

# Plight and Fate of Women During and Following **GENOCIDE**

GENOCIDE:  
A CRITICAL BIBLIOGRAPHIC REVIEW  
VOLUME 7

Samuel Totten, editor



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# 1

## **Women and the Armenian Genocide: The Victim, the Living Martyr**

*Rubina Peroomian*

### **Introduction**

The events of 1915 mark the beginning of the culmination of a series of calamities that befell the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire. These events, spanning about a quarter of a century—beginning with the Hamidian massacres of 1894–1896, continuing with the Cilician massacres of 1909, and ending with the Kemalist campaign of 1919–1923—constitute what is known today as the Armenian Genocide. As a result of the calculated and systematic destruction of Armenian life in the Ottoman Empire, an estimated one and a half million Armenians lost their lives and about five hundred thousand survivors fled the country and scattered around the world. Today, aside from a dwindling Armenian community of about 50,000 in Istanbul, it is estimated that about one hundred thousand forcibly Islamized Armenians continue to live throughout Turkey, a modern republic in which the presence of Armenians in their homeland of 3,000 years, as well as the edifices of their culture and heritage, are no more, wiped off the map as they are from the memory of its Turkish citizens.

During this darkest period of Armenian history, Armenian women were victimized by a prolonged agony. More vulnerable and less well-equipped physically and emotionally, especially during the forced deportations from their homes and villages of 1915, they had to take charge of the remnants of the family and face particularly tragic choices, to throw themselves down cliffs, to surrender to the raging waters of the Euphrates, or to live the life of a concubine in a Turkish or Kurdish harem—decisions to live or die, none of which offered true salvation, yet all of which demanded heavy compromises or extraordinary courage. Women who survived lived with the traumatic memory of the past and

its impact, never able to lead a normal life. Moreover, willingly or unwillingly, they affected their children's perception of the world and of their identity as a person and as an ethnic Armenian.

This chapter and the annotated bibliography that follows it focus on the plight of Armenian women as victims and survivors of the Genocide, and point to the need for more in-depth research and study in this field. The bibliography leaves out the huge corpus of Genocide literature written in Armenian and thus only includes works that are accessible to the English-speaking audience. Due to the constraints of space, the entries are limited. Further titles can be found in Richard G. Hovannisian (1980, pp. 17-43), Samuel Totten (1991b, pp. 7-43), and Hamo Vassilian (1992).

### **Through and Beyond the Darkest Period of Armenian History**

#### *The Impact of Events Preceding 1915*

The memory of the cataclysmic events preceding 1915 permeated the Armenian psyche of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Within the confines of their families, the elders spoke of their traumatic experience as survivors. Eyewitness accounts detailed the plight of Armenian women, mothers witnessing their daughters being raped, their sons and husbands being tortured and killed in front of their eyes; young women being forced into conjugal relationships with their Turkish or Kurdish abductors, bearing their children, and then, in extreme cases, in a moment of rage and revenge, killing the innocent offspring and running away insane. Eyewitness accounts also spoke of women who took up arms and fought shoulder to shoulder with *fedayees* (freedom fighters) in the incomparably scant defense that Armenians put up against the Turkish army or the incessant Kurdish assaults. During this period, towns and villages were ruined, thousands of lives were lost, but total destruction did not occur (Dadrian, 1995, pp. 141-157, 181-183). The survivors continued their lives in their ravaged homes and ransacked towns and villages. Rebirth was possible, and women played a major role in this revival. Armenians survived and continued to thrive, despite continuing discrimination and persecution.

#### *The Total Destruction*

The premeditated and planned massacres and deportations of Armenians beginning in the spring of 1915 destroyed the fabric of Armenian life in its ancestral homeland. The entire Armenian population was swept away. There was not even a flicker of hope for rebirth and revival.

The annihilation of Armenians was executed in phases (Dadrian, p. 221), and Armenian women were victimized throughout in various ways. The Turkish government proceeded, as Henry Morgenthau, the American ambassador to Tur-

key (1913–1916), asserts, by first turning Armenians into defenseless masses in order to make their slaughter less difficult (Morgenthau, 1975, p. 302). Contrary to the pre-1908 revolution of the Young Turks, Armenian men were permitted to serve in the army and receive military training, and some even possessed arms. The total annihilation could not begin without first liquidating them. As Turkey entered World War I, able-bodied Armenian men were conscripted into the army, but shortly after being conscripted, they were segregated, disarmed, formed into labor battalions, and murdered (Morgenthau, 1975, pp. 302–303). A minuscule number survived the butchery to recount what was going on in the army. Such butchery was followed by the decree of general disarmament during which all Armenians had to surrender all weapons, even instruments such as kitchen knives or any implements that resembled weapons. The decree was implemented with utmost cruelty. The tortures inflicted on Armenian victims—the *bastinado*, the horse-shoeing, the pulling out of eyebrows, beards, and nails—are horrific to even contemplate. Speaking of such, Morgenthau (1975) wrote:

The gendarmes treated women with the same cruelty and indecency as the men. There are cases on record in which women accused of concealing weapons were stripped naked and whipped with branches freshly cut from trees, and these beatings were even inflicted on women who were with child. Violations so commonly accompanied these searches that Armenian women and girls, on the approach of the gendarmes, would flee to the woods, the hills, or to mountain caves. (p. 305)

The next phase was the arrest of Armenian men, mostly in leadership positions, in every town and village. On the night of April 23–24, 1915, the Armenian secular and religious leaders and prominent intellectuals in Istanbul and other large cities were arrested and either executed outright or killed on the road to exile. This calculated strategy turned the Armenian population into defenseless and frantic masses of women, children, and elderly men who had escaped death in the previous phases.

The way was now paved for the full-fledged implementation of the annihilation of the Armenian population. The defenseless people of towns and villages were driven out of their homes and deported south to the desert. The manner in which the orders for deportation were carried out differed in each locale. The time granted for preparation varied from no time at all to a few days.

### *Difficult Choices*

In almost every household, with the men of the family murdered or imprisoned, it was now up to the women to assume responsibility and make the difficult decisions, first, to accept the loss of the murdered or imprisoned husband or son, and then to prepare for the journey. Preparation entailed anticipating every possibility, what to take along, and whether or not entrust a young child to the care of a volunteering neighbor—with the hope of returning and reclaiming the

child. A survivor interviewed by the Miller and Miller (1993) remembers how difficult it was to part from her mother, sisters, and grandmother. Her mother had decided to allow her to be deported with her fiancé's family, because she would not be able to protect and watch over all four of her daughters. As luck would have it, she was the only survivor of the family. Other interviewees recalled the preparations: the mother of one wanted to kill one of their five hundred sheep in order to prepare food to take along, but the Turks had stolen all of them; the mother of another bribed a soldier to get a good pair of shoes for her daughter; other mothers buried their precious possessions, gold and jewelry, in the hope of recovering them when they returned (Miller and Miller, 1993, pp. 68-72). In many places, the government had given assurances that the deportations were a temporary safety measure, simply a matter of relocating Armenians from the war zone.

Many families were given the option to convert to Islam and avoid deportation. It was up to the women to make that difficult decision and face the long-term compunction of having betrayed the Christian faith of their ancestors. But even in these cases, their troubles did not end with their conversion. They had to surrender their children to Turkish orphanages where they were to be brought up as true Muslims. Obviously, the government did not trust the converts of the older generation of Armenians.

Caravans of deportees left each town and village throughout Anatolia, carrying Armenians to their fate. Most deportees went on foot, while others with better means hired carts or pack animals to carry their belongings or a sick or elderly member of their family. Usually one or more gendarmes accompanied the caravans to "protect" the deportees. Instead, the latter alerted the surrounding Muslim villagers and/or bands of *chettes*—criminals released from jails and given free rein in the countryside to assist with the extermination of the deportees—of the approaching convoy, then stepped aside and allowed them to loot, rape, and kill at will. After a few days, all the deportees were in the same situation, with their belongings stolen, and their carts and horses or donkeys gone.

Unable to bear the hardships of the road and the weeks of walking without food and water, the older and weaker men and women often slowed down and fell behind. In turn, the gendarmes shot them or left them to die by the roadside. Survivors recall their mothers crafting makeshift shoes by wrapping cloth around their children's bare feet, but these ripped easily on the thorns and stones on the road. Mothers kept making these wrappers until they ran out of materials, blankets, and clothing. Many survivors also remember their mothers teaching them the Armenian alphabet, drawing with a stick in the desert sand, in the hope that after their own certain death, their children would keep the memory of their identity alive. Those who still had their Bibles would read to the children to soothe the pain of hunger and thirst (Miller and Miller, 1993).

The deportees would walk all day and stop at night to rest in the open air or under makeshift tents. They would cling to each other for protection and



hide the young girls, because the gendarmes or the nearby tribesmen usually attacked the camp at night to prey on young girls.

From April to October 1915, thousands and thousands of wretched women and children filled the roads, prey to continuous assaults, hunger, thirst, epidemic diseases, and the scorching desert sun. The death march passed through circuitous country roads and rugged mountain passes crowded with the rotting corpses, covered with worms, of those left behind from previous caravans. The route that was chosen avoided populated villages so that the deportees could not get food, water, or help of any kind. Even when the route took them by a stream or a well, the gendarmes would prohibit the deportees from approaching the water. The deportees became walking skeletons, skin and bone, barefoot, half-naked, their skin encrusted with dirt and filth and blackened and dehydrated from the blistering sun and literally dying of thirst, they craved water. But those who ran to the water were shot.

Women were separated from their children and husbands from their wives. The men, who had not been arrested before the deportation, along with the older boys, were separated from the caravans and shot or killed with bayonets (Hovannisian, 1986, p. 29).

