

The Armenian Genocide

History, Politics, Ethics

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10 Armenian Literary Responses to Genocide: The Artistic Struggle to Comprehend and Survive

Rubina Perroomian

The event came to be known as the Armenian Genocide and the literary responses to this calamity as the Armenian Genocide literature. The category encompasses a wide spectrum of responses by the Armenian literati and, through their work, the reactions of victims to an unprecedented traumatic collective experience. The topics of the genocide literature consist of not only literary works with the 'Catastrophe' or *Aghed* as their theme but also those in which the event is a hidden motive, a source of an unknown pain, and the cause of a gloom that engulfs the author's creative powers.

As the event drops back in time, the class of literary works in which the genocide is not directly narrated becomes richer and more complex. The catastrophe becomes a covert psychological affliction symptomized by the dilemma of adjusting to the new environment, by the fear of assimilation and loss of national identity, by nostalgia and homesickness, by escape from painful reality into the world of dreams and memories of the past, and by scathing criticism of cultural, religious, and traditional values transmitted as sacred fetishes from generation to generation. In these literary representations of inner tumult, the catastrophe, though not addressed directly as a literary theme, is tacitly acknowledged as the end of an era and a collective life, a terminus that has to be comprehended in order to make a new beginning possible.

The genocide literature makes no attempt to document the event; the event is a point of departure, a source of psychological and ethical impact that reverberates in artistic creation. With

the imaginative realization of the catastrophe in literature, the author-survivor, and generations of survivors, strive to comprehend what is beyond comprehension, to come to terms with what is irreconcilable, so that life can continue.

The Armenian Genocide was not only a historical event stamped on the memory of mankind but a challenge to the ethical and moral standards of the Armenian people, to the traditional concepts and ideas that shape their world-perception and dictate their collective behavior. Finally, it was an enduring wound affecting the state of mind and creative imagination of the generations of survivors scattered in the diaspora. A thematic study of the Armenian post-genocide literature underscores the complex network of meanings of the literary responses.

The history of the Armenian people is filled with persecution, forced deportation, and massacre. And Armenian literature is replete with the responses of survivor-writers to those catastrophes. By the same token, traditional responses rooted in the ethical, religious, and cultural traits and peculiarities of the Armenian people have been transmitted in their paradigmatical form from generation to generation. Accordingly, it is an *a priori* assumption that no creative imagination is innocent and free of the influences of memories of past catastrophes and the responses to them. The core concepts of explanations and interpretations are transmitted into the conscience of the victim reacting to the catastrophe. Some prove adequate or acquire new connotations to provide explanation – the paradigm of responses continues intact. Others, impotent and inadequate *vis-à-vis* the catastrophe, are fiercely rejected – the paradigm is disrupted.

MAJOR THEMES OF THE ARMENIAN LITERARY RESPONSES TO GENOCIDE

Whether the actual atrocities are narrated or only their impact is portrayed in a literary work, a *leitmotiv* embodying the author's perception of the atrocities dominates the piece. Responses to genocide emerge through the varied treatments of these leitmotifs.

In some literary works the Armenian Genocide unfolds as an internal tragedy. The dominating theme is the self-criticism of the victim. Others focus on the victimizer. The author attempts

a confrontation with the perpetrator of the crime and an analysis of the latter's intents and character. In a secular context, the possibility of armed resistance to prevent the massacre is expounded. When the perspective is religious the catastrophe is viewed as a divine act, and the theme revolves around God's involvement in the tragedy.

Glorification of armed resistance and heroism

Armenian self-defense and armed resistance during the massacres and deportations of 1915–23 were rare. With well-calculated, preplanned measures, the Turkish government had been able to neutralize the armed struggle of the preceding few decades and prevent new resistance. But even these rare instances of self-defense have inspired artistic creations, and become a major motive in responses to the *Aghed*.

Suren Partevian's *Ariuni mateane* (The Book of Blood), a collection of short stories published in 1915, embodies the glorification of armed resistance and heroism as a response to persecutions and injustice. The episodes in this collection may belong chronologically to the pre-genocide era, but the imprint of contemporary thoughts and of interpretations of recent tragedies is obvious. The narratives are therefore transtemporal, and the memory of the events is subconsciously developing in hindsight from the perspective of more recent tragedies. This assumption is substantiated by the fact that Partevian (1876–1921), in a literary career spanning a quarter of a century, whether in Constantinople, London, or Cairo, remained ever preoccupied with the tragic fate of the Armenian people. The horrors of the atrocities haunted him, reverberating in his every line. When news of the massacres of the Ottoman Armenians began to spread abroad, Partevian was writing stories about the calamitous years of 1894–96 and the bloody Armeno-Tatar clashes of 1905–7 in the Caucasus. With its setting in the recent past, *The Book of Blood* puts forth a definite political ideology – organized armed resistance against Turkish persecutions and glorification of the heroic actions. Indeed, Sassuntsi Saro, Dali Baba, Haro, and Tigran the hunchback in Partevian's stories are idealized heroes with superhuman traits and overpowering drive for revenge. Their characterization has a Nietzschean ring: Partevian's heroes, too, live only to die in a battle against the enemy.

With a conscious attempt to raise the self-esteem of his fellow Armenians and to encourage them to stand tall in self-defense, the author presents his heroes as the true descendants of mythical heroes of Armenia 'immortalizing the true characteristics of the Armenian nation.'¹

Partevian's *Anmah botse* (The Immortal Flame, 1917) and *Dzaine huchets* (The Sound Echoed, 1916), two romantic dramatizations of the horrors of 1915, also pursue the theme of extolling the spirit of armed resistance: 'Revolt, rebellion . . . "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" . . . Resistance. . . . An honorable triumph over death,' passionately exclaims the protagonist in *The Immortal Flame*.²

Armed resistance, as a literary theme and a response to catastrophe, is absent in Hagop Oshagan's immediate responses to the genocide. Oshagan (1883–1948), who had acquired a modest reputation teaching and writing in Constantinople before the First World War, was a witness to the atrocities of 1915. He miraculously survived to become a prominent man of letters and a critical authority on post-genocide diasporan literature. The Armenian armed struggle was a theme that he developed in his later works in the 1930s. *Mnatsordats* (Remnants, 1932–3), which he calls the novel of the *Aghed*, best reflects his perception of the Armenian armed struggle: 'Armenian revolutionism' is 'our mysticism, which arms our chosen ones, but is not understood by the masses.'³ Oshagan is convinced that the armed resistance failed, not because Armenians were incapable of fighting but because the Turks were like a sea engulfing a small island.⁴ Pondering the Armenian revolutionary movement, he continues,

