խթանող մի այլ ազդակ էր Ամերիկայում 1960-70-ականներին ինքնագիտակցական ու արմատներին վերադառնալու շարժումը, մանաւանդ՝ աֆրիկեան ծագում ունեցող ամերիկացիների մէջ: Արդիւնքում՝ ամերիկեան մշակոյթը աւելի հանդուրժող դարձաւ ԱՄՆի ազգաբնակչութիւնը կազմող զանազան խմբակցութիւնների եւ նրանց արմատների, անցեալի ու ազգային պատկանելիութեան փնտրտուքի նկատմամբ: Հայու անցեալը ու նրա Ամերիկայում յայտնուելու դրդապատճառը Ցեղասպանութեան էին յլում, որ միջնորդուած էր հենց ցեղասպանութեան գրականութեամբ ու վերապրողների փոխանցած արեան ու արցունքի պատմութիւններով: Եւ դա դարձաւ աղբիւրը նոր սերնդի ինքնագիտակցութեան:

Քանադահայ Քերոբ Պտուկեանի *Some of us Survived* յուշագրութիւնը լոյս տեսաւ 1979-ին, նուիրուած իր մօր եւ քրոջ, որոնց քաջութեան, տոկունութեան եւ համբերատարութեանն էր պարտական՝ այդ դժոխքից իր կենդանի դուրս գալը: Սըվագում (Սեբաստիա) ծնուած Քերոբը Եղեռնի

օրերին ինն տարեկան էր եղել եւ ինն տարեկանի տեսանկիւնից էլ նա շարադրել է իր յուշերը: Առաջին անգամ մահուան հետ նա դէմ հանդիման էր եկել իրենց քաղաքի հրապարակում հայ յեղափոխական երիտասարդի կախաղանից ձօճուող անշնչացած մարմնի առջեւ սարսափահար քարացած: Դա նախանշանն էր այն արհաւիրքի որ փոքրիկ Քերոբը պիտի ճաշակէր երկար ու դժուարին աքսորի ճամբին մինչեւ Բիրեջիք ու ետ Կոստանդնուպոլիս:

Ալիս Մկրտիչեան Շիփլիի յուշերը, *We Walked Then Ran*, 1983-ին հրատարակուեց: Ապշեցուցիչ է մինչեւ ազատութիւն երկարող չորս տարուայ ճամբան, որ այդ փոքրիկ աղջնակին իր մօր ու քոյրերի հետ Դիարբեքիից ու Խարբերդից մինչեւ Դերսիմ ու Էրզրում, Թիֆլիս, Բաքու, Աստրախան ու Կովկասի վրայով մինչեւ Արքթիք, Հիւսիսային Ծով ու վերջապէս Լոնդոն հասցրեց: Նրա հայրը Անգլիական հիւպատոսարանում բարձրաստիճան պաշտօնեայ լինելով, Դէյվիդ Լոյդ Ջորջի ու Մարք Սայքսի պէս հիւրեր էին այցելում նրանց: Նա յիշում է, թէ ինչ հարցերի մասին էին խօսում. նկարագրում է Խարբերդի Եփրատ Քուէջի հայ դասախօսների ձերբակալութիւնն ու աքսորը եւ ապա իր ընտանիքի տեղահանութիւնն ու փախուստը: Փախուստի ճամբան նրան Բաքուի որբանոցն է նետում. բայց դա էլ երկար չի տևում: Բուլշեւիկները այրում են նաւթահորերը եւ սպանում դրանց տէրերին, որ մեծ մասամբ հայեր էին եւ որոնց նիւթական օգնութեամբ էր որբանոցը պահում:

Գիւրուն ծնուած եւ Սըվագ ապրած Ջան (Յովհաննէս) Մինասեանը տասնեւինն տարեկան երիտասարդ էր երբ տեղահանութիւնները սկսեցին եւ նա իր ծեր հօր եւ ընտանիքի հետ աքսորի ճամբան բռնեց: Առաջին դժուարմատչելի բլուրը մագլցելով, հայրը ասել էր յուսահատ, - դեռ շատ