People were not allowed to stop to bury their dead. Pregnant women were not allowed to stop and give birth. Those who had babies had to bundle their newborn in a piece of their own clothing and move on. These were the lucky ones, who saw their offspring. Others, stabbed with bayonets, had their fetuses taken out and thrown in the air or crushed against a rock. Speaking of such horrors, Morgenthau (1975) wrote:

There were women who held up their babies to strangers, begging them to take them and save them from their tormentors, and failing this, they would throw them into wells or leave them behind bushes, that at least they might die undisturbed. Behind was left a small army of girls, who had been sold as slaves—frequently for a *medjidie*, or about eighty cents—and who, after serving the brutal purposes of their purchasers, were forced to live lives of prostitution. (p. 317)

A woman survivor from Malgara, who was six years old during the deportations (UCLA Armenian Oral History collection), recounted the following story: The gendarmes separated the children from their parents and led them to a small village nearby. They were to be sold to Bedouin Arabs the next day. It was already dark, she recalled, but the children could see the flames of a big fire in the distance. They could also smell burning flesh. Frightened and distraught, they huddled together and watched the flames finally die down. In the darkness of the night they found a thin stream running nearby. They were so thirsty that they drank the water. It was a little salty and tasted funny. The next morning when they looked at each other they were terrified. Their faces were covered with blood, the blood of their parents and fellow deportees burned alive the night before. The survivor recounted this with tears in her eyes and confessed with pain that she cannot get rid of the image deeply imprinted in her memory.



Reverend F. H. Leslie, an American missionary in Urfa at the time of the genocide, reported about the caravans of women and girls passing the city each day, noting how they were “constantly robbed of their money, bedding, clothing, and beaten, criminally abused and abducted along the way” (quoted in Miller and Miller, 1993, p. 21). American missionaries also reported the most terrible scenes along the banks of the Euphrates. More specifically, they told how gendarmes pushed the Armenian women into the water and shot at them if they tried to swim away, or how women themselves jumped into the river with their children in their arms to put an end to their torturous life and/or to avoid becoming prey to the perpetrator’s sexual appetite.

Suicide was not always an option, as human instinct drove the wretched women into the tricky game of survival, a game that could defy moral standards and rob human dignity and normal patterns of behavior of their meaning. There are reports of instances of cannibalism in the desert of Deir-el-Zor, where tens of thousands of Armenians were first pushed and then “herded.” After months of dehumanizing, incapacitating suffering, the few remnants of women and children were left in the desert to die. They were faced with the choice of either starving to death or eating the corpses of their own children, who themselves had died of starvation. Thus, the Turkish atrocities did not end with murder and plunder; in certain cases, those Armenians who remained alive, but just barely, were reduced to the status of lowly animals, thus shifting the burden of guilt onto the wretched survivors who had to go on living a tormented life of lingering shame and remorse (Hovanisian, 1986, p.178).

### *A Self-Assigned Mission*

Despite numerous hardships, some survived to tell the story of Armenian suffering, and many interviewees (UCLA Armenian Oral History collection) attest to that self-assigned mission. These eyewitness accounts and testimonies are valuable insights that, as Samuel Totten (1991a) puts it in his analysis of the importance of first-person accounts, provide “a means to penetrate deeper into the dark depths of genocide” (p. 322).

Pailatsu Kaptanian, for example, wrote her 298-page eyewitness account *Tsavak* (the name of her baby boy who did not survive), for the express purpose of helping the European representatives at the postwar negotiation table to see the truth as to what happened to the Armenian people at the hands of the Ottoman Turks.

Bertha (Berjouhi) Nakshian Ketchian, firmly believed, “We—the survivors—are living eyewitnesses of the Genocide of Armenians by the Turks. What was documented in writing and pictures at the time is now being denied.” She was determined to fight against denial, to join the struggle for world recognition of the Armenian Genocide, believing that “recognition of the crime does not

bring the victims back, but it eases somewhat the pain of the living" (Ketchian, 1988, pp. ix-x). Other similarly motivated memoirs are listed in the annotated bibliography accompanying this essay.

### *A Lifetime of Disillusionment and Nightmares*

It is difficult to live a normal healthy life, as healing and reconciliation become impossible when one's trust in humanity is shattered, when the traumatic ordeal of the past is fueled by the perpetrator's unwavering denialist stance. Historical documentation as well as the testimonies of many survivors speak of the participation of Turkish and Kurdish mobs in the looting and carnage. Turkish neighbors refused to buy the goods that Armenians offered before the 1915 deportations in order to procure funds for the journey ahead. Instead, many rushed to move into Armenian homes even before the inhabitants were evacuated (UCLA Armenian Oral History collection). During the postwar Kemalist campaign in Smyrna (Izmir), the Turkish neighbors of Armenians and Greeks helped the Ottoman army identify Armenian and Greek homes and to set them on fire after looting and killing the inhabitants (Housepian, 1988, pp. 155-167). They also burned the Armenian church with hundreds of refugees inside. And Turkish officers preyed on the Armenian women who were driven out of their homes and gathered on the quay (Smyrna Tragedy). Many survivors speak of the betrayal and complicity of a close and trusted Turkish friend of the family. This was an enigma that continued to weigh heavily among the survivors' painful memories. Disillusionment was coupled with anger when the world praised Kemal Atatürk, the father of modern Turkey, but also the perpetrator of the Smyrna Tragedy.

