

The

# GENOCIDAL

# MIND

Edited by

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## CHAPTER 13

# Literary Representations of the 1915 Genocide of Armenians: An Important Topical Genre Continuing in the New Millennium

Rubina Peroomian

Commensurate with the history of the Armenian persecutions and massacres, Armenian literature has been a repository of responses to these collective experiences, responses shaped and reshaped through time by multiple layers of influences such as Judeo-Christian teachings, cultural determinants, historical archetypes, as well as evolving national ideals and political aspirations.<sup>1</sup> Within this context, literary responses to genocide are the amalgamation, the echo, and the culmination of all these responses, as the Genocide is the culmination of all historical catastrophes in terms of its eschatological nature and impact.

Armenian Diasporan post-genocide literature in its entirety is a response to the Armenian Genocide. It embodies the attempts to conceptualize the catastrophe and in one way or another relates to it:

Children of massacre,  
children of destruction,  
children of dispersion,  
oh, my Diaspora ...  
someone was calling  
in my dream.<sup>2</sup>

These lines from a poem published in 1987 are a rendering by Armenian American poetess Diana Der Hovanessian of the make-up of the Diaspora and the interrelationship between the Diaspora and the Genocide. Hilda Kalfayan-Panossian, a native of Constantinople residing in France, laments: "Spiurk [Diaspora] is my pain / like an agony that never ends / unable to speak / and yet full of hope." The Diaspora for her is the site of "destruction and disintegration," the outcome of the Genocide that obliterated all rules and regulations, effaced order and value in the life of Armenians thrust in the Diaspora, caught in a prolonged agony.<sup>3</sup> Will this prolonged mental state continue into the new millennium? The Event is sliding into the past century, is there a reason for the continuation of genocide literature? And if there still exists a milieu open to its development, what direction will these responses take?

The Armenian Genocide has generated a plethora of literature across generations of survivors. Each writer, each poet has strived to encapsulate the cataclysm in art, to comprehend it, to render meaning to his/her harrowing experience, to let out the last cries of the dying nation, to vent the pain, the rage, the frustration of the surviving few against the denial of the perpetrators and the indifference of the world's bystanders.

Some argue that one has to live the hell in order to be able to create its representation in art; yet even such representation will be a mimesis, according to Platonic logic, one step removed from the Truth of the unthinkable reality of genocide. Elie Wiesel has said that only one who has been there, has the right to speak, and Alvin Rosenfeld asserts that "the best portrayals of 'life' in Nazi concentration camps are produced by those who themselves experienced the meaninglessness of the two categories of life and death."<sup>4</sup> The generation with first-hand experience of the Armenian Tragedy did not succeed in creating the masterpiece. The most talented writers and poets were massacred at the outset. The attempts of the surviving few did not bear fruit. Is it reasonable to hope that succeeding generations of Armenian writers would be able to reach that pinnacle, the successful conceptualization of the genocide in art?

My contention is that the coming generations of Armenian literati—some obsessed with the Genocide, others only now discovering the traumatic past, the cause of the unspoken pain in the family, and still others finding the freedom to entertain the topic as they choose—have strong potentials. With the distance of time and space in their favor, with a deeper knowledge of history, and with a talent for grasping the poetics of violence, they have favorable possibilities to be able to confront the Genocide. Their work is likely to encompass the echoes of the nation's collective psyche shaped by the violence, the pain of dispersion, the effects of self-accusation, the search for identity or the struggle to cope with a dual identity, the effects of the past, and present role of the perpetrators and world bystanders.

Fiction is socially conscious, as Melvin J. Vincent suggests, and offers deeper insight into both human character and events and their significance.<sup>5</sup> The fictionalized Armenian Genocide provides that deep insight into the Event with a potential impact that works in two distinct dimensions. The internal dimension accounts for its cathartic quality. It also works as an essential fuel to keep the fire burning in the soul, to keep alive the Armenian consciousness of a colossal injustice awaiting redress. The external dimension deals with the potential impact of such literature on world public awareness.