We may call these revolutionists, who believed in the ideology of freedom and who sacrificed their lives for it, madmen or criminals. That is because we are seeking a scapegoat to blame for the *Aghed*. But those who will write the history of our revolution should stop and think about the thoughts and ideas of these men.⁵

Glorification of heroism and armed struggle as a literary theme was initiated by the nineteenth-century Armenian Renaissance writers and more elaborately developed later in the pre-genocide era. The lyric heroes and idealized martyrs are portrayed rising against the overwhelming power of the enemy,

ready to sacrifice their lives for the freedom of the nation. But they differ greatly from the Christian martyrs glorified and immortalized in ancient and medieval Armenian literature. The modern martyr does not sacrifice his life for the sake of religion. Lying wounded and bleeding to death from the enemy's bullet, he does not have the comforting vision of a host of angels flying his tortured body to Heaven to reward him with eternal life. His only solace is that his martyrdom may help to liberate the nation from the yoke of the oppressors. Therefore, although the idealization of martyrdom continues to work effectively as the core concept of the literature of catastrophes, its connotation is entirely secularized.

Armed struggle as a response to tragedy, a means to achieve the solution to the Armenian question, was passionately pursued and thus thematized in the pre-genocide literature and, to some extent, later in the immediate aftermath of the genocide. In post-genocide diasporan literature, however, armed struggle as a literary theme and a means of achieving a goal is non-existent. Indeed, the political atmosphere of the diaspora and the deplorable situation of the masses of Armenian refugees striving to survive everyday hardship did not lend themselves to the development of such ideas. For those who wrote in response to the dispersion of the Armenian people, the thought of armed struggle was beyond imagination. It was not until the 1970s that the idea resurfaced in the agenda of some Armenian political groups; acts of political violence became a new source of literary inspiration mainly for the committed (in the Sartrean sense of the word) new generation. In this revival, the extolling of armed struggle was characteristically coupled with outbursts of anger and frustration and a call for revenge against the Turk as the incarnation of evil and the perpetrator of an everlasting tragedy for Armenians.

Internalization of the catastrophe

In conceptualizing the genocide in Armenian literature, self-criticism or internalization of the catastrophe is a recurring theme. Aram Antonian (1875–1951), an established prose writer who was arrested in Constantinople along with other intellectuals and political leaders on the eve of 24 April 1915, was able to escape execution. He then survived the death marches toward Der-el-Zor and fled to Aleppo carrying the memories of three

long years of horror and suffering. He composed six episodes, which he collected in a volume entitled *Ain sev orerun* (In Those Dark Days), published in 1919. The episodes expose the ugliest facets of the human psyche when confronted with an extreme situation. We witness the inner defense mechanism releasing hitherto suppressed instincts to ensure survival. In this struggle, the victim is human nature with its moral and ethical conventions.

Antonian describes the degradation of the human character: 'After the first few months they [the gendarmes] were all convinced that the best way to torture Armenians was through Armenians themselves.'⁶ Victims have become victimizers. They hurt their own kin, they do anything to please their Turkish masters in order to gain a few miserable privileges for themselves. The Armenian nightwatchmen, appointed by the Turkish gendarmes to maintain order in the camp, themselves victims of atrocity, become victimizers sometimes even more cruel than the gendarmes. They beat the deportees; they deny food and water to the newly-arrived emaciated refugees to teach them a lesson in obedience; they provide the *mudur* (person in charge) with Armenian girls and make them dance naked during the orgies. The nightwatchmen symbolize the dehumanizing quality of the Turkish crime, and the deportees, who do not resist these atrocities, characterize the degradation of the Armenian people. Human attributes fall victim to these outrageous circumstances, the result of which, in the words of Lawrence Langer, is 'The ultimate degradation of the human image under the conditions of atrocity.'⁷ With bitter irony Antonian writes,

For them it was a natural precondition for survival, a sort of a tax to pay. When their innocent daughters were snatched away to be raped and then passed around among the lower ranking officers, they made no protest. They sometimes even handed over their daughters as ransom to alleviate their own suffering.⁸

Antonian reproaches the deportees for having turned into self-centered creatures. In an episode entitled *Mairere* (The Mothers), the man who had risked his life to retrieve the body of a drowned boy from the raging waters of the Euphrates, stands naked on the shore furiously shouting curses because his clothes have been stolen. The old woman in *Keanken hognutiune* (Weariness

of Life), grapples with another deportee, stubbornly demanding that the undertakers remove her grandson's body before taking that of the other man's daughter in order to make room in the tent for her deathly-ill last grandchild. Antonian's realistic and even in some cases cynical approach leaves little room for sympathy for the victim. The reader tends to agree with the author's conclusion that 'The widespread misery, the commonality of suffering, the frequency of deaths, and finally all the tortures and pains of that damned life had beyond doubt made people entirely self-centered.'⁹ Subconsciously threaded through the text but never openly stated is the fact that it was the hand of the perpetrator which had created these conditions, crushing morality, ethics, and decency.

Suren Partevian's responses to the catastrophe of 1915 also provide examples of self-blame and internalization of the calamity. In his preface to Arsen Erkat's *Anapatin hushardzane* (Monument in the Desert) he writes in a romantic outburst:

This is what our negligence and desertion brought upon us . . . During the great crisis we spent valuable time in painful sterility. We made mistakes in weakness. It is clear to all of us now that we have not been able to become a strong determinant factor in the battlefield; during our great holocaust, we were silently reduced to an expectation of external altruistic intervention. It is proven reality today that the resistance in Vaspurakan and Sassun would not have failed if the military operations and the armed self-defense, at least this once, were organized on a national level.¹⁰

The internalization of the national tragedy, the blaming of self, revealed in critical self-analysis in the genocide literature, is not a new trend. In fact, it is a twist of a long-existing paradigm in the traditional responses to catastrophe based on the concept of sin and punishment. Many ancient and medieval Armenian writers blamed the sins of the people for the calamities that befell them. This concept was central to the interpretation of many tragic events such as the battle of Avarair in 451 AD against the invading Persian armies, the collapse of the Arshakuni (Arsacid) kingdom in the fifth century, the continuing atrocities during the Arab dominion between the seventh and ninth centuries, and the fall of Constantinople at the hands of the Ottoman Turks in the fifteenth century. Internalization of the tragedy and self-criticism

as a response to collective suffering persisted in nineteenth-century Armenian Renaissance literature. But certain aspects had changed. The writers of the pre-genocide era blamed not the sins of the people for the calamities but Armenian subservience and lack of rebellious spirit, the absence of organized armed resistance, and the shortsightedness of those Armenian civic leaders who were playing it safe with Turkish officials and serving the government in absolute loyalty. Writers criticized the Armenian clergy, who misinterpreted the Christian tenets and taught their flock to behave like sheep. In the literary responses to the genocide of 1915, the victims are still to blame, this time for having lost their integrity and moral values when subjected to extreme collective hardship.