Almost all of the survivors spoke of nightmares haunting them and affecting their behavior. The horrors they experienced live on in the deep layers of their memory and are propelled to the surface in their sleep, when the willful suppression of these images is not functioning.

The ordeal continued. Women survivors of the Armenian Genocide carried the burden of horrifying memories and transmitted it to their offspring, even if they tried to suppress the memory by not talking about their past. And thus, the memory remained alive in the next generation and the one after that, and such memory, of course, constitutes an important component of the Armenian ethnic identity—and also as an important factor in their outlook on life.

### **Critical Challenges Facing the Field**

While the study of the Armenian Genocide has made important strides, gender analysis is quite a new field within that domain. It has yet to find acceptance and the recognition of its importance among genocide scholars, such that they come to understand that one need not be a feminist or a woman scholar to focus on

the experiences of women victims in genocidal situations. This is particularly true in the case of Armenian Genocide studies.

Another major challenge to this field is the lack of information about the thousands of Armenian women who were “rescued” (most often not with altruistic motivation, but for egotistic reasons) or abducted and forcibly converted to Islam. No gender analysis would be complete without in-depth research on the life experiences of these women. And here, we come late. Most of these women are dead and buried now, and buried with them are their stories that never had a chance to reach receptive ears and fill a small gap in the history of the Armenian Genocide, as well as the history of multiethnic Turkish society believed to be uniform and uninterrupted.

An interesting and newly revealed twist in this area is the hostile attitude among the children of runaway Armenian concubines, those women who eventually took refuge in Armenian communities outside Turkey. This is a double-edged sword, a continuing source of suffering for the mothers—the guilt of their unholy conjugal life with a Turk and the pain of having abandoned their children—and a source of anger and hatred for their offspring, having been told about their Armenian mothers who ran off and left them behind as orphans. Research in this area is essential.

### **Avenues to New Possibilities for Progress**

The main opening for progress in the study of the plight of the Armenian women victims of the Genocide is the keen interest of third-generation Armenians in the experience of their grandmothers. Evidence of this is the increasing number of publications of their stories in memoirs, and the use of their stories for deeper analysis. Another phenomenon that inspires optimism for progress in this field is the recent change of atmosphere in Turkey. The wall of silence surrounding the Armenian issue has been breached, and many Turkish intellectuals are challenging the official stand and demanding that the Turkish government confront the past. Because of this change, there has been a relaxation, albeit slight, in the rigid Turkish policy of enforced silence about the Armenian Genocide, allowing the emergence of memoirs, biographies, and fiction that entertain the subject of the Armenian Genocide and explore the lives of survivors hitherto assumed to be totally integrated and immersed in Turkish society. It is only recently that we have become aware of the lifelong trauma engulfing these survivors, and how the past has shaped the identity of the generations born to them. Migirdic Margosyan’s *Gavur Mahallesi* (The Infidels’ Quarter), Fethiye Cetin’s *Anneannem* (My Maternal Grandmother), and Kemal Yalcin’s *Seninle Guler Yuregim* (You Rejoice My Heart) are pacesetters.

### **Conclusion**

In-depth analysis of the experiences of Armenian women—victims and survivors—would certainly help to expand our knowledge of the Armenian

Genocide. In this respect, increased momentum in the study of existing sources is crucial. But more important is to bring to light the experience of Islamized Armenian women in Turkey, and that is possible only with the help of Turkish and Turkish-Armenian intellectuals and a favorable atmosphere in Turkey.

The Armenian survivors who have now almost all passed on were denied the satisfaction of seeing the criminal admit the crime—a unique situation in the Armenian case—which could have had a psychological, even a therapeutic effect. They passed with a bitter grievance weighing on their souls. Now, it is the second- and third-generation survivors who live with these unsettled accounts of the past. They deserve belated reconciliation for the sake of a peaceful future and for the sake of humanity, and this reconciliation will be possible only when the official Turkish stance vis-à-vis the Armenian Genocide is reversed.

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## Annotated Bibliography

### *Diaries*

Jacobson, Maria (2001). *Diaries of a Danish Missionary, Harpoot, 1907-1917*. Kristen Vind (Tr.), Ara Sarafian (Ed.). Princeton, NJ and London: Gomidas Institute Books, 266 pp.

Jacobson describes the convoys of deportees, mostly women and children, passing through Harpoot (Kharbert), the missionary orphanage. In doing so, she recounts she and her colleagues were forced to close the orphanage down and as a result had to relocate the orphans. She witnessed Turkish families taking in Armenian children, giving them Turkish names and forcing them to convert.