Anne Frank did just that for the Jewish Holocaust. Published in English in 1952, her diary was the first to penetrate the American consciousness and shape the American, or rather the universal, reception of the Holocaust. Alvin Rosenfeld attributes this to the subtlety of the subject: not too harsh, not too Jewish, not too disturbing.<sup>6</sup> Then came Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, surpassing the impact of Anne Frank's Diary. This was a completely new approach to the Jewish tragedy, one that portrayed not the victimization of the Jews but the confrontation of good and evil, the savior and the executioner, and the conclusion was not a depressing one but a happy reunion of survivors, now mostly affluent people. This is something that the public can readily grasp.

What does the public know about the Armenian Genocide? The survivors of the Armenian Genocide, scattered throughout

the world, in most cases did not speak of their horrible experience. They had an inner compulsion to leave everything behind and live in the New World integrated in society like everyone else; if they told their stories, it would set them apart. The prejudice of mainstream society against newcomers, especially in America, contributed to that conduct. There was also the intent to spare their children, to protect them against the paralyzing memory with which they had to live. Their response to genocide was silence.

For some, this period of silence was never broken. It was only after their death that their children discovered the tremendous burden of memory that weighed so heavily upon their parents' souls and caused their sometimes peculiar behavior. Virginia Haroutounian's *Orphan in the Sands* (1995) is an example.<sup>7</sup>

David Kherdian speaks of the same experience:

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.<sup>8</sup>

Even today, when this generation is almost gone, the memoirs keep appearing in the press. They are being written by the second, even the third generation. In some cases, the author is simply reproducing what was left in writing by the survivor. Hovhannes Mugrditchian's *To Armenians with Love: The Memoirs of a Patriot* (1996) is an example.<sup>9</sup>

In other cases, the raw material, survivor testimonies, is elaborated and embellished to become the response of the new generation to the memory of their parents, to the genocide of their people. Peter Balakian's *Black Dog of Fate* (1998),<sup>10</sup> Stina Katchadourian's *Efronia: An Armenian Love Story* (1994),<sup>11</sup> and Carol Edgarian's *Rise the Euphrates* (1994) are examples of this category.

The success of these works in the United States can be attributed to the fact that they are being produced within the conventions of American culture. They are palatable to the American taste and acceptance of horror stories. The second and third generation poet

or writer has mastered the criteria. As Arpiné Konyalian Grenier puts it, the new writer "faces the tragedy, accepts it, mourns it and transcends it." She adds, however: "It is tricky and slippery to face emotion and express it in unadulterated fashion."<sup>12</sup> It is indeed a challenging task, for it is sometimes impossible not to succumb to the waves of irrepressible emotion.

Leonardo Alishan was never able to transcend the tragedy that was his grandmother's, the tragedy that became his fate at the age of nine:

I try to be a spectator of that tragedy which culminated in a London hospital room in 1978 where Granny saw Turkish horsemen around her bed before she died. But, alas, I am not the spectator. I am a character caught in that play which never, never, never reaches its equilibrium.<sup>13</sup>

It is through his grandmother, as is the case for most second or third generation writers, that Alishan sees the Armenian suffering, the Genocide:

In the center of my dream  
there is a church of stone in Van  
sealed from outside  
exhaling screams and smoke from the inside,  
its congregation of Armenian folk  
replacing the candles with their flesh.

There is a church in my dream  
made with the bones of dead gods,  
babies and parrots' prayers;  
always, all night, in flames  
but never burning to the ground.

And in the church burns a statue of Mary  
With my Granny's face, wax dripping down her eyes  
drop by drop, on the skin of my dreams.<sup>14</sup>

In some cases, the topoi associated with the Genocide appear as fragmented images imposing themselves upon everyday life in the New World. Many of Peter Balakian's poems in *Sad Days of Light* (1983) illustrate this duality.<sup>15</sup>

These responses are definitely different from the immediate reactions of those who attempted to recapture in art the hell through which they themselves had lived. They tried to find the source of the evil in the character of the Turk. They tried to explain the Catastrophe, laud the spirit of self-defense, chastise the cowards and their lowly means of survival. They tried to interpret the calamity as a twist in the relationship between man and God, even defied God, cast doubt on His existence or His oneness.