բլուրներ պիտի մազլցենք: Ինքը չհասցրեց անելին առաջանալ. չարչարանքի տակ կիսամեռ մնաց ճամբի եզերքին: Բայց զաւակը այդ նախատեսումը օգտագործեց որպէս իր յուշագրութեան վերնագիր՝ *Many Hills yet to Climb: Memoirs of an Armenian Deportee* (1986): Մինասեանը գիտէր, որ պարտականութիւն ունի աշխարհին պատմելու հայ ժողովրդի Մեծ Աղէտի մասին, ինչպէս պատգամել էր նրա բանտակիցը գիտենալով, որ ինքը դատապարտուած է մահուան: Յովհաննէսը իրօք շատ բան տեսաւ, մահաբեր ճամբաներից մինչեւ Հալէպ. ապա՝ Հալէպի փոթորկալից կեանքը, գաղթականների կեղտոտ ու անառողջ, ոճիւններով լեցուն ապաստարաններն ու որբանոցները, հայ անտարանջական եկեղեցու եւ նրա նուիրեալների բերած հսկայ օգնութիւնը գաղթականներին ու որբերին, տիֆոիդի համաճարակը, որ իր զոհերը խլեց նաեւ հիւանդներին խնամող ու նրանց հոգուն մխիթարութիւն պարգեւող կղերականների միջից: Յետոյ՝ դարձեալ դէպի անապատ, որտեղ Յովհաննէսը արաբների կողմից գերեվարուած հայ կանանց եւ քուրդի ու արաբի տան ճնշիչ միջավայրից փախուստ տուած հայ որբերի անմխիթար վիճակը տեսաւ:

Տիրուհի Գոյումճեան Հայկազը պատմելիք շատ ունէր ու նրան ոգեւորում էին օտարները եւս՝ գրի առնելու այդ անսովոր պատմութիւնը, թող աշխարհը իմանայ: Տիրուհին որոշեց իր պատմութիւնը գրել հենց անգլերէն լեզուով: *Refugee Girl* (1985) վերնագրուած նրա յուշերը այդ լեզուն խօսողներին աննախընթաց ոճին է ծանօթացնում:

Յովհաննէս Մկրտիչեանը յառաջացած տարիքում սկսեց գրել, *To Armenians with Love: The Memoirs of a Patriot* (1996): Ցեղասպանութեան տարիներին նա արդէն ամուսնացած էր. իսկ նրա երիտասարդ ընտանիքում առաջին զոհը նորածին

դուստրն էր: Լափաջը ծնուած Յովհաննէսն էլ իր կնոջ Բէաթրիսի հետ երկար ու չարչարանքներով լի ճամբաներ կտրելով Հալէպ էր հասել ու այնտեղ հիւանդանոցների ու որբանոցների տաղտկալի պայմաններում աշխատել: Բախտը նրան Ամերիկա էր նետել, բայց նա չէր գոհացել: Հայրենասիրութիւնը նրան Խորհրդային Հայաստան էր տարել՝ ուրախանալու նրա յառաջդիմութեամբ, ապրելու նրա զրկանքներն ու նոր աքսորի սպառնալիքները: Ու յետոյ՝ վերադարձ Ամերիկա:

Աղաքազարցի Հրանտ Սարեանը պարբերաբար գրի էր առել իր գլխի եկածը երբ 14 տարեկանում *Սելիաթ*-ի ահազանգը նրան աքսորի ճամբաներն էր նետել: Կառավարութիւնը գրաւել էր նրանց հարուստ տունը, իբրեւ թէ վարձու էր առել... Դէյր էլ-Զօրից կառավարութեան յղած նրա հօր թախանձանքը՝ այդ «վարձի» դիմաց մի բան ուղարկելու եւ ընտանիքը սովից փրկելու անպատասխան էր մնացել: Ծայր աստիճան աղքատութիւնից ու սովից ստիպուած, Հրանտը մի արաբի մօտ աշխատանքի էր մտել. բայց երբ զգացել էր, որ կրօնափոխութիւն է պարտադրում եւ արաբը մոլլա է բերել իրեն թլպատելու, փախել էր գիշերով ու դառն փորձառութիւններից անցնելով, Հալէպ էր հասել: Յետոյ՝ Պոլիս եւ վերջապէս Մարսէյլ... Նրա գրառումները դուստրը՝ Լուիզ Քիֆերը, ֆրանսերէնի թարգմանելով եւ *Le journal de mon père* վերնագրով համացանցի վրայ է դրել 2008-ին:

Վահրամ Փափագեանը չէր աքսորուել, Ցեղասպանութեան տարիներին Պոլսում էր եղել: Որպէս հեռագրատան մասնագէտ-պաշտօնեայ, կառավարութիւնը հանդուրժել էր նրան: Այնուամենայնիւ, «Սէր, սէր, սէր» (1962) վերնագիրը կրող նրա յուշերը, կարեւոր աղբիւր են այդ օրերի քաղաքական անցուդարձի, սարսափի, խտրականութեան ու հալա-

ծանքի մթնոլորտում հայկական կազմակերպությունների ճակատագրի մասին. իսկ այդ բոլորը՝ նրա արկածալի կեանքի ընդմիջից:

Բերթա Պերճուհի Նաքչեան Քեչեանը հաւատում էր, որ վերապրողները կենդանի վկաներն են թուրքի ձեռքով կատարուած Հայոց Ցեղասպանութեան: Այն ինչ որ փաստ էր այդ օրերին եւ իրականութիւն, գրում է նա, թուրքերը ուրանում են այսօր: Ուրեմն, իր յուշերի գրառումը նա համարում է պայքար ուրացման դէմ, քաջ գիտենալով, սակայն, որ Ցեղասպանութեան ճանաչումը զոհուածներին ետ չի բերի, բայց ապրողների ցաւը կը թեթեւացնի: Եւ իրօք, ինչպէս Ervin Staub-ն է գրում, ոճիրը ճանաչելն ու ընդունելը եւ վերապրողին ցաւակցելն ու զօրակցելը բուժարար դեր են կատարում: Այդպիսով, մարդկութիւնն էլ հաստատում է, թէ կատարուածը անընդունելի է: *In the Shadow of the Fortress: The Genocide Remembered* (1988), Քեչեանի ողիսականն է Հիւսենիկից մինչեւ Ամերիկա:

Նարգիզ Ժամկոչեանը Սեւ Ծովի ափին, Քութորայի մի բարեկեցիկ ընտանիքում էր ծնուել: Աքսորից առաջ, տատիկը չորս տարեկան Նարգիզին ու նրա երկու տարեկան եղբօրը մի յոյն բարեկամի էր յանձնել, բայց յոյնը իշխանութեան սպառնալիքի տակ փոքրիկներին դուրս էր հանել տնից: Մահուան սարսափն զգալով եւ ապրելու բնագոյից դրդուած, Նարգիզը իր հիւանդ եղբօր թողել էր ծովի ափին հաւաքուած երեխաների կոյտի մէջ ու փախել էր աննկատ: Զափթիւները վախից ճչացող երեխաներին ծովն էին նետել. դրանց մէջ էր Նարգիզի եղբայրը: Դա մի սարսափելի տեսարան էր, որ Նարգիզը երբեք չմոռացաւ, որքան էլ դեռ չարչարանք կար պահուած իր համար: Ու երբ յառաջացած տարիքում, Սուխումիի հանգիստ ափերում «հանգիստ» կեանք

ստեղծած, Վիթալի Եանքոյի ընտանիքին էր հիւրընկալում, այդ բարի մարդու մէջ գտաւ համբերատար ունկընդիրը. իր տանջալից կեանքը պատմեց ու խոստում առաւ գրի առնել ու հրատարակել, որ աշխարհը իմանայ, թէ հայ ժողովրդի գլխին ինչ աղէտ է եկել: Դա նրա համար վերապրումի միակ երաշխիքն էր: *The Promiss at the Sea*-ն (2004) Նարգիզ Ժամկոչեանի վերապրումն է ապահովագրում:

Խարբերթին մօտիկ Բերրի գիւղում ծնուած, անասելի սարսափներից անցած եւ հրաշքով մահից փրկուած Համբարձում Զիթեանը 74 տարեկանում փորձեց գրի առնել իր յուշերը, բայց չկարողացաւ: Գրեց 50 էջ միայն: Սակայն նրա կեանքի պատմութիւնը պէտք էր լոյս աշխարհ բերել. եւ 25 տարի յետոյ, երբ Համբարձումը 102 տարեկան էր, Սեդա Մարոնեանը արձանագրելով նրա պատմածը, աւելացնելով նրա նամակների պարունակած տեղեկութիւնները, պատրաստեց «Մազի չափ մահին մօտ» յուշագրութեան հսկայ հատորը (2004): Հատորի հրատարակութիւնից առաջ հեղինակի դստեր՝ Սառա Զարուիի Զիթեանի թարգմանութեամբ լոյս տեսաւ նրա յուշերը անգլերէնով՝ *The Hair's Breadth from Death, The Memoirs of Hampartzoum Mardiros Chitjian* (2003):

Երուանդ Կիւրեղեանի կեանքի պատմութիւնը տառապանքի ծով չէ միայն, կոտորուած ընտանիքի, աւերուած հայրենիքի սրտաճմլիկ յուշ չէ միայն, այլ ֆիդայու սխրալի կեանք, համեստ զինուոր Արեւմտահայաստանի պաշտպանութեան ու Հայաստանի կարճատեւ անկախ հանրապետութեան: Վասպուրականի Հայոց Զորի շրջանի Քերծ գիւղում էր ծնուել ու փոքր տարիքից որբութեան ցաւը կրել: Թուրքի բռնութիւնն ու քուրդի վայրագութիւնները նրան ջան ֆիդա էին դարձրել, ու նա կռուել էր գիւղէ գիւղ, մինչեւ Վասպուրա-