### *Eyewitness Accounts*

Lambert, Rose (1911). *Hadjin and the Armenian Massacres*. New York, Chicago, Toronto, London, and Edinburgh: Fleming H. Revell Company. 106 pp.

The author, a missionary stationed in Hadjin, recounts the 1909 massacres and the Armenian defense of the city. Similar episodes are recorded by Zapel Esayan in *Averaknerun mej* (Amid the Ruins).

Mugerditchian Esther (circa 1917). *From Turkish Toils: The Narrative of an Armenian Family's Escape*. New York: George H. Doran Company Publishers, 45 pp.

Esther wrote this long letter in Armenian to her husband, an employee of the British Consular Service in Diarbekir stationed in Egypt. She described in detail the hardship of the family, and how, disguised as Kurds, they escaped the Turkish atrocities. The letter was translated into English in 1919 with a message from the author, "Cherish in your hearts the feeling of vengeance for our hundreds of thousands of martyrs."

Parmelee, Ruth M. (2002). *A Pioneer in the Euphrates Valley*. Princeton, NJ and London: Gomidas Institute, 68 pp.

Dr. Ruth Parmelee was an American medical missionary in the Ottoman Empire during World War I. This book is a testimony of Turkish atrocities against Armenians in the region.

### *Memoirs and Autobiographies*

Bedoukian, Kerop (1978). *The Urchin: An Armenian's Escape*. London: Butler and Tanner Ltd. 186 pp. (Also published as *Some of us Survived*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 242 pp.)

Bedoukian was nine years old when the deportation of Armenians in Sivaz began. The memoirs are dedicated to his mother and sister who shared his



horrifying ordeal, and who protected him, allowing him to survive and escape to freedom. He remembers her mother's utmost sacrifice for her children and her begging for bread in Turkish houses where Armenian women were taken in as concubines.

Martin, Ramela (1989). *Out of Darkness*. Cambridge, MA: Zoryan Institute Publication, 220 pp.

Born in the Pilibosian family in Malatia, Ramela was a little girl during the years of deportation and massacres. She soon found herself left alone with her mother on the deportation road. She lost her mother, too, and struggled all alone until she found her way into an orphanage, where she witnessed children dying from hunger and illnesses. Reaching Greece, and freedom, was a miracle.

Minassian, John (1986). *Many Hills Yet to Climb: Memoirs of an Armenian Deportee*. Santa Barbara, CA: Jim Cook, Publisher, 255 pp.

John Minassian was born in Sivaz. He was a student at the American Teachers College when the Great War broke out. He survived the genocide to write a detailed account of the Armenian suffering. This story is also the sad story of women of different walks of life subjected to dehumanizing atrocities.

Muggerditchian Shipley, Alice (1983). *We Walked Then Ran*. Phoenix, AZ: A. M. Shipley, 290 pp.

The author was born into a diplomatic family. Her father was in the service of the British government in Egypt when the deportations began. Alice tells the story of her escape from the Turkish atrocities with her mother and siblings.

Naim Bey (1965). *The Memoirs of Naim Bey* (second printing). Compiled by Antonian, Aram. Newtown Square, PA: Armenian Historical Research Association, 84 pp.

In this compilation of Official Turkish Documents on the deportations and massacres of Armenians, Antonian is making heard the voice of a Turkish official who reluctantly carried out his superiors' orders. After the war, Naim Bey handed over the documents he had still kept to Antonian and on behest of Antonian wrote his memoirs in which the harrowing events and the suffering of women are described.

Najarian, Peter (1986). *Daughters of Memory*. Berkeley, CA: City Miner Books, 157 pp.

Women survivors of the Genocide, living in the United States, get together every so often and relate their experiences during the deportations of 1915. Najarian shows how indelible are the imprints of these memories, always present in the lives of these women.

Nakshian Ketchian, Bertha (1988). *In the Shadow of the Fortress: The Genocide Remembered*. Cambridge, MA: Zoryan Institute Publication. 151 pp.

Bertha (Berjuhi) remembers her childhood in Husenig, in the Province of Kharbert. She describes women, children and old men during the Death March, young women being kidnapped, attractive children taken away by Arabs and Kurds, women hurling themselves down the cliffs. She remembers her grandmother trying hard to keep the family together. Bertha ended up in an orphanage in Kharbert after the remnants of her family managed to return from Aleppo.

Soghoian, Florence M. (1997). *Portrait of a Survivor*. Hanover, MA: The Christopher Publishing House, 147 pp.

Soghoian relates the story of her mother, Shnorhig, who was deported from Zeitun at the age of seven. Her father was a soldier in the Turkish army and away from the family at the time. They never heard from him again. Her family members were separated from each other in that chaotic crowd on the road of deportation. She was left alone in the streets of Marash and was taken to the orphanage there. Later, she was reunited with her mother, the only other survivor of their large family.