The next generation, the orphans of the desert who began their adult life in the Diaspora, expressed the pain of orphanhood, took refuge in the world of dreams; they blamed the past generation and the values and traditions they had transmitted to them.

The Armenian Genocide is now sliding into the past, but we still question why it happened. Why did the world let it happen? Why this terrible injustice? These are questions that have no answers and cause frustration. Justice has not been rendered, and the Armenians cannot put their dead to rest. One and a half million souls seem to haunt them. There are two other underlying reasons why Armenians are still so obsessed with the Genocide and why the subject keeps surfacing in their literature. The perpetrator's denial of the crime and the use of intrigue to secure allies and distort history is one reason. And they always find reasons for their denial. Edgar Hilsenrath, the German-Jewish author of *The Story of the Last Thought*, the most impressive novel of the Armenian Genocide, has a long list of reasons he puts forth with his unique sarcasm and playful style. "Where do they find them?" asks the storyteller's shadow in the novel. "In their fears," replies the storyteller.<sup>16</sup> "In their fears!" No explanation could be as expressive as this one word—"fears." Then, there is the vague image of a lost homeland that kindles a sense of yearning and deprivation.

The American culture of the 60s and 70s encouraged the search for one's roots since it became more and more permissive of group

affiliation and identification. And the trend continues. In the case of Armenian-Americans, the Armenian past was obviously associated with the massacres and deportations, a captive homeland swept clean of its indigenous people, and a decimated family. The modern responses were thus shaped through looking back to that historical source of self-understanding, and self-identity. And it did not and does not matter whether or not the individual Armenian has lost family members in the death marches. All are survivors of genocide. "We are children of Der Zor," writes Diana Der Hovanessian:

Even though your mother was a baby  
in Worcester, and safe  
and your father a young soldier  
in Mourad's mountains  
and you a generation from being born,

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even without a single  
relative who lived to march,  
lived past the march. We are children of Der Zor.<sup>17</sup>

The commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armenian Genocide in 1965 and the heightened political activism of the Diaspora played a pivotal role in sensitizing the new generation, kindling self-consciousness and self-recognition among a stratum of youth, who were now thoroughly immersed in the mainstream culture yet still searching for the source of their own particularity.

The echoes of this search reverberate in literature, both in the works of immigrant writers and of those born in America. Among the second generation survivor-writers in the United States, Peter Najarian stands out with his *Voyages* (1971). Najarian's *Daughters of Memory* (1986) and Peter Balakian's *The Black Dog of Fate* (1998) are also examples in which the Armenian component is gradually pulled out of a nebulous memory hole to become an important dimension in the Diasporan Armenians self-identity.

Vahé Oshagan, an emigrant from the Middle East, portrays the assimilated, alienated generation in America against a backdrop of national traditions, the past, the roots calling the generation back, demanding action, be it in the most unconventional way, as is the case in *Odzum* (Consecration). Indeed, this well wrought short story reverberates with the effects of collective victimization, dispersion, and alienation, that is, the effects of genocide in Armenian-American community life.<sup>18</sup>

The pain and frustration resulting from the struggle to adjust to one's dual identity as well as the search for an ideal image of the Diasporan Armenian echo in almost the entire literary output of Hakob Karapents. Nubar Agishian and Penyamin Nourigian are two other immigrant writers who develop an array of characters caught in the turmoil of dual identity and intermarriages leading to assimilation.<sup>19</sup>

Then come the newer poets and writers, all emigrants from Middle Eastern countries (Vrej Armen, Boghos Kupelian, Vahé Berberian, Vehanoush Tekian and Ishkhan Jinbashian) who write in Armenian and whose artistic creations portray the painful transition, the make-up of the new Diasporan Armenian. The hardship of dislocation, the memory of the dead family have become a part of the Armenian heritage and are transmitted from generation to generation. How they have responded to their Armenian heritage depends on that linkage, whether they love and cherish it and live stranded within it, or hate it, run away and try to free themselves from it. In all cases, the response is an act of desperation.