Even Hagop Oshagan, who so realistically and convincingly explores Turkish characters and portrays the Turkish crime, is not immune from the trend of self-blame. In *Remnants*, the critical views expressed by a Turkish official during the interrogation of Matik Melikhanian, an imprisoned Armenian revolutionist, reveal the author's own severe criticism of the Armenian secular and religious leadership, of traditional values, and of the reactions of the masses to persecutions and massacres. Elsewhere in the same novel, Oshagan declares, '1915 would not have been possible if the network of espionage, subservience toward others, and the self-serving drive for wealth had not been so widespread.'¹¹

It is interesting to note how the theme of internalizing the tragedy and self-criticism persisted in the post-genocide diaspora in the works of the second-generation survivors. This was the generation of orphans 'the desert generation,' so called for having experienced the horrors of genocide at an early age and for beginning their literary careers in exile. The literature they produced revolved around the Armenian dispersion, not the genocide *per se*. In other words, the consequences of the genocide were dealt with and not its horrors. Orphaned during the massacres, Vazgen Shushanian (1902–41), grew up destitute in the streets of Middle Eastern towns before ending up in Paris. Shushanian writes, '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 leprosy and hungry dogs.'¹² The world had treated them most cruelly. They

had to struggle alone to survive a catastrophe and then to overcome the enormous difficulties of adapting to an alien environment. This profound psychological trauma resounded in the literature they produced and in the characters they created. Surprisingly, however, when writers of the desert generation reflected on the source of their misery, they looked inward, searched the Armenian past, and blamed their own ancestors and the Armenian Christian tradition that was so vehemently inflicted on them.

Shahan Shahnur (1903–74), a native of Constantinople who fled to France after the war and began his writing career in the late 1920s in Paris, embodies this spirit of protest and criticism in one of his characters in his most famous novel, *Nahanje arants ergi* (Retreat Without Song, 1927–29). Pondering the dilemma of survival in the dispersion, Suren, a rebellious soul, exclaims:

Our grandfathers weren't able to sculpt anything out of flesh. . . . The succeeding endless generations of our forefathers have not been able to rescue us. . . . In the place of collective effort, we have put guerrillas – all our monasteries are proof of this. . . . In the place of struggle, we have put quarrelsomeness – our political parties are proof of this.¹³

The ecstasy of rage and passion builds up. Suren holds Armenians themselves responsible for the hardship they endure. Bitterly spilling out his anger and frustration, he concludes, 'No matter how far back I take my thoughts, I always see Armenians as they are today: egotistic, selfish, disunited, grocers. . . .'¹⁴

The formation of the *Menk* (We) group in Paris, by young Armenian poets and writers – second-generation survivors – in itself is a collective gesture of protest against the past generation and a criticism of all traditional values. The first issue of the periodical *Menk* in 1931 reflects this rebellious attitude. The young intellectuals set out to find new means for collective survival. They searched for new avenues to conserve their eroding ethnic identity because the defenses built by the past generation had collapsed, and the ideas transmitted by them had proven impotent in the diasporan condition. Shavarsh Narduni (1898–1968), an outspoken member of the group, writes,

We are searching for the youth who has shaken off the dust of the 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 the Western imitations. Our political fallacy is a result of a faulty literary orientation. It was our literature, that which came from Europe, which caused our destruction.¹⁵

The role and function Narduni attributes to literature may sound exaggerated, but his statement well reflects the state of mind of the young generation in the turmoil of a frustrating struggle.

It is natural for a victim of misfortune or the victims of a collective wrong to find a scapegoat. The survivor-writers of the generation of orphans, even as they harshly criticized the older generation of writers, followed the paradigm of self-criticism in response to tragedy. Vahan Tekeyan (1878–1945), a representative of the older generation and the most respected diasporan poet of his time, was – only three years earlier, in 1928 – still feeling blameworthy. Taking refuge in Cairo in the wake of persecutions in the Ottoman Empire in early 1915, Tekeyan survived the genocide to witness the gradual dissolution of his people. In the poem *Ptuke* (The Clay Pot), he depicts allegorically this deplorable state of the Armenians with no dreams, no goals, not a new spark of hope and holds them responsible for bringing the calamities down upon their head. ‘. . . We caused our own destruction; / O horror! we consumed ourselves. . .’. Tekeyan has not escaped the paradigms of the past.

Confronting the perpetrator of the crime

In view of this widespread tendency of internalization of the tragedy, the question persists: where is the enemy, the perpetrator of the crime, the author of the degradation and dehumanization of the nation, the cause of the Armenian dispersion and assimilation and alienation in the wake of the genocide? The Turk plays no part.

The exception is Oshagan’s deliberate effort to characterize Turkish officials organizing and executing the genocide and the Turk in the street eagerly participating in the carnage. Oshagan has the best examples of confrontation between victims and perpetrator. In *Vrdovvats Khghchmtanke* (The Agitated Conscience), an

episode in *Kaiserakan haghtergutiun* (Imperial Song of Triumph, 1920–21), he recreates a scene of massacre of an entire Armenian village at the hands of Turks from the neighboring village. Oshagan's vantage-point is unusual. The massacre – the killing of the 'infidels' – is viewed through the eyes of the executioners. The old Turkish religious leader, a holy man dressed in white, the embodiment of God himself, supplies the first example. He ceremoniously raises the holy sword and brings it down on the neck of the Armenian priest who is kneeling helplessly with hands tied behind his back. The ritual of shedding the blood of the infidels has started. The entire village, men, women, and boys, hurry to take part in the carnage.

In this same episode, two Turkish boys are shown piously performing their duty, which is to set fire to a barn with Armenian victims locked within. In a mystic ecstasy they watch the flames rise to the sky with 'playful motion' and the golden smoke cover the blue of the 'peaceful sky' like 'a beautiful golden veil.'¹⁶

In another scene from this same episode,

A fifteen-year-old hero had nailed the head of a slaughtered man to the end of a long wooden stick. The eyes were gouged out, and the eyebrows were plucked. The stick on his shoulder and a rifle on his chest, he walked up and down the streets of the Armenian village to experience the pleasure of the terror he spread among women and children around him.¹⁷

Oshagan succeeds in demonstrating that what Armenians perceive as a catastrophe the Turks see as a source of mystical gratification and the fulfilment of a sacred ritual.