Surmelian, Levon Z. (1945). *I Ask You Ladies and Gentlemen*. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 316 pp.

This autobiography is one of the first English-language works on the Armenian Genocide. The tragedy of 1915 is described through the eyes of a young boy. It is a documentary with a poetic language, and reflected in it is the philosophy of life of someone who has come face to face with death a few times in his childhood.

Tabibian, Negdar K. (1988). *Destined to Survive: An Autobiography*. Laverne, CA: American-Armenian International College, University of Laverne, 140 pp.

Tabibian tells the story of the defense of Van and the exodus of the people of Van just before the Turkish reoccupation of the region. She took to the road with her grandparents, mother, younger sister, and older sister with her newborn baby. The men of the family had all fallen during the battle to defend the city.

### *Biography*

Bagdasarian, Adam (2000). *Forgotten Fire*. New York: DK Publishing, Inc. 273 pp.

Twelve-year-old Vahan's childhood abruptly ended when he watched horror-stricken the execution of his two older brothers by gendarmes in their own garden in Bitlis. The book is based on Bagdasarian's great uncle, Vahan's life story. Female members of the family and fellow deportees are vividly portrayed throughout the story.

Balakian, Peter (1997). *Black Dog of Fate*. New York: Broadway Books, 289 pp.

This is a testimony of Balakian's discovery of the traumatic past that his family and his ancestors had experienced. Against a backdrop of historical facts, Balakian narrates the story of his grandmother, which is the story of many victims and survivors of the Armenian Genocide.

Katchadourian, Stina (1994). *Efronia, an Armenian Love Story*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 221 pp.

Efronia's memoir of some 500 pages, written in Armenian, was translated into English by her son and then turned into a piece of literary work by her non-Armenian daughter-in-law. Efronia was born into a well-educated family in Aintab. She planned to enter the Marash College for Girls when the Great War broke out. From that moment, her story is the turbulent life of a family in their struggle to survive. Meanwhile, Efronia's love story with a young Persian man was an outrageous occurrence for the time. She always had the chance to turn her back to the family's tradition and Christian faith and escape with her lover to safety and personal happiness, but she chose to suffer with her family. She survived and, much later in life, reluctantly chose a partner in marriage. This story of forbidden love gives a different view of woman's suffering in those tumultuous years.

Kherdian, David (1979). *The Road from Home: The Story of an Armenian Girl*. New York: Greenwillow Books, 238 pp.

Kherdian relates the story of his mother Veron, born in Azizia into a well-to-do family. At the age of sixteen, she was deported with her family and survived unspeakable hardship.

Manoukian, Mariam, and Manoukian, Elize (2005). *On the Other Side of Mount Ararat: A Story of a Vanished City*. Glendale, CA: Abril Publishing, 177 pp.

In the voice of her grandmother, Mariam Manoukian and her daughter Elize depict the life of the Kosparian family and, in general, the life of Armenians in Van in the years between 1913 and 1915. Women of different generations are portrayed in their everyday life: their beliefs, their fears, their bravery, and their suffering through the hardship of the exodus from Van, escaping the encroaching Turkish army. This book is the result of the efforts of third and fourth generation Armenians to recount the memories of a tragic past that have remained imprinted in the minds of generations to come.

Mouradian, Kay (2005). *A Gift in the Sunlight: An Armenian Story*. London and Reading: Taderon Press, 205 pp.

Mouradian wrote her mother's story on her behest. To furnish a historical background for these heartrending stories, reminiscences of the years of massacres she grew up with, she began her research, and the deeper she

delved, the more convinced she became that what she was to write was more than her mother's story; "it is also the story of every Armenian who survived that tragic historical event that continues to be glossed over by the modern world."

Tashjian, Alice A. (1995). *Silences: My Mother's Will to Survive*. Princeton, NJ: Blue Pansy Publishing, 98 pp.

This is the story of Iskouhi Parounagian of Sivaz, the author's mother, a story that has come alive through mother-daughter conversations. Still in her teens, Iskouhi lost her mother to the hardships of the Death March. Orphaned and alone, she wandered for days without food until a Turkish woman picked her up and took her home. But sheltering Armenians was dangerous, and Turks who did that, faced jail or even death. Iskouhi was driven out, but the Turkish woman was kind enough to accompany her until she could join a caravan of Armenians, to be followed by further ordeals.

### *Fiction*

Aharonian Marcom, Micheline (2001). *Three Apples Fell from Heaven*. New York: Riverhead Books, 270 pp.

This novel is based on Micheline's maternal grandmother's story and includes the horrifying experience of other men and women during the years 1915-1917. The author is a third generation half-Armenian half-American woman who, despite her mother's resolve not to talk about the harrowing stories that she herself had been raised with, set out to discover the past.

Edgarian, Carol (1994). *Rise the Euphrates*. New York: Random House Books, 370 pp.