The intensity of this struggle for an Armenian identity does not necessarily exist to the same degree in other Diasporan communities. In some cases, this struggle is only that of the intellectual elite, and the wound of the Genocide bleeds through the literary works they produce. Sevda Sevan's novel *Rodosto, Rodosto* (written in Bulgarian, 1981) permeates the Bulgarian Armenian poetess-writer's motivation to capture the impact of genocide on the mental state of its survivors and the perpetrators' perception of the event, as well as their unchanged attitude toward the few remaining Armenians.<sup>20</sup>

In a most recent poem, "Voghjuin kez nor dar" (*Greetings to You*, New Century, 1999), Iranian-Armenian poet Varand hails the New Century with hope and expectations for the deliverance of the nation. And, significantly, the source of his chagrin and the tears he sheds is the continued captivity of his homeland, symbolized by Mount Ararat. "For the star-reaching captive did not return home yet," he reasons, and the crime against the nation remains unresolved: "For the righteous blood boiling in my veins is the blood I shed on the roads to Deir el-Zor."<sup>21</sup> Azad Matian, another Iranian-Armenian poet, uplifted by a young woman singing the famous song "Krunk" (Crane) during a vigil at the Genocide monument, writes the poem "April 24, 1996 (to Gariné for singing Krunk)." He expresses his bewilderment with unanswered questions and fading memories. He struggles to come out of this hopelessness:

Where are we

and bound for where?

Who are we

and heading for what?

Hating, hating this endless pain

and one another

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and believe again

in the eternal life of my stricken race.<sup>22</sup>

For all intents and purposes, the new response has stemmed from the attempt to confront the Genocide in order to grasp its historical and psychological impact, to enhance the fading memory or to construct one with which to relate and identify. The constructed reality can be an imagined one. Hilsenrath's *The Story of the Last Thought* sets a perfect example. It constructs brick by brick the reality of Thovma Khatisian's family history, "from the little idyllic mountain

village to the torture chambers of the Turkish rulers.”<sup>23</sup> Khatisian’s family was wiped out completely during the Genocide. As a young boy, he was raised in a Turkish family. Dagmar Lorenz notes in his review of this novel, Khatisian had a choice of self-identities: Turkish, Swiss or Armenian.

The last was for him the hardest to attain, since he had to reconstruct or even construct an entire biography and national history. Yet he chooses to become a survivor of the massacres and a witness.<sup>24</sup>

Thovma’s inquiries led him to patch together his own story, albeit an imagined reality. And, one day, he says,

I had a genuine family history. I knew my roots. I had a father and a mother again, and I had many relatives. I also had a name with a tradition, one that I could pass on to my children and grandchildren.<sup>25</sup>

Hilsenrath is truly compelling as he interweaves imagination, dream, and reality in the thoughts of Thovma Khatisian at the end of the long and torturous road that is called “life.” His last thoughts, as those of all Armenian survivors, fly back to Mount Ararat, to Hayastan. Perhaps their thoughts never left these places. Perhaps, Armenians never left these places. The dead Armenians whisper, Hilsenrath suggests, and “when Armenians whisper at night, the Turks have nightmares....”<sup>26</sup> because in every Armenian’s dream “Anahit, the mother of Armenia,” will find Hayk, “her lost son” [toward the end of the novel, the storyteller calls Thovma Hayk to invoke “the first of the Armenians.” Incidentally, according to the storyteller, Thovma’s mother was called Anahit]. Hayk “will be fruitful and have many descendants. And the children of Hayk and their children’s children, will people this land, which was always meant for them.” Finally, as with the last thought of Thovma Khatisian, the last thoughts of all Armenian survivors, before they draw their last

breath, “will fly back into the gaps in the Turkish history books.”<sup>27</sup>

New responses to the Armenian Genocide were generated in the Diaspora, particularly in America. In fact, in recent years the increasing fragmentation and particularization of American culture, the prevailing theory of multiculturalism, and the political atmosphere have played as the catalyst and booster of the new Armenian-American response to the past, to history, to genocide. These new responses will certainly influence the literary output of the Republic of Armenia. That is one of the goods, the commodities if you will, that we shall see crossing the Diaspora-Armenia bridge to reach the thinkers and the ordinary citizens of Armenia. Literature will become one of the major footings of mutual awareness and eventual unification. This will come about, as Vahé Oshagan puts it, from “the strong attachment of all poets to the national ethos.” One important reason, Oshagan continues,

is that throughout the past centuries, the Armenian literary elite has always been involved with national ideology i.e., survival of the nation and the preservation of the culture. This in itself is a political ideal, and all poets, Diasporan or Armenia-based, have been and are committed to it.<sup>28</sup>