The participation of the Turkish mob of men and women is once again demonstrated in *Vrezhe* (The Revenge), another episode in the same collection. A group of deportees are herded together with soldiers circling them, ready to shoot. 'Meanwhile, Turkish men, armed with axes and daggers, with that terrible look of anticipation in their eyes, await their turn to carry out their mission, to complete the domination of death, to silence the last traces of life.'¹⁸ Oshagan further elaborates on the Turkish character, on its instinctive drives, motives, and objectives in his later novels. He strives to find the answer to an enigmatic question: why is it that 'the Turks, from the vizier to the peasant shepherd, received the orders of annihilation with such peace

and calm, as if it was a pleasant invitation to the centuries old instincts?¹⁹

Oshagan's novels, and especially *Remnant*, are peopled with Turkish characters in different walks of life and with different views. They all have a role to play in the planning and execution of the massacres. Mehmed Sureya Pasha, the modern intellectual, can reconcile his European education and universal humanistic ideologies with his racial and religious drives, and mastermind the anti-Armenian schemes. Suleiman Bey, a captain in the Turkish army, is a common criminal, and the Armenian persecutions are the best opportunities for him to vent his murderous instincts. For him torturing a fifteen-year-old Armenian girl and cutting her body in pieces was not only a military duty performed at its best (the girl would not tell her torturer where her brother was hiding) but also a divine pleasure. Osman Bey Zade Osman is a patriotic soldier who obeys and carries out, in all orthodoxy, the national motto: 'Whoever exploits the Christian is a true son of the Turkish land.'²⁰ Sheikh Sabit is the synthesis of Armenian 'reminiscence of the Janissaries – their features and atrocities – and the semi-savage nomadic tribes of Asia and Africa.'²¹

Oshagan rejects the view of those who tried to explain the Armenian Genocide as an outgrowth of the world conflict. He explains:

It was not the outbreak of war which made the Turks so much Turk. Before or after the war, it has been the same. The soldier, the volunteer, the layman, the clergy, with an inexplicable smile on their faces, would twist the tortured, half-dead Armenian prisoner's head and shamelessly ask him 'Is your wife pretty?' . . . I repeat. This is not an outcome of war psychology . . . They raped young women in front of their ropebound husbands. They forced women to watch to the last moment the slaughtering of their husbands. While two Turks would hold the man down, with his face sweeping the ground, others would unhurriedly sharpen their knives; then they would try the knives against the neck of the man. The execution would begin. They would push the knife very slowly, twisting like a screw, passing the skin, then cutting the veins, one by one; they would pause here to prolong the agony, before tearing the larynx apart. The deep, inexplicable ugliness of all

this. I stress these because the world confuses the massacres with the passion of violence. The world thinks of an irresponsible criminal psychology when visualizing the Turks engaged in murder.²²

Oshagan makes an effort to analyze the character of the Turk. He suggests genetic elements developed through centuries of killing and looting, patterns of behavior that he believes are dictated by religious determinants. He concludes, 'There exist not only criminal people but also criminal races.'²³

Mazhar Shakir, the educated, good friend of the wealthy Armenian Atom, in Suren Partevian's *The Immortal Flame*, is another well-developed Turkish character. The reader is admitted into his inner world and acquainted with his personality, outlook, and national and political ideas. Mazhar Shakir is an influential person who can prevent Atom's arrest and his family's deportation, but he covets Atom's beautiful wife, Siranush. His desire to possess her and his jealousy for his friend's wealth and position drive him to commit the crime. He has Atom arrested and the rest of the family deported before abducting Siranush. The crime in the story is a microcosm of an enormous enigma. Mazhar Shakir's secret motive sheds at least a dim light upon the hidden designs and intentions behind the great crime.

Inability or unwillingness to believe

Except for these and a few other well-developed characters, Turks are absent from the Armenian Genocide literature. Some gendarmes here and there, the *mudur*, and a few Arab vendors, whose personalities, emotions, and hidden motives are neglected or barely sketched, say little about the roots of the evil, as if they played no part in the great crime. The absence of the Turk may be a subconscious rationale behind another characteristic trait in the genocide literature: the inability or unwillingness of the victims to believe in what is happening to them.

Zapel Esayan (1878–1943), a novelist who recorded her eyewitness accounts of the massacres of Armenians in Cilicia in 1909, pictures this incredulity in the words of a survivor: 'We knew it very well but pretended ignorance. We played blind and deaf. . . . Shame on us. . . . He who does not know how to die does not deserve to live . . . we are a bunch of slaves.'²⁴ Esayan

interprets this tendency to play deaf, dumb, and blind not so much as a sign of passivity but as evidence of political immaturity and of a misguided trust in the goodwill of the Turkish government. Her reaction to the massacres of 1909 came at a time when the fervor and enthusiasm around the Young Turk revolution had not yet died down, and Armenians still hoped for a better life with the Turks in the Ottoman Empire. Esayan was foreboding a painful reality that was to come to light in the next few years. But even then many Armenians still clung to their naïve trust and optimism. Partevian describes in *The Immortal Flame* the unpreparedness of many Armenians at the outset of the deportations and massacres of 1915 to believe the Young Turk scheme to annihilate them. Atom Azatian, a well-educated character in this novel, views the ongoing deportations as a temporary phenomenon and projects a peculiar analysis of the situation. 'Undoubtedly, there will be physical losses during the deportations. . . . But after all, this is not a widespread massacre. . . . Many will endure. They will live. They will survive.'²⁵ There are those like Arsen who are more alert and can see the evidence all too clearly: 'Does Mr Azatian still expect assistance from those criminal Young Turks? I feel sorry for his naïveté . . . The Ittihad [Young Turk party], a thousand times more anti-Armenian than Hamid, has decided on our total annihilation.'²⁶ The truth is that the majority of Armenians, and particularly the community leaders, still believed that they could allay the anger of the Turks and prevent large-scale massacres. Oshagan refers to this mentality in *Remnants*. He describes Ohan, the priest, and Artin Varzhapet, the teacher, flattering the Turkish commander to ward off the imminent danger hovering over the entire village. The priest warned the villagers against taking arms to resist, lest it aggravate the commander. The teacher writes a petition, and almost all the villagers sign it, begging the Turkish government for mercy and avowing, 'There is no salvation for Armenians outside Turkey.'²⁷

God *vis-à-vis* the catastrophe

It would be simplistic to attribute this unwillingness or inability to see the truth to naïveté alone. The explanation lies in the *Aghed* itself, the magnitude of which ruled out for many the possibility of an earthly cause. Was there a supernatural

conspiracy behind all this? Isn't God responsible for all this? The crushing answer came with disillusioned and frustrated expressions of shattered faith. Once again tradition rose from the subconscious to provide an explanation for the inexplicable disaster:

The ancient Judaeo-Christian tradition held the covenant between man and God as the core of explanations. Collective sufferings and national catastrophes were considered signs of rupture of the covenant. In this interpretation, who the enemy was, was not important. The enemy was only an agent carrying out God's judgment to punish His favorite people for disobeying His commandments. This interpretation had persisted in the earlier Armenian traditional responses to catastrophe. It undoubtedly remained embedded in the subconsciousness of survivor-writers responding to the genocide, thus, engendering a line of response which presumes the involvement of God in the tragedy. In these responses God's role in the catastrophe is a prominent theme.