կանի ազատագրումը, մինչեւ տեղահանութիւն ու մինչեւ Սարդարապատ. եւ յետոյ, ապստամբութիւն բռնկուիլ իշխանութեան դէմ, կարճատեւ յաղթանակ, ապա՝ գաղթ դէպի Ատրպատական, նոր կեանք, նոր ամուսնութիւն, եւ վերջապէս Ամերիկա: Ամերիկայի յստակութեամբ նա յիշում է ամէն մանրամասնութիւն: «Իմ յուշերի ճանապարհով» (2009) նրա յուշագրութիւնը, խմբագիրների յաւելեալ տեղեկութիւններով ու ծանօթութիւններով օժտուած, կարելի է այդ ժամանակաշրջանի պատմագրութիւնը համարել:

Թերեւս հնագոյն յուշագրութիւնը պատկանում է տարաբախտ Արշալոյս Մարտիկեանին, կամ, նրա յուշերը գրի առնող Harvey Gates-ի առաջարկով՝ Aurora Mardiganian-ին: Խարբերթին մօտիկ Չենիշ-Չեզեք գիղաքաղաքում էր ծնուել, ու 14 տարեկանում արդէն ճաշակել էր թուրքի սարսափը, հօր եւ եղբօր սպանութիւնը, տեղահանութիւն, քաղց, ծարաւ, հիւանդութիւն. բայց այդ բոլորից աւելին, նա հարեմից հարեմ էր քաշկռտուել ու լլկուել: Երբ դիմադրել էր թուրք Ահմեդ Բէյին, նրա հարձը չէր դարձել ու Քրիստոսին չէր ուրացել, պատժուել էր չարաչար: Նրա մօրը, փոքրիկ քրոջը եւ երկու պզտիկ եղբայրներին իր աչքի առջեւ էին մորթոտել եւ իրեն մութ նկուղում բանտարկել: Արշալոյսի ազատուելն ու Ամերիկա հասնելը հրաշքի պէս մի բան էր: Ամերիկեան Near East Relief-ն էր օգնել. իսկ Ջօրավար Արդրանիկը պատգամել էր նրան գնալ ու աշխարհին պատմել կատարուած անպատմելի ոճրի մասին:

Harvey Gates-ի գրի առած *Ravished Armenia*-ն (1918) յաջորդ տարին ֆիլմի վերածուեց *Ravished Armenia* կամ *Auction of the Souls* անուններով: Արշալոյսը ֆիլմում ինքն իր դերն էր խաղում: Ֆիլմը դարձաւ ցեղասպանութեան մասին պատրաստուած առաջինը, որ իր հսկայ յաջողութեամբ մեծ

գումարներ ապահովեց Near East Relief-ի համար: Սակայն, իր կեանքի բոլոր սարսափազդու իրավիճակները նորից նոր ապրելը միանգամայն եւ ընդմիշտ աւերեց Արշալոյսի հոգեկանը: Նա միշտ ապրեց սարսափի ու կասկածանքի մէջ, մենակեաց կեանք վարեց ու մեռաւ լքուած ու մոռացուած:

Ուսումնասիրածս յուշագրութիւնները, նրանով հանդերձ որ ժանրի մէջ ներկայացուցական բնոյթ ունեն, ի համեմատութիւն այս ժանրի հսկայ գրականութեան, մեծ թիւ չեն կազմում: Ընտրածներս պատահական են եւ որեւէ նախասիրութեան չեն հետեւում: Դեռ շատ յուշագրութիւններ գրասեղանիս վրայ կուտակուած ինձ են սպասում: Երանի կարողանայի աւելին կարդալ: Հնարաւոր չէր: Յանցաւոր եմ զգում: Միայն յոյս ունեմ, որ կարողացայ բերածս օրինակներով նկարագրել սպանդի դաշտը որքան կարելի է մօտ իրականութեան, որովհետեւ երբեք հնարաւոր չի համապարփակ ներկայացնել Հայոց Ցեղասպանութեան պատմութիւնը:

Իւրաքանչիւրը այս յուշերից մի սոսկալի տեսարան է պարզում, որոշ տեսակէտից նման միւսներին, կարելոր չի, թէ որտեղից է սկիզբ առնում Սըվազի՞ց, Քոնիայի՞ց, Խարբերթի՞ց, Սեւ Ծովի ափից, թէ՞ այլուր. բայց միեւնոյն ժամանակ, այն տարբեր է իր մանրամասնութիւններով: Այն ինչ յստակ է այս յուշագրութիւններում, դա պարզ, երբեմն պարզունակ ոճն է, ժամանակագրական կարգի պահպանումը, սահուն արտադրումը: Ինչպէս Christine van Boheemen-Saaf-ն է հաստատում, այս վերապրողները ամբողջ կեանքում ապրել ու դարձեալ ապրել են այդ տեսարանները, այնքան որ դրանք իրենց մտքում արդէն պատումի են վերածուել: Բայց հարց է ծագում, թէ եթէ այդպէս դիւրին էր արտադրելը, ինչո՞ւ համեմատաբար քիչ են յուշագրութիւնները:

Շատերը զսպեցին արտայայտուելու ցանկութիւնը յատկապէս ցաւ չպատճառելու համար զաւակներին—երբեմն, զաւակներն էլ ցանկութիւն չունէին լսելու: Կամ՝ չուզեցին բացայայտել իրենց վերապրելու գաղտնիքը, որ կարող էր ամօթաբեր լինել—նոյնիսկ եթէ արտաքին մի նշան, ինչպէս դաջուածք կամ թլպատում, մատնում էր այդ գաղտնիքը: Նարգիզ ժամկոչեանը չփորձեց թագցնել իր եւ իր եղբօր մէջ կատարուածը: Ամբողջ կեանքում իրեն տանջող խղճի խայթը թող աշխարհը իմանար: Զէ՞ որ թուրքի բարբարոսութիւնն էր այդ փոքրիկ աղջնակին բնագոյաբար այդ քայլին մղել:

Յուշագրութիւնները երբեմն պարզ նկարագրութիւններ են՝ առանց մեկնաբանութեան կամ վերլուծութեան փորձի: Քերոք Պտուկեանը իր մանկական տեսանկիւնից է ցեղասպանութիւնը դիտում: Երուանդ Կիրեղեանն ու Հրանտ Սարեանը շարադրում են ամենայն մանրամասնութեամբ բայց առանց մեկնաբանութեան: Բերթա Նաքչեանը փորձում է գտնել ինչուի պատասխանը. ինչո՞ւ կոտորեցին: Եւ առաջադրում է, -գուցէ մենք չափազանց խաղաղասէր էինք եւ վստահելի: Աբրահամ Յարթունեանի նպատակը ոճրագործի մտայնութիւնը ըմբռնելն է: Այդտեղից էլ իր աշխատութեան վերնագիրը՝ *Neither to Laugh nor to Weep*: Սփինոզան այդպէս էր բանաձեւել՝ մարդկանց արարքների վրայ ոչ ծիծաղել եւ ոչ լաց լինել, այլ միայն հասկանալ նրանց: Ջան Մինասեանը փորձում է փաստել, թէ հակառակ որոշ հայերի կարծիքին, տեղահանութեան պատճառը հայ յեղափոխական շարժումը չէր: Վահրամ Փափագեանն էլ այն կարծիքի է, որ Օսմանեան Կայսրութեան մէջ ապրող հայերը որեւէ դեր չունէին ջարդ ու տեղահանութիւն հրահրած լինելու մէջ:

Որքան էլ պարզ են նկարագրութիւնները, սակայն կենդանի գոյներով եւ մանրամասնութեամբ են պատկերուած

մարդիկ ու վայրեր, որ այսօր չկան: Եւ դա յուշագրութեան կարեւոր յատկանիշներից է: Այնտեղ է նախա-եղեռնեան հայ կեանքը Արեւմտեան Հայաստանում:

Իսկ ո՞րն է վերապրումի բանալին: Ի՞նչն է պատճառ դարձել որ միայն փոքրաթիւ մարդիկ են կարողացել այդ դժոխքից կենդանի դուրս գալ, մինչ՝ դա չի յաջողուել մէկուկէս միլիոնին: Նրանով հանդերձ, որ հնարաւոր չի լիովի պատասխանել այս հարցումին, բայց իւրաքանչիւր յուշագրողի պատումի մէջ մի ակնարկ կայ ընդգծուած: Պտուկեանը վստահ է, որ իր մօր եւ քրոջ անձնագոհութեան, անկոտրում կամքին ու կազմակերպութեանն է պարտական: Ալիս Մկրտիչեանը համոզուած է, որ մօր քրիստոնեայ հաւատքը եւ Աստծուն ապաւինելը փրկեց ընտանիքին: Այս հաւատքը աւելի շեշտուած է աւետարանչական դաստիարակութիւն ստացած ընտանիքների մէջ: Այդպէս է մտածում բողոքական ընտանիքում մեծացած Ջան Մինասեանը: Իսկ Աբրահամ Յարթունեանի կեանքի ուղին հենց աւետարանչական ուսուցմունքով է գծուած: Յովհաննէս Մկրտիչեանն ու Տիրուհի Գոյումձեանը հաւատացած են Աստծու հրաշքին: Բայց դա ամենադիւրին բացատրութիւնն է վերապրողի համար: Այլ բացատրութիւնների շարքում, օրինակ՝ Վահրամ Փափագեանի կարծիքով եթէ հայը վերապրել է դա ոճրագործի ողորմածութեան պատճառով չի եղել այլ՝ հայի սուր եւ արարող մտքի, քարից ջուր հանելու կարողութեան:

Շատերը իրենց յուշերը Ամերիկայում են գրել եւ սկզբից էլ երազել են Ամերիկա հասնել: Երբ Տիրուհին Ամերիկա ոտք դրեց, առաջին վայրկեանից հարազատ զգաց: Բոլորի պէս ինքն էլ մի այլ երկրից եկած էր. ինքը այլեւս գաղթական աղջիկ չէր: Յովհաննէս Մկրտիչեանը ամէն աշխատանքի պատրաստ էր. միայն Ամերիկա հասնէր. եւ իրօք, իր առա-

ջին աշխատանքը մի ճաշարանում գետնախնձոր կեղեւելն ու ամաններ լուանալն էր: Ամերիկյան դժոխքից ճողոպրած այդ խեղճերին ապահովութիւն ու անվտանգութիւն էր խոստանում, բայց նաեւ առիթ՝ նոր կեանք սկսելու:

Վերապրողներից շատերի կեանքում եղել է մի բարի թուրք, արաբ կամ քուրդ, որ իր վերաբերմունքով յիշատակելի յուշ է թողել կամ նոյնիսկ կեանք է փրկել: Այս բարի արարքները կատարուած վայրագութիւնների համեմատութեամբ այնքան փոքր են, որ յաճախ աննկատ են անցնում յուշագրութեան մէջ: Վահրամ Փափագեանը խանդավառանքով է յիշում բոլոր այն թուրք մտաւորականներին, որոնք անընդունելի էին համարում կառավարութեան վերաբերմունքը հայերի նկատմամբ եւ սգում էին կորուստը: Նարգիզ Ժամկոչեանը չի մոռանում իր մեծօր բարեկամ թուրք մուլային, որ ծովափում մոլորուած գտաւ նրան եւ մէկ տարի թագցրած պահեց իր տնում: Թուրք ֆրանկմասոն Վահագ Էֆենդին, Ալիս Մկրտիչեանի հօր բարեկամ օթեակակիցը, տեղահանութիւնից փրկեց Մկրտիչեան ընտանիքին եւ դէպի ազատութիւն ճամբայ դրեց նրանց: Քուրդ Հիւսէյն Աղան երկու տարի իր տան մէջ պահեց Երուանդ Կիրեղեանին ու մօրը եւ սպառնաց տեղի քրդերին ձեռք չբարձրացնել հայ հարեւանի վրայ ու զսպել թալանի ախորժակը: Արշալոյս Մարտիկեանը յիշում է անծանօթ թուրք կնոջ, որ օգնեց իրեն Դիարբեքիից փախուստ տալու, նոյնիսկ ճամբի պաշար տուեց նրան: Աբրահամ Յարթունեանը իր անծնական բարեկամ Քեմալ Փաշայի գթասրտութիւնն ու արդարամտութիւնն է դրուատում եւ որ նա երբեք համաձայն չէր կատարուածի հետ: Վիրժինի-ժիժան իր փրկութիւնը թուրք գինուորական Թահսին Բէյին է պարտա-

կան ու յիշում է, թէ ինչպէս նրա հարուստ ընտանիքում հարազատ դստեր պէս էին վարում իր հետ:

Ովքե՞ր են եղել այդ մարդիկ որ քաջութիւնն են ունեցել կառավարութեան հրահանգին չենթարկուել եւ մի հայ կամ մի հայ ընտանիք փրկել: Բարեսրտութիւն էր դա, թէ՞ յետին հաշիւներ: Ռիչըրդ Յովհաննիսեանը ուսումնասիրում է 527 վերապրողների բանաւոր հարցազրոյցները, որոնցից 183-ը նման միջամտութեան են ակնարկում եւ փորձում է գտնել այդ միջամտութեան դրդապատճառը: Ըստ Յովհաննիսեանի, դա տարածուած է զուտ բարեգործութիւնից մինչեւ տան մէջ ստրուկ ծառայող կամ տանտիրոջ ու նրա տղաների սեռային քնահաճոյքների գերի ունենալը: Արդիւնքում՝ զուտ բարեգործութիւնը մնում է դրդապատճառներից նուազագոյնը:

Հայոց Ցեղասպանութիւնը վերապրած մնացորդացի մի հսկայ տոկոսը որբերի փաղանգն է կազմում: Գրեթէ բոլոր յուշագրողները կամ իրենք որբ են մնացել, կամ նկարագրում են հանդիպած որբերին եւ որբանոցները: Յիշում են հայ կամաւոր խմբերը, որոնք պատերազմից յետոյ Թուրքիայի ներսերում շրջում ու որբեր էին հաւաքում: Բայց, ո՞վ գիտէ քանի հազարներ այդպէս էլ չգտնուեցին ու շարունակեցին մնալ Իսլամ ընտանիքներում, քանի՞ հազարներ հենց որբանոցներում սովամահ եղան կամ համաճարակի զոհ դարձան: Հալէպի որբանոցները ամենատարրական յարմարութիւններից զուրկ էին ու դռ արաբների ու թուրք պաշտօնեաների յարձակումներին ենթակայ: Ամերիկեան աւետարանիչների հաստատած Պոլսոյ, Խարբերթի, Մեզրէի եւ այլ վայրերի որբանոցները Սուրթաֆա Քեմալի առաջխաղացքի վտանգի տակ փակուեցին ու որբերը երկրից դուրս տարուեցին...

Ցեղասպանութիւնից ազատուածները շարունակեցին ապրել, բայց Սարսափելի յուշերը միշտ կենդանի մնացին նրանց կեանքում: Բոլորը խօսում են այն մասին, թէ յաճախ մի ծայն, մի հոտ, առօրեայի մի տեսարան կարող է անցեալի սարսափելի պատկերները արթնացնել իրենց մտքերում ու նոյնքան ցաւ ու սարսափ պատճառել: Marian MacCurdy-ին բացատրում է, թէ աղիտալի դէպքերը ենթակայի մտքում iconic image-ներ են կազմում, որոնք խորունկ պահում են նրա ուղեղում: Բայց արտաքին մի երեւոյթ յանկարծ պատճառ է դառնում որ այդ image-ները անսպասելիօրէն յայտնուեն ուղեղի մակերեսում եւ ենթակային անցեալի ողբալի դէպքի վայրն ու ժամանակը փոխադրեն: Վերապրողները վկայում են այդ իրողութիւնը, այդ սոսկալի պատկերները՝ երբեմն գիշերային մղձաւանջներով, երբեմն արթուն ժամերին նրանց միտքը չարչրկող:

Եւ

Ցեղասպանութեան գրականութեան յորձանքի ներքոյ Վերջաբանի փոխարէն

Մտքիս հորիզոնում, աչքերիս առջեւ մի քարտէս է տարածուած, ծաղկուն ու բարգաւաճ հայկական գիւղեր, յետոյ գալարուող մի շարան—մարդիկ են երերուն, ճամբի փոշու ու կեղտի մէջ ծածկուած—վրաններ են՝ ծուռումուռ փայտերի վրայ տնկուած պատառոտուած լաթեր, անանցանելի կիրճեր են, բաց գերեզմաններ, անթաղ մեռելներ ու դիակներ ամէն կողմ ցրուած. կեղտոտ փողոցների անկիւններում կուչ եկած մանր երեխաներ են, քաղցած ու հիւանդ... Սոսկալի տեսարանը ամբողջ Թուրքիան է ծածկում, հիւսիսից հարաւ, արեւելքից արեւմուտք:

Ես մի քարտէս գիտեմ վրան մեծ ու փոքր կարմիր կլոր նշաններ, դրանք ցոյց են տալիս այն վայրերը ուր կոտորած

է եղել: Բայց այդ կարմիր նշանները ցեղասպանութեան գրականութեան ցաւի ու տառապանքի լեզուն չեն խօսում, չեն գծում այն ճամբաները, որտեղից քայլեցին տեղահանուած գաղթականները, իրենց մեռելները ետին թողնելով: Մտքիս քարտէսի վրայ կլոր նշանները սկսում են շարժուել, մահուան ճամբան են քայլում ու ամբողջ քարտէսն են բռնում: Թուրքիան հայու արեան կարմիրով է ծածկւում. Դա հայոց Ցեղասպանութիւնն է: Դա Հայոց Ցեղասպանութեան բեռն է Թուրքիայի վրայ:

Ներկայ աշխատութիւնս պատրաստելու ընթացքում փորձեցի որքան կարելի է ցեղասպանութեան գրականութիւնից շատ նմոյշներ կարդալ: Դիւրին չէր: Նկարագրուած ահռելի տեսարաններն ու այդ գրականութեանը տիրող գերընկճուած հոգեվիճակը կարող է ընթերցողի հոգին փշրել ու նրա անդորրը վտանգել: Այնուամենայնիւ, պիտի կարդայի եւ ներկայացնէի՝ հաւատալով, որ դրանք ըմբռնելն ու բացատրելը ճանապարհն է զոհի հոգեբանութիւնից ձերբազատուելու եւ արդարախոյզ գրգիռով Ցեղասպանութեան ճանաչման եւ հատուցման գործին մղուելու: Դա կլինի ազգի յարատեւման ու յաւերժութեան ճամբան:

Աւելի քան քսան հազար էջերից բաղկացած գրականութիւնը, որ քննուել ու ներկայացուել է այստեղ եւ դեռ այն ամէնը ինչ որ չհասցրեցի տալ, հիմնաքարերն են յետեղեռնեան սերունդների, երկրորդ, երրորդ եւ գուցէ չորրորդ սերնդի գեղարուեստական գրականութեան: Առանց ըմբռնելու այդ գրականութիւնը, որ իրականութեան մէջ գեղարուեստականացուած պատմութիւնն է Հայոց Ցեղասպանութեան, յաջորդ սերունդների ստեղծագործութիւնները պիտի թուան անիրական, արտառոց ու մտածածին: Մինչդեռ դրանք անլուր աղէտից անցած մի ամբողջ ժողովրդի արդարու-

թեան ճիշն են՝ անոքելու ցաւը, դարմանելու վերքը եւ վերջապէս՝ ազգային հաւաքական բնականոն կեանքին վերադառնալու. իսկ դրա համար անհրաժեշտ է երկու կողմի՝ թէ՛ զոհի եւ թէ՛ զոհագործի մասնակցութիւնը (Վերջինիս մասին արդարադարձել են *And those who Continued Living in Turkey after 1915* հատորում): Մինչ այդ ժամանակ, սակայն, ինչպէս Margaret DiCanio է գրում, «ժամանակը յուշերի դառնութիւնը չի մարի»:

Յուսամ, որ ընթերցողս այժմ կը զգայ բուռն վրդովմունքս երբ այս աշխատութեան սկզբում խօսում էի պատմական հանգոյցներին որպէս լուծում թուրք պատմաբանների «հաշտութիւն առանց պայմանների» առաջադրանքի մասին: Երբ դեռ թուրքը պատրաստ չի իր անցեալի հետ հաշուի նստելու, երբ դեռ անարդարութիւն է տիրում, երբ ոճիրը իր լիակատար իմաստով դեռ չի ճանաչուած, հայը իչպէ՞ս կարող է հաշտութեան եզր գտնել իր անցեալի եւ իր անապաշաւ զոհագործի հետ:

(Շարունակելի)

The author would like to extend her heartfelt thanks

To the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute and its Director, Dr. Hayk Demoyan, for supporting the project and overseeing the publication of this book,

To Ms. Lusine Matevosyan for the cover design,

To Ms. Diane Belle James for her meticulous work as copyeditor,

To my husband, Neshan Peroomian, for financing this publication,

And to all those who gave me moral support to complete the all-consuming task of writing this book.

- 86 00 -

ՀՀ Ազգային գրադարան

NL1044270

75675 FL

The Armenian Genocide in Literature

Perceptions of Those who Lived
Through the Years of Calamity

Rubina Perroomian

Published under the auspices of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute

The Armenian Genocide that took place almost a century ago is now sliding into the past, but justice has not been rendered, and Armenians cannot put their dead to rest. Obsession with the past fueled by denial of the crime, the deniers' distortion of history, and the image of a lost homeland that kindles a sense of deprivation keep surfacing in the literature produced in the Diaspora. Indeed, literary responses to the Armenian Genocide did not come to an end with those of the first-generation survivor-writers; they continue to emerge in different ways in the works of successive generations as a strong indication of an old wound not yet healed and a source of still unabated pain.

The present volume engages with this discussion. It begins with the response of the first-generation writers who survived, to complement this author's *Literary Responses* (1993) and to demonstrate more emphatically the depth of the initial psychological shock of the most recent traumatic experience as well as the soul-consuming struggle in dispersion. It then proceeds to discuss the literary response of the orphan generation, *anapati serund*, in its diversity and complexity and as a stark departure from the worldviews and literary traditions of the past with, nevertheless, the Genocide at its core. The final chapter is devoted to the memoirs of the aging survivors, those ordinary men and women who, without a claim to artistry but with an urge to leave the memories of their harrowing past experiences for posterity, have put their personal stories in writing.

The entire bulk of the literature discussed in this volume is treated as the echo of the inner psyche of the survivors of a colossal collective trauma symptomized by withdrawal, isolation, anger, protest, wistful yearning, and the collapse of social and moral order. And this speaks to the fact that the process of healing has been denied to Armenians.

The present study provides the tools to examine and comprehend the transgenerational transmission of the memory of the traumatic past. The publication of the next volume discussing the literary responses of the second- and third-generation survivor-writers will follow shortly.