Sooner or later, the “Armenia-based” literati will rid themselves of the constraints of the Soviet era and its lingering ideologies; the forced detachment from the Armenian past and the Genocide in particular will be lifted off the minds as it is lifted off the political atmosphere; interest to address these issues will increase and Armenia will join the Diaspora in responding to the past, to history, to the Armenian Genocide. These literary responses will continue as an important intellectual endeavor both in Armenia and the Diaspora. They will serve to build and enhance the monument of the Armenian collective memory but, more important, they will serve to find a way to overcome the Catastrophe and make national survival possible.

Before proceeding any further, I would like to make it clear that, despite Soviet restrictions and censorship, the Genocide did not

cease to occupy the minds of Soviet Armenians, be it as a painful memory secretly transmitted from generation to generation, be it as a covert leitmotif in literature, or be it as innocent reminiscences of the native village or hometown. Eghishé Charents, Gurgen Mahari, Khachik Dashtents set the example. Silva Kaputikyan speaks of those covert expressions of longing, pain and suppressed tears of the older generation, the Western Armenian survivor-refugees in Soviet Armenia, as the conduits to transfer and to build the collective memory of the unsolved injustice.<sup>29</sup>

The fiftieth anniversary of the Armenian Genocide was a turning point in the evolution of political thought in Soviet Armenia, as it was in the Diaspora. On the morning of April 24, 1965, for the first time in Soviet Armenian history, a huge crowd took to the streets in Erevan and marched in commemoration of the victims of the Genocide, demanding the return of their ancestral lands, and calling for a just solution of the Armenian Question. Silva Kaputikyan reminisces about the event:

They were going  
 To claim their orphaned dead and orphaned tombs,  
 To kneel and kiss the orphaned sacraments  
 Of Maruta Monastery,  
 To bring back the land  
 And pull out of it the Lightening Sword,  
 To bring back the rock and bring out Kurkik Djalali  
 To say that we are able to saddle our father's dragon-slaying  
 horse,  
 To say that we are the owners, the lords of the House of Sasun  
 And the cause of Sasun.  
 The month was April,  
 And the day was right.<sup>30</sup>

After that day, nothing was the same. The Khrushchev thaw was succeeded by the Brezhnev restrictions and renewed censorship; yet masterpieces like Paruyr Sevak's "Anlreli zangakatun" (Immutably Tolling Bell Tower), Mushegh Galshoyan's "Tsirani poghe" (The Purple

Horn), and Hrant Matevosyan's "Metsamor" (the name of a district in Armenia), as well as Gevorg Emin's poems of rage and tears for the victims, were produced. The Soviet Armenian dissident literature prepared the ground for the Karabagh movement in 1988, a nationalistic uprising demanding the unification of Karabagh (an Armenian enclave in the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan) with Soviet Armenia.<sup>31</sup>

Rediscovering the past, writing about the Genocide, and dealing with previously forbidden historical subjects in literature, however, have not gained momentum in today's relatively free atmosphere, while historical research in these areas has come a long way. Rare are the voices like that of the young poet Ludvik Turyan who expresses disillusion and at the same time the aspiration for justice for all of mankind. In his poem "Justice," Turyan begins by treating justice like a toy, when he knew little about the fate of his people and about justice that was denied to them:

Justice, if you had been given to me  
as a toy when I was a child,  
I am sure I would have broken you  
to bits to find what made you tick.