Vahan Tekeyan's poetic responses to genocide are the embodiment of the concept based on the covenant between man and God. Most of his poems on the theme of genocide are dialogues with God or rather soliloquies addressed to God. In a poem entitled *Ahavor ban me aintegh* (Something Terrible There, 1916), Tekeyan depicts the gruesome carnage, laments the slaughter of an entire nation, and calls pathetically for help. There is no mention of the perpetrators of that 'terrible thing'; instead, he addresses God and holds Him responsible: 'An enemy God, of course, who was looking from His hiding place, launched upon it [the Armenian people] all the evil in the world.'

If God caused the misery, then God himself will bring about the deliverance. In another poem, *Piti mornank* (We Shall Forget, 1918), Tekeyan bargains with God:

We will forget our terrible wound and our grief,
We will forget, won't we? If we return to our land.

Tekeyan does not even consider the possible means to achieve this end. He expects God to compensate and reward the Armenians for their torture and crucifixion. God is the one who brought evil upon them; He will be the one to set it right. Ghevond, too, an eighth-century historian who recorded the devastation during Arab dominion in Armenia, was convinced that Armenians did not need to act. God himself would punish

the enemy: 'Vengeance is Mine, saith the Lord.' Tekeyan's interpretation echoes that same belief. In 'We Shall Forget,' he continues in the same vein,

I know it is too soon. And fate still an enemy,
but, Lord, let that day rise soon
when we can bless you unreservedly.²⁸

Involving God in the Armenian Genocide is a common theme with Tekeyan. In fact, it is the only way that Tekeyan views the *Aghed*. He presents God as the author of the calamities even in poems where the Turk is pinpointed as the executioner. According to Tekeyan, therefore, God is the only power that can heal the wounds. In the poem *Piti esenk Astutso* (We Shall Say to God, 1917), the Turk is present and his role in the great crime is expounded; but again, God is addressed, not the Turk. God is blamed, for He has witnessed the crime and remained silent. There is no feeling of anger or animosity toward the Turk. Protesting, the poet swears to refuse the comfort God may offer in the afterlife to compensate for the agony of the Armenian people,

Let us swear that if 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.²⁹

Even though Tekeyan addresses God in an angry tone, he does not sound as daring as the youthful poet Daniel Varuzhan, murdered during the genocide when he was only 31 and at the apex of his creativity. In the poem *Haihyoyank* (Curse, written between 1906 and 1909), Varuzhan's lyric hero rises above the desolate survivors of a carnage (during the massacres of 1894–96) and in an outburst of rage exclaims:

God! God insidious and bloodthirsty,
I protest against you.
Look down and see the falseness of your generosity. . . .

A singular dimension of the Armenian literary responses to genocide in the context of the covenant between man and God is

the idea of the duality of God, the doubt in the oneness of God. This idea finds an unusual manifestation in Oshagan's 'The Agitated Conscience.' In a morbid scene of slaughter Oshagan draws a distinction between the God to whom Armenians offer their lives – in the example of the martyrs of ancient and medieval Armenia – and the God of Islam who watches with approval the carnage and accepts the human sacrifice His worshippers offer to Him. These two images cannot belong to one God, hints the author. If the God watching the carnage was the same God to whom Armenians prayed, Oshagan reasons, He would object or intervene when the Turks made the village priest, that holy 'man of God,' walk in chains to the shambles. God did not object even when 'the victims were forced to keep their eyes open to the very end to see the shame rising from the pile of beheaded bodies and to hear for the last time the insults addressed to their powerless God and their religion.'³⁰ It was difficult indeed for the Armenian victims to believe that the God of love and goodness could also be the creator of ruthless creatures capable of killing the innocent and the defenseless.

In these varied manifestations of the theme of God and the *Aghed*, the most popular way to address God is, of course, to pray to Him for mercy, to beg Him to intervene and save the suffering nation. The precedent for this response – a response that most probably was an instinctive reaction among the helpless victims of the genocide – goes back to the inception of Christianity in Armenia, when Armenians came to believe in a God possessed of infinite power and boundless generosity. The writers naturally mirrored the reactions of the victims calling upon God in their agony. Exclamations, such as 'Mother of God! Come to our rescue . . . Jesus . . . show your power,'³¹ or 'O God . . . Where is God?'³² are common in the Armenian literary responses to the genocide.

Rebirth and an optimistic vision of the future

Throughout their turbulent history, the Armenians have been able to recover from persecution and devastation and look forward to the future. Poets and writers have extolled the spirit of Armenian determination to rise from the ashes. Rebirth and an optimistic vision of the future occur repeatedly in the pre-1915 literature. The stance is strictly secular and rests on the

tradition set forth by nineteenth-century Armenian Renaissance writers. The theme of revival was elaborately developed to spur confidence and self-esteem and encourage the struggle for emancipation. In the aftermath of the 1894–96 massacres, rebirth was a recurring theme in response to the national disaster. Daniel Varuzhan, after an outpouring of deadly scenes and suffering, ends his poem *Jarte* (The Massacre) with an optimistic note of prophecy by assuring the mourning mothers, ‘The coming of Dawn, a Dawn, whose footsteps / Believe me, mothers, / I hear.’

In the immediate aftermath of the genocide the theme of rebirth and enthusiastic forecasts are conspicuously absent. And that is understandable. Armenian writers, who had escaped the fate of hundreds of thousands of their compatriots, had left their homeland in ruins and devastation, and, with other survivors, were scattered throughout the world in abject poverty and uncertainty. What they saw was a gloomy picture of their people, uprooted from their land, frightened and confused in a new, alien environment. Decades had to pass for generations of Armenian writers in the diaspora to witness a revival of the determination to perpetuate their national identity, language, and culture. Inspired by this upsurge, William Saroyan would proclaim defiantly:

I should like to see any power of the world destroy this race, this small tribe of unimportant people, whose history is ended, whose wars have all been fought and lost, whose structures have crumbled, whose prayers are no longer uttered.