Edgarian blends the facts of the Armenian Genocide with the traumatic experience of the survivor generation, specifically, that of her grandmother. She highlights the attractions and fun and multiple opportunities that American culture can offer a third-generation Armenian teenager and demonstrates that no matter how deeply assimilated with the culture and lifestyle of the mainstream and aloof from the Armenian past, this American-born generation still carries traces of the wounds of the Genocide.

Hacikyan, Agop J., and Jean-Yves Soucy (2001). *A Summer without Dawn*. Toronto, Ontario: McClelland & Stewart Inc. Publishers, 545 pp.

This novel was first published in French, *Un été sans aube*. It is a detailed description of Vartan and Maro Balian's ordeal through the years of genocide. Maro struggles to save her only son as she bears the disgrace and humiliation of a concubine in her "rescuer's" harem. She represents the collective persona of all women facing the same predicament, exemplifying the life-long ordeal of women, who had to leave behind their children, fruits of the unholy conjugal life with their abductors, and escape to freedom.



Kricorian, Nancy (1999). *Zabelle*. New York: Avon Books, 241pp.

This is the story of Zabelle Chahasbanian, from her childhood in Hadjin to her immigration to the United States, with frequent flashbacks into the darkest years of her life during the deportations.

Shirinian, Lorne (2002). *Memory's Orphans*. Kingston, Ontario: Blue Heron Press. 101pp.

This is a collection of short stories about individuals in search of their place in the New World. Whether they were born somewhere in Turkey (Western Armenia), survived the Genocide and took refuge in the Diaspora, or were born in the Diaspora but lived with the transmitted memory of the genocide, they are outsiders, marginal people, who are here and there simultaneously. This is clearly the effects of the genocide on the survivors and generations of survivors.

### *Secondary Material*

Akcam, Taner (2006). *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility*. New York: Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt and Company, 483 pp.

In the light of Turkish nationalism and the goals of the Young Turks, this Turkish historian presents his view of the Armenian massacres. While discussing the massacres and deportations, he also speaks of the fate of women (see, particularly, pp. 174-204).

Balakian, Nona (1958). *The Armenian American Writer*. New York: Armenian General Benevolent Union of America, 32 pp.

This is a short introduction into the works of the first generation Armenian writers who wrote in English. Balakian analyses their work, their motives, and the imprint of the Old Country on their writings.

Balakian, Peter (2003). *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 475 pp.

Using archival materials and eyewitness accounts, Balakian presents the history of the Armenian Genocide. He provides valuable information on the lot of Armenian women, their experience during the deportation, their forcible conversions and abduction into harems, and the sexual violence perpetrated against them.

Bedrosian, Margaret (1991). *The Magical Pine Ring: Armenian American Literature*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 249 pp.

This is a compilation of essays analyzing the works of various Armenian-American writers in their quest to find their identity and to come to terms with their collective traumatic past. Bedrosian herself is a second generation survivor, and her own past has affected her approach to these writers.



Dicanio, Margaret (2002). *Memory Fragments from the Armenian Genocide: A Mosaic of a Shared Heritage*. New York, Lincoln, Shanghai: Mystery and Suspense Press, 243 pp.

Dicanio has recorded the life stories of thirty-one second-generation men and women survivors, all of whom exemplify the philosophy that "doing well is doing good." This is a credo handed down to them by their survivor parents and the memory of their family members who perished during the Genocide. They uphold their culture and heritage and do well in life as if taking revenge on the Turkish campaign to wipe out Armenians.

Hovannisian, Richard G. (1992). "Intervention and Shades of Altruism During the Armenian Genocide," pp. 173-207 (CHECK THIS). In Richard G. Hovannisian (Ed.) *The Armenian Genocide, History, Politics, Ethics*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Hovannisian, one of the doyens of research on the Armenian Genocide, analyzes oral histories of the Armenian genocide into order too attempt to gain insight into the motivations of those who intervened on the behalf of the Armenians. He shows these interventions to be humanitarian, obviously, not counting the cases of sexual exploitation, forced labor, bribery, etc. This essay is important to the topic under discussion because cases of good Turks saving Armenian women for solely humanitarian reasons have not been addressed in the body of this essay.

Mergerian, Barbara, and Renjilian-Burgy, Joy (Eds.) (2000). *Voices of Armenian Women. Papers Presented at the International Conference on Armenian Women. Paris, France*. Belmont, MA: AIWA Press, Armenian International Women's Association, 333 pp.

The first section of this volume (pp. 1-49) comprises five essays dealing with the impact of the Armenian Genocide on women survivors and their offspring.

Miller, Donald E., and, Touryan Miller, Lorna (1992). "Women and Children of the Armenian Genocide," pp. 152-172. In Richard G. Hovannisian (Ed.) *The Armenian Genocide, History, Politics, Ethics*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Based on interviews of survivors through the years, the Millers delineate the experience of women, identifying their gender-specific physical and emotional suffering.