Shattered at the thought that there is no justice in the world, he continues with a pessimistic note. He sees no light at the end of the tunnel:

What healer  
you could have been, had you arrived  
centuries ago

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But Justice, our globe is aging, aging,  
You are too, and I am afraid you may die  
of old age before you really arrive.<sup>32</sup>

Independence in Armenia since 1991 has provided an incomparable freedom for the literati but paradoxically has brought about, especially in the first years, a socioeconomic atmosphere quite

unfavorable for artistic endeavors. Sporadically, we hear voices that sing the song of the orphaned lands of Armenia and the calamity that befell the nation. These creations are mostly in the genre of lamentation. With a heart full “With the grief /and the gloom of Armenians,” Gurgen Gabrielyan, a poet of Artsakh (Karabagh), laments the sufferings of his people. Robert Esayan, a younger poet of Artsakh, searches in history, in the destruction of his people in Western Armenia, for the source of the present plight in Karabagh and the carnage that went on for years at the hands of the Azeris.

In a poem dedicated to the sixteen hundredth anniversary of the development of the Armenian alphabet, Ruben Vardanyan paints the landscape of Armenian history and the Armenian Genocide with sullen darkness and morbid metaphors. Silva Kaputikyan, whose mother and grandmother were refugees from Van, remembers their ordeal and that of her people in “Hin karote” (*The Old Yearning*, 1992).<sup>33</sup> The poem captures Kaputikyan’s preoccupation with the fate and the unresolved cause of the Armenian people. In her imagination three generations, her grandmother, her mother, and herself, walk together through life as girls of the same age harboring the same yearnings, the same unfulfilled dreams, the same shattered hope for return to the ancestral home. Kaputikyan implies that national pain and aspirations do not diminish with the succession of generations.

The theme of Genocide, if entertained at all in the poetry of Armenia, is within the framework of old responses. Only in a few cases, when the atrocities against the Armenians of Azerbaijan and Karabagh are lamented, is a new accent added: a thread is passed through history to link these pogroms to the Genocide, and the new Azeri perpetrator is identified with the Turk of yesteryear. New voices are rare, and they are heard in the most unexpected contexts and conceptualizations. An expressive example in prose is Aghasi Ayvazyan’s “Antun turke” (*The Homeless Turk*). In this imaginative interaction with the Turk, the nation’s hatred and rage pour out. Fate brings the Armenian and the Turkish wanderers together under a freeway overpass in Pasadena, where the homeless hang out. The Armenian blames the Turk for their plight:

You Turks, if you had not invaded Armenia from Central Asia, or wherever you came from ... if you had not driven my grandfather out of his home in Bitlis or Kars or wherever ... if you had not slaughtered the children and the old ... I could welcome you in my house in Bitlis or wherever. We could drink wine together.<sup>34</sup>

Another example, this one in poetry, of such an innovative voice in literary responses to Genocide in Armenia is Henrik Edoyan's call "Hey, Turkish Poets." The author addresses the Turk, and, at the same time, he intimates the importance of the role of literati, in this case the Turkish intellectuals at the time of the Genocide. Edoyan believes that they could make a difference and prevent the atrocities. The first stanza sets the pattern:

If one of you, just one, had spoken up  
"Why kill this trembling kid,  
his slaughtered parents were enough,"  
We might have raised a glass together  
if not a monument.<sup>35</sup>

I wonder if Edoyan has read Nazim Hikmet's poetry of rage and admonishment, but, on the other hand, he is a voice in the wilderness.<sup>36</sup>

Literary works on the themes of Armenian suffering and especially the inflicted injustice may be few in Armenia due to the lingering effects of the past restrictions. However, taking into consideration the current efforts to elevate and enhance national education in schools and to broaden involvement in the national struggle for the just solution of the Armenian cause and also in view of the fact that the Diaspora literature with these themes at its core is being avidly read, one can presume that the inclination to address these issues will increase and genocide literature will soon form an independent corpus and find new directions.

Based on this presumption, I believe that, although historians

will continue their research and new documents will continue to shed light on the issue, it is the literary representations that will shape the understanding of the Armenian Genocide for future generations. It is the power of the artist's imagination that can capture the unthinkable, the genocide, and provide, as Yehuda Bauer would say, the "metaphysical comprehension," of the Armenian Genocide.<sup>37</sup>

Paraphrasing Emil Fackenheim's words, I conclude with this idea: to renew the past for present life has always been an essential obligation of historians, philosophers, and, I may add, the literati as well, and never before has this task been so indispensable.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, I would like to submit that future responses to the Armenian Genocide, be they fragmented and incoherent, as an imposition of the theme itself, will stand as a monument to the Armenian aspiration to become a nation again. They will provide the needed dialogue between history and literature to place the Armenian Genocide within the ongoing saga of a living people, to find a way to resolve the tragedy, and to make national survival and perpetuation possible.