Go ahead, destroy this race. Let us say that it is 1915 again. There is war in the world. Destroy Armenia. See if you can do it. Send them from their homes into the desert. Let them have neither bread nor water. Burn their houses and their churches. See if they will not live again. See if they will not laugh again.

THE AFTERMATH: THE DISPERSION – A CONDITION, A STATE OF MIND, AND A LITERARY THEME

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.

(Vahan Tekeyan, 'Diaspora')³³

Tekeyan's 'Diaspora' best pictures the chaos that was Armenian life in dispersion. The masses of refugees, survivors of the genocide, clustered in alien lands, try to pull themselves together and overcome the hardships of the new unfamiliar conditions of life. The present is painful; the future is uncertain; the past is filled with horrifying memories that haunt reason and rationality. Creative power is paralyzed and expression of talent is obscured. 'It is hard to explain what I went through and the thoughts and reflections that generated this effect. Perhaps my yearnings for my homeland explain the haze and even the sadness itself which has left its imprint even on my character . . .'³⁴ Zapeł Esayan was unable to explain the veil of sadness enveloping her work in the aftermath of the genocide. She never attempted to express her own experience of the deportations and massacres, but the impact of her painful memories weighed on her creative imagination and cast a pall over her literary output. She was aware of that impact. She was also aware of the calling of the artist to employ all her talent and innate power to bring about through art the deliverance of the nation: 'I feel that I should let out the scream of the nation suffering for centuries under the yoke of oppression and slavery. I ought to let out the scream of liberation with my personal talent and my intrinsic power.'³⁵

Esayan had been able to mold effectively the artistic representation of the Cilician massacres of 1909; but she never found the appropriate literary medium to voice the survival of the nation, to confront the genocide in art in order to be able to transcend it. She avoided the subject of genocide, perhaps intimidated by the awesomeness of the task.

For the generation whose childhood was embedded in the horrors of massacres, the impact was not manifested in sadness alone. The horrors of the genocide and the deprivations and misery afterward were not only painful experiences to becloud their mental horizons; they were their school of life in which these young wanderers learned their first lessons of survival, a window through which the reality of life was perceived. Many of

them sought consolation in each other's company and tried to find the coziness of their abandoned homes in the familiar atmosphere of the Armenian churches and local community organizations. But most drifted away once they recovered from the initial shock. They found their escape in ephemeral love affairs with easygoing, fun-loving German, French, and Italian women. In the words of Shahnur, 'Marianne, with her irresistible charm, approached each one of them and dragged them away, here and there. Whether here or there, the winner always remained the same: always the same Nenette, the granddaughter of Manons, Ninons, and Nanas. Some were married, many lived with girl-friends, the Armenian Church became empty, the number of letters sent home decreased and, of course, far away mothers cried.'³⁶

In this passage from *Retreat Without Song*, Shahnur touches upon a painful reality, and at the same time encapsulates a typical theme commonly developed in the literature of this generation. The theme is **assimilation and loss of ethnic identity**, the thinning of Armenian society, to which Tekeyan, too, sadly attests. Besides *Retreat Without Song*, Shahnur has employed this theme in other works. His pessimistic views are embodied in *Haralezneru davachanutiane* (The Treason of Spirits, 1933).³⁷ Armenians are dead, he concludes, and the ancient spirits refuse to revive them. Short essays and allegoric anecdotes in Shahnur's *Tertis kiraknorea tive* (The Sunday Edition of My Paper) reflect that same pessimism. In one anecdote Shahnur tells the story of two sisters who were reunited after many years of separation. One raised her family in France, the other in Germany. While the sisters were chatting with each other and recalling old memories, their two sons played together reluctantly, unable to communicate for they did not speak Armenian. The child born in France tried but failed to snatch the other's toy. Angrily he turned away and yelled in French, 'You dirty German! Go back to your country.'³⁸ Symbolically, the passage is titled 'Obituary.'

More than any other factor in the diaspora, indeed, the attractiveness of the culture of the host country and the overpowering lure of non-Armenian women threatened Armenian ethnic identity. This **fascination with the non-Armenian**, coupled with helpless and unsuccessful efforts to resist the temptation, was a typical dilemma of the diasporan youth. It was a tragic reality and it inspired artistic expression, short stories,

and novels. Zareh Vorbuni (1902–80), a representative of the generation of orphans and an active participant in the Armenian literary life in France, expounds upon this dilemma in *Ev eghev mard* (And There Was Man). Written in 1964, this novel deals with the problems of the early post-genocide diaspora. Tomas, a young survivor and the protagonist of the novel is confronted with a choice between the Frenchwoman Mary Josette and the Armenian Srбуhi, whose name meaning pure and holy, suggests a deliberate move by the author to imply the untouchability of the sanctified figure of the Armenian woman emerging from the fires of the holocaust. In Mary Josette's love he had found a new life, comfort, self-confidence, and, what is most important, a sense of belonging to a locale. Mary Josette dies but, even after her death, he is not able to cut his spiritual ties with her. Then, there is Srбуhi, who reminds him of what is Armenian, and that only means painful memories, an unknown sadness, and uncertainty.

Those who remained faithful to their Armenian ethnicity and resisted assimilation waged a difficult battle. They did not always succeed in reconciling their two identities. The conflicts which arose from **dual identity** and which affected both the personal lives and the collective endeavors of Armenian youth in the diaspora are reflected in the literature of the time. On the personal level, Shahnur's characters Petros (or Pierre, the French name he acquired) and Lokhum in *Retreat Without Song*, Norair (or Robert, his French name) in *Pchegh me anush sirt* (A Bit of Sweet Heart), Tages Balabanian in *Derdzak me, ir erku hiurere ev zanazan depker* (A Tailor, His Two Guests and Various Incidents), and Hambardzum in 'The Treason of Spirits' vividly personify that helpless struggle. Some surrender to the sweeping waves of the new world; others stubbornly fight, but the end for them is either suicide or the asylum.