Moranian, Suzanne Elizabeth (1992). "Bearing Witness: The Missionary Archives as Evidence of the Armenian Genocide," pp. 103-128. In Richard G. Hovannisian (Ed.) *The Armenian Genocide, History, Politics, Ethics*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Moranian discusses missionary activities in the Ottoman Empire, especially during the massacres and deportations, and cites their reports. She describes how difficult it was for the missionaries to witness the deportation,

knowing that the deportees "faced almost certain death." Anna Birge, for example, remembers women and children jammed into cattle cars going south without food and water: "One woman gave birth to twins in one of the cattle cars, and upon crossing a river, the woman hurled herself and her two infants into the water." Toward the end of the Genocide, the Turkish government exempted the Armenian Catholics and Protestants from deportation, but most of them were already gone.

Peroomian, Rubina (1993). *Literary Responses to Catastrophe: A Comparison of the Armenian and the Jewish Experience*. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 238 pp.

Through the literary responses to the Genocide by the first generation Armenian literati, the author examines the plight of the Armenian people and their differing reactions to the horrors of genocide. The predicament of women in their prolonged agony is also discussed.

Peroomian, Rubina (2003). "New Directions in Literary Responses to the Armenian Genocide," pp. 157-180. In Richard G. Hovannisian (Ed.) *Looking Backward, Moving Forward: Confronting the Armenian Genocide*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

The author examines the contextualization of the Armenian Genocide by the second- and third-generation writers, stresses the power of artistic literature as an instrument of memory and mission and as an indicator of the metamorphosis of ethnic identity. Through this analysis, the second- and third-generation Armenian women's perception of the past and its impact on the present is discussed.

Peroomian, Rubina (2003). "When Death Is a Blessing and Life a Prolonged Agony: Women Victims of Genocide," pp. 314-332. In Colin Tatz, Peter Arnold, and Sandra Tatz (Eds.), *Genocide, Perspectives II: Essays on Holocaust and Genocide*. Sydney: Brandl & Schlesinger with the Australian Institute for Holocaust & Genocide Studies.

This gender-specific analysis discusses women's plight during the Genocide and the impact of the traumatic past on survivors as reflected in memoirs, eyewitness accounts, and fiction.

Rowe, Victoria (2003). *A History of Armenian Women's Writing: 1880-1922*. London: Cambridge Scholars Press Ltd., 301 pp.

This book contains a comprehensive bibliography of works of Armenian women writers and those focusing on Armenian women. Chapter 6 deals specifically with women's experience of exile and genocide.

Shirinian, George N. (2001). "The Armenian Massacres of 1894-1897: A Bibliography." *Armenian Review*, 47 (1-2), 113-164.

This compilation of material (historical background, documents, memoirs and eyewitness accounts) about the massacres in individual cities and towns

and policies of the Great Powers is a valuable contribution to the research and understanding of the massacres of that era—and specifically the plight of the Armenian women caught in that turmoil.

Shirinian, Lorne (1990). *Armenian-North American Literature, a Critical Introduction: Genocide, Diaspora, and Symbols*. Lewiston, Quinston, Lampeter, Canada: The Edwin Mellen Press, 304 pp.

Shirinian explores the ways Armenians in North America relate to the Armenian Genocide and discusses how there is a certain unity in the texts at the level of the collective symbol of the Armenian Genocide.

Shirinian Lorne (1998). "Survivor Memoirs of the Armenian Genocide as Cultural History," pp. 165-174. In Richard G. Hovannisian (Ed.) *Remembrance and Denial: The Case of the Armenian Genocide*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press.

In this essay, the author discusses the difference between written accounts/memoirs and oral history. He maintains that memoirs are part history and "contribute to and form a major component of the collective memory of the Armenian nation." The importance to the subject at hand is the background and analysis it provides for the many memoirs by women survivors listed in this bibliography.

Shirinian, Lorne (2000). *Writing Memory: The Search for Home in Armenian Diaspora Literature as Cultural Practice*. Kingston, Ontario: Blue Heron Press, 189 pp.

Examined are the role of the memory of the Genocide in the Armenian Diaspora communities, and the hardship of living away from home. "Home" here is a substitute for Western Armenia that was swept clean of its indigenous people during the Genocide.

Staub, Ervin (2003). "Healing and Reconciliation, pp. 263-274. In Richard G. Hovannisian (Ed.) *Looking Backward, Moving Forward, Confronting the Armenian Genocide*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

The author deals with the post-traumatic stress disorder and its relevance to Armenian survivors, stressing the need to reconcile with the past.

Topalian, S. Shake (1999). "Daughters and Granddaughters of Survivors: From Horror to Finding our own Voices," pp. 224-331. In Mark A. Mamigonian (Ed.) *The Armenians of New England*. MA: National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, Armenian Heritage Press.

The author discusses the impact of the genocidal experience on Armenian women and how they transmit that psychological effect as they raise their daughters and granddaughters.