## Endnotes

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1. For an analysis of paradigms of responses to collective sufferings in national catastrophes through time and multiple layers of constituent elements, see Rubina Peroomian, *Literary Responses to Catastrophe: A Comparison of the Armenian and the Jewish Experiences* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1993).
2. Diana Der Hovanessian, *About Time* (New York: Ashot Press, 1987), from a poem titled "Diaspora," p. 22 (quotation marks by the author).
3. Hilda Kalfayan-Panossian, "The Wake," trans. Vahé Oshagan, *RAFT* 9 (1995): 15-16.
4. See David Roskies, "The Holocaust According to Literary Critics," *Prooftext* 1 (May 1981): 209-16.
5. See Bernard Cohen, *Sociocultural Changes in American Jewish Life as Reflected in Selected Jewish Literature* (Rutherford, Madison, Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1972), p. 32.
6. See Alvin H. Rosenfeld, "The Americanization of the Holocaust," in Alvin H. Rosenfeld, ed., *Thinking About the Holocaust After Half a Century* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 141-44.

7. *Orphan in the Sands* is the story of the author's mother, who only in the final days of her life shared with her daughter her terrible ordeal during and after the Genocide. It is the story of the daughter, who resented her mother's strange behavior and strove all her life to adjust to it, only to learn in the end that it was the Genocide and its aftereffects that had ruined her mother's and her own life.

8. David Kherdian, "For My Father," in a collection of poems titled *Homage to Adana* (Fresno, CA: The Giligia Press, 1970), unpaginated. This and the poem quoted next are examples of many which resonate the ineffaceable, tormenting memory of the Genocide indirectly transmitted to the author through his father to whom the collection is dedicated.

9. Hovhannes Mugrditchian, *To Armenians with Love: The Memoirs of a Patriot* (Hobe Sound, FL: Paul Mart, 1996).

10. For a review of this book, see *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 12, 1998. In this review the book is presented as one in which "personal discovery and history merge" (p. B7).

11. For a brief analysis of Stina Katchadourian's *Efronia, an Armenian Love Story* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1994), see a book review by Rubina Peroomian, *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 7 (1994): 205-08.

12. Arpiné Konyalian Grenier, "The Apprentice in Exile: Toward an Armenian-American Poetics," *Aspora*, 1: 1 (Fall 1993): 17-32 (quotations, pp. 26-27).

13. Alishan, "An Exercise," p. 352.

14. From an unpublished poem, "ECCE HOMO."

15. For an analysis of these images in "The History of Armenia," see Shirinian, *Armenian-North American Literature*, pp. 110-15.

16. *The Story of the Last Thought* was published in German in 1989, (English translation by Hugh Young, London: Scribners, 1990; 2d ed. London: Sphere Books, 1991. Edgar Hilsenrath's *The Story of the Last Thought* was the winner of the 1989 Alfred Döblin Award. The novel is a unique representation of the Armenian experience with a different scope and a different approach. See p. 345 for this quotation.

17. Part 2 of the three-part poem, "Tryptich." The quoted part is titled "Why Sand Scorches Armenians." See *About Time*, p. 14.

18. "Odzum" (Consecration, 1988) and "Telefone" (The Telephone, 1988) are two examples in which Oshagan shows how a shocking event in the life of the Armenian community (an act of sacrilege, deliberately staged in an Armenian church, by three youth belonging to an extremist terrorist group in "Odzum" and the news of the suicide mission of an Armenian youth group against the Turkish embassy in Lisbon in "Telefone") can stir the ashes of oblivion and indifference in assimilated American Armenians and bring to the surface of their conscious the long forgotten sense of Armenianness.