On the level of collective endeavors the outcome was no better. The old values to which they clung were fading against the colorful background of the new culture. There was no direction to follow, no new values by which to abide. Lecturing in Paris in 1925 on the Armenian literature in the diaspora, Vazgen Shushanian observed,

The struggle of the old generation was clear. They strove to overthrow the rule of the tyrannical oppression, or to enrich the culture. The struggle is ambiguous and uncertain today. The

socio-political, 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.³⁹

Caught in the hardship of the everlasting struggle, vanquished and stripped of their strength and willpower, some found solace in isolation and in escape from reality. Their reaction to the life around them was translated in the literature they produced as **dreams of the past and nostalgic reminiscences of childhood memories**. According to Vazgen Shushanian's own confession, 'Indeed, from a long time ago, my soul has known two pleasures and my body two sustenances, two mannas – memories and dreams.'⁴⁰ Shushanian's literary legacy is the true artistic representation of this behavior. He admits that childhood memories are sometimes trivial things which 'a happy man may have long forgotten, but these little things pile up in my mind. They keep returning to me, and I return to the happy home of my early childhood.'⁴¹

In 1924 in Paris, Levon Zaven Surmelian (b. 1907), another young survivor, published a collection of poems consisting mostly of childhood reminiscences. *Tunis hishatake* (The Memory of My Home) is a romantic poem filled with pathetic yearnings for his murdered parents and the happy home of his childhood from which he was brutally snatched:

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.

In Surmelian's poetry the genocide looms as an awesome barrier in time and space separating him from his loved ones. *Asatsvatsk irutean* (A Saying about Silence) pictures Surmelian's mental horizon overshadowed by his dead mother's image. Unable to overcome the persisting pangs of orphanhood, he tries to drown himself in silence:

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

Surmelian represents the generation of survivors, who in the words of Shushanian, 'carry their dead upon their young but strong and affectionate shoulders.'⁴² The vivid memory of their dead and their spiritual relationship with the world of the dead have isolated them from the reality of life. In *Asatsvatsk tsar tnkelu masin* (A Saying about Planting a Tree), Surmelian acknowledges the burden of the dead on him and sees the tree he plants as a cross in their memory.

Mushegh Ishkhan (1913–89), another representative of the generation of orphans, strove to sever his emotional and psychological ties with the past. The autobiographical essay, *Mnas barov mankutian* (Goodbye Childhood, 1974), seems to be his last attempt to set the record straight with the past and free himself once and for all from its ongoing influence. With reference to his childhood, the final lines read, 'Despite the bitterness you lived and deprivations you went through, you became a golden dream smiling to me from a distant past and filling my soul with boundless goodness. Goodbye my sweet, my brave childhood.'⁴³ Leaving childhood memories behind, Mushegh Ishkhan finally looks forward to the future.

THE OPEN WOUND

Survivors of the catastrophe, driven out of their land, continued their life in the diaspora. They tried to live a normal life, to marry and establish families. But there was something inexplicable, an enigmatic psychological dilemma that weighed on their souls and was transmitted from one generation to the next. It became an incomprehensible sensation, which at times sounded like 'the groaning of the earth' left behind by fathers and grandfathers, in the words of Hakob Karapents in far-off Kansas City. This prose-writer has grown up in the diaspora, never having seen Armenia, but 'In his sad eyes he carries the pain and the longings of his people in exile.'⁴⁴

Gerald Chaliand, a political scientist in Paris, grapples with the memory of his dead, because, 'I am, whether I like it or not, a descendant of a massacred people.'⁴⁵ The old memory of his ancestors haunts him. His childhood recollections were shaped by his grandmother's harrowing tales, and he perceived the world through her eyes: 'The old woman in black of my child-

hood reminisced: these unburied dead were their dead forever.¹⁴⁶ The image appears to him and interferes with his most serious scholarly work.

Times change. The new generation adopts the culture, the language, and the lifestyle of the host country. They speak the mother tongue with a heavy accent or do not speak it at all. Parents and children become strangers to one another. Relationships chill. David Kherdian, an American-Armenian writer, would perhaps give anything to be able to enjoy wholeheartedly the happy life of his family in Wisconsin, to forget about the massacres of Adana, whence his father escaped, and the terrors of Afyon Karahisar, where his mother spent her unhappy childhood; yet, an unknown pain, a remorse weighs heavy on his soul, as in his poem 'For My Father':

Why have I waited until your death
to know the earth you were turning
was Armenia, the color of the fence
your homage to Adana, and your other
complaints over my own complaints
were addressed to your homesickness
brought on by my English.

Genocide is not comprehended yet. Its impact persists.

They speak English. The language is lost. They are acculturated. But the pain lingers. The hyphenated Armenianness follows them everywhere. The unresolved dilemma of a dual identity, experienced by the past generation, visits them like a nightmare. American-Armenian poet Diana Der Hovanessian struggles in vain to overcome the dilemma in 'In My Dream':

I found the bloodied arm on the ground
before me. 'You didn't need it' said the voice.
I saw a sea of dismembered limbs tossed,
strewn on the horizon and beyond.
'You didn't really need these bones.'
They covered land that stretched, pressed past.
'You didn't need these provinces, did you?'
What would you do with all these stones?'
A mountain of broken bodies rose.
'You didn't need Mt Ararat, did you?'
I tried to speak. No tongue. My breath froze.
'You didn't need that language, did you?'

I woke, washed, and looked in the glass.

Only another American there dressed in fine clothes.

Peter Balakian, too, writes in English. Armenian was a language that his grandmother spoke. She is gone now; the language is lost; but her horror stories, the history of Peter's nation persist in the poet's mind. In his poems in *Sad Days of Light* images of everyday life in Bloomfield and Newark mix with the dreadful scenes of corpses piled up and deportees dragging their dilapidated bodies in a death march out of Adana and Diarbekir. The result in his writing is an outburst of unusual sensations which only those who have experienced the hell of a genocide can comprehend.

Gayané, a young, beautiful girl, a victim of Turkish atrocities, survived the genocide, but the wound nested deep in her soul never to let her recover and lead a normal life. She became a grandmother looking after her grandson but also, perhaps unwillingly, shaping his spiritual and imaginative world. The grandmother is gone, but the writer Leonardo Alishan still lives in two separate worlds at the same time. One is the rational, the 'real world.' The other, even more real than the reality around him, the world of his grandmother, the world of the Armenian sufferings, holds him like a prisoner screaming for freedom and threatens his reason. 'Sanity, a red bear father brought me when my tonsils were removed. I lost it either in the church or in the graveyard when my grandmother died. She also died mad, seeing Turkish horsemen in her hospital room.'⁴⁷

The nightmarish dilemma of Armenian life in the diaspora persisted in the writings of the second-generation survivors. Shahan Shahnur's protagonists Petros, Suren, and Hrach, after four decades, are reincarnated in Aram and Ero in Peter Najarian's novel, *Voyages*. For an American-born Armenian, who searches for his roots and who carries the burden of his ancestors' unfulfilled yearnings, America is a foreign land, as was France for the generation of orphans a half-century earlier. Najarian, too, struggles to find reconciliation with his dual identity, with his unfathomable longings for a land he has never seen, with the memory of the sufferings he has never personally experienced.