19. For a brief thematic analysis of works by these authors, see Rubina Peroomian, "The Transformation of Armenianness in the Formation of Armenian-American Identity," *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 6 (1992-93): 119-45.
20. A chapter of this novel, translated by M. Terzian into Armenian, is published in *Otaralezu hay groghner* [Armenian Writers Writing in Foreign Languages] (Erevan: Erevan State University Press, 1989), pp. 404-56.
21. Varand, "Voghjuin kez, Nor Dar" (Greetings to You, New Century), *Nor Dar* 2 (1999): 232.
22. Azat Matian, "April 24, 1996 (to Gariné for singing Krunk)," trans. Vahé Oshagan, *RAFT* 10 (1996): 55-57.
23. From the backcover of the book.
24. For Dagmar C.G. Lorenz's book review, "Hilsenrath's Other Genocide," see the *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual* 7. Quotation, p. 3.
25. Hilsenrath, *The Story of the Last Thought*, p. 16.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 462.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 464-65.
28. Oshagan further explains that "this may seem slightly outdated at a time when Western poetry has abandoned the notion of a mission and has become an expression of total independence and purely personal vision." See *RAFT* 8 (1994): 3-4.
29. Silva Kaputikyan, *Tsavet nuinpes tsnum e neruzhutium* ["Pain Also Generates Strength"], in *Hayatsk Yerevanits*, No. 4 (25), April 15, 2000, p. 5.
30. Silva Kaputikyan, *Ejer pak gzrotsnerits* [Pages from Locked Drawers] (Erevan: Apolon Press, 1997), p. 678. There are a few references here to the Armenian national epic "David of Sasun." David used the ancestral Lightening Sword to fight and slay the enemy. Kurkik Jalali is the legendary horse belonging to this family of Armenian epic heroes. According to an Armenian legend, after fighting against injustice and all the evil in the world, David's son, Pokr Mher, was imprisoned in a cave, and one day this last figure of the epic family will ride his horse back to the world to set the Armenians free. "The House of Sasun" here has a more general sense than the region of Sasun. It is a reference to Armenia.
31. Parenthetically, it should be noted here that dissidence in Soviet Armenia did not have the same meaning as in Moscow or other parts of the Soviet Union. Whereas Soviet dissidents fought against the Communist regime, the Armenian dissident movement was nationalistic, sensitive to the past, to history, to the Genocide, and to the lands lost to Turkey.
32. Ludvik Turyan, "Justice," trans. Dianna Der-Hovanessian, *RAFT* 11 (1997): 45-46.

33. Kaputikyan, *Ejer pak gzrotsnerits*, p. 658.

34. Aghasi Ayvazyan, "Antun turke" [The Homeless Turk], *Nor Dar*, no. 2 (1999): 58-60.

35. Henrik Edoyan, "Hey, Turkish Poets," trans. Diana Der Hovanessian, *RAFT* 6 (1992): 11.

36. Nazim Hikmet (1902-1963), a Turkish Marxist writer-poet, a rebellious soul against oppression, also speaks about the Armenian massacres. In the poem "Evening Walk," written in 1950 (or "Evening Stroll" in a 1954 publication of Hikmet's poems by another translator), he has this to say:

The grocer Karabet's lights are on. This Armenian citizen has not forgiven the slaughter of his father in Kurdish mountains. But he loves you, because you also won't forgive those who blackened the name of the Turkish people.

As most of Hikmet's writings, this poem is also autobiographical, and he himself is his addressee (the "you" throughout the poem). See *Selected Poems of Nazim Hikmet*, tr. Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk (New York: Persea Books, Inc. 1975), p. 60.

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

38. See Michael L. Morgan, "To Seize Memory, History and Identity in Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought," in Rosenfeld, *Thinking about the Holocaust*, p. 172.

At best, this cynical misreading, if not blatantly wrong to me. While it is obviously true that all postwar memoirs are written by survivors, it seems cynical, at best, to call theirs a "happy ending," after what they endured.

Upon further consideration, I thought that Holocaust diaries and commentaries written before liberation could offer a different perspective. David Patterson suggests that "Unlike other diaries, the Holocaust diary is not the daily record of life but is the account of a daily struggle against death." Diaries Abel Eisenberg, Mary Berg, Avraham, Taly and Hillel Sandman, among others, even though diary did, in fact