Is it possible to come to terms with the memories and the consequences of the catastrophe – the *Aghed*? Is it possible to leave memories behind and look back to them peacefully and

rationally as past experiences? Is it possible to render meaning to these experiences, create the masterpiece, the last echo of the literary responses to catastrophe, in order to transcend the elongated era of the genocide and to clear the way for the universal in Armenian diasporan literature? There is no answer.

As long as the effects of the Armenian Genocide persist in the diaspora, with ethnic identity fading away, the language being forgotten, and spiritual ties losing their grip, as long as the Turkish denial of the crime adds fuel to the smoldering embers of suffering souls, the *Aghed* will overshadow the creative imagination and the diasporan literature will reverberate with the sentiments of the victims of unrequited wrongs.

NOTES

1. Suren Partevian, *Ariuni mateane* [The Book of Blood] (Cairo: M. Shirinian Press, 1915), p. 8. (All quotations from Armenian sources are my translation unless cited otherwise).
2. Idem, *Anmah botse* [The Immortal Flame] (Alexandria: Aram Stepanian Press, 1917), p. 32.
3. Hagop Oshagan, *Mnatsordats* [Remnants], Vol. 2, Part 2, (Cairo: Housaper Press, 1933), p. 37. (Vol. 1 1932 and Vol. 2, Part 1, 1933).
4. Ibid., Vol. 2, Part 1, p. 386.
5. Ibid., p. 387.
6. Aram Antonian, *Ain sev orerun* [In Those Dark Days] (Boston: Hairenik Press, 1919), p. 84, from the episode entitled 'Jur. . . Jur. . .' [Water. . . Water. . .].
7. Lawrence L. Langer, *The Age of Atrocity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), p. 205.
8. Antonian, *In Those Dark Days*, p. 94, from 'Water. . . Water. . . Water. . .'.
9. Ibid., p. 122, from 'Keanken hognutiune' [Weariness of Life].
10. For this quotation and a short introduction to Arsen Erkat's portrait of suffering and death during the deportations, see *Hai nor grakanutean patmutiun* [History of Modern Armenian Literature], Vol. 5 (Erevan: Armenian SSR Academy of Sciences, 1979), p. 753.
11. Oshagan, *Remnants*, Vol. 2, Part 1, p. 389.
12. Vazgen Shushanian, *Vasn patranatap mankutean ev mnayun aghkatutean* [On Account of a Dreamless Childhood and Permanent Poverty], unpublished. For this quotation see G. Sevan, *Vazgen Shushanian* (Erevan: Armenian SSR Academy of Sciences, 1968), p. 45.
13. Shahan Shahnur, *Nahanje arants ergi* [Retreat Without Song, 1927–1929]. Quotation from a translation by Mischa Kudian (London: Mashtots Press, 1982), pp. 88–9.

14. Ibid., p. 90.
15. Shavarsh Narduni, 'Menk . . . Menk . . . Menk . . .' [We . . . We . . . We . . .]. See *Menk* (Paris) 1 (1931), p. 39.
16. Hagop Oshagan, *Kaiserakan haghtergutun* [Imperial Song of Triumph], Boghos Snapien (ed.) (Beirut: Altapress, 1983), p. 29.
17. Ibid., p. 27.
18. Ibid., p. 47.
19. Hagop Oshagan, *Hamapatker arevmtahai grakanutean* [Panorama of Western Armenian Literature], Vol. 9 (Antilias, Lebanon: Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, 1982), p. 278.
20. Oshagan, *Remnants*, Vol. 2, Part 2, p. 192.
21. Ibid., p. 338.
22. Oshagan, *Remnants*, Vol. 2, Part 1, p. 381.
23. Oshagan, *Panorama*, Vol. 9, p. 279.
24. Zapel Esayan, *Averakneru mej* [Amid the Ruins] (Beirut: Etvan Press, 1957), p. 89.
25. Partevian, *The Immortal Flame*, p. 34.
26. Ibid., p. 29.
27. Oshagan, *Remnants*, Vol. 2, Part 1, p. 363.
28. The translation by Diana Der Hovanessian and Marzbed Margossian, first and second line amended by me. See Diana Der Hovanessian and Marzbed Margossian trans., *Sacred Wrath, The Selected Poems of Vahan Tekeyan* (New York: Ashod press, 1982), p. 43.
29. Der Hovanessian and Margossian, *Sacred Wrath*, p. 10.
30. Oshagan, *Imperial Song of Triumph*, p. 27, from 'Vrdovvats Khghchmtanke' [The Agitated Conscience].
31. Antonian, *In Those Dark Days*, from 'Mairere' [The Mothers], p. 52.
32. Ibid., from 'Water . . . Water . . .', p. 85.
33. The first two stanzas of Vahan Tekeyan's 'Spiurk' [Diaspora, 1923], in Der Hovanessian and Margossian, *Sacred Wrath*, p. 8.
34. Zapel Esayan, 'Hogis aksoreal' [My Exiled Soul], in *Erker* (Works), (Erevan: Haipethrat, 1959), p. 133.
35. Ibid., p. 151.
36. Shahnur, *Retreat Without Song*, p. 86.
37. Shahan Shahnur, *Haralezneru davachanutiune* [The Treason of Spirits] (Paris: Haratch, 1971). According to old Armenian beliefs, *haralezes* were spirits which were able to revive the dead by licking their bodies.
38. Shahan Shahnur, *Tertis kiraknorea tive* [The Sunday Edition of My Paper] (Beirut: G. Keoseian Press, 1958), p. 22.
39. Quoted in preface by A. Topchian to Vazgen Shushanian, *Erkir hishatakats* [Land of Memories] (Erevan: Haiastan Press, 1966), p. 3.
40. Vazgen Shushanian, *Alekots tariner* [Tumultuous Years], unpublished, quoted in Sevan, *Vazgen Shushanian*, p. 33.
41. Shushanian, *Land of Memories*, p. 341.
42. Ibid., p. 209.
43. Mushegh Ishkhan, *Mnas barov mankutun* (Goodbye Childhood) (Beirut: Hamazgayin Press, 1974), p. 244.
44. Hakob Karapents, *Antsanot hoginer* [Unfamiliar Souls] (Beirut: Atlas Press,

- 1970), p. 156, collection of novellas, from the novella 'Voreve teghitis minchev aistegh' [From Anywhere To Here], written in 1955.
45. Gerald Chaliand, 'Memory of My Memory,' *Armenian Review*, 40: 1 (Spring 1978), p. 1.
 46. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
 47. Leonardo Alishan, 'Deathtime,' from a series of prose poems, *Ararat*, 23: 3 (Summer, 1982), p. 65.