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Ellen Sarkisian Chesnut, *Deli Sarkis: The Scars he Carried, A Daughter Confronts the Armenian Genocide and Tells Her Father's Story*, (Minneapolis, MN: Two Harbors Press, 2014), pp. 186, with family photographs and bibliography of sources

With a first glance, I knew that my interest in this book lies not only on the memoir of a survivor of the Armenian Genocide, a major theme in my field of study and research, but also on the response of an offspring of the survivors, in this case the daughter and in fact all her siblings, to the traumatic past of her/their parents. The reason being that the theme of the responses of the second generation survivors of the Genocide is at the core of my present undertaking.

So the story of another torturous life and miraculous survival with permanent scars, physical and psychological, unfolds. Sarkis, a native of Keramat village on the shores of Lake Izni in the Bursa Province of Turkey, describes his horrifying experience during the deportations and massacres. This is on behest of his oldest daughter, Shakeh/Ellen when he is old and frail. Fearing that he will pass with his story untold, she prompts her to recount his memoirs and she takes notes from 1988 to 1995. She transcribed them and received her father's approval in 1995.

It all started on October 29, 1915, when a messenger on horseback brought the alarming news. Armenians had two days to prepare for a journey by train, and that was "for their own safety." The panicked and fear stricken Armenians knew the meaning of that unknown trek. Rumors of the sort happening to Armenians all over the Empire had been going around for some time. It was their turn now. Sarkis was ten years old. The caravan of 1500 men, women, and children, the entire Armenian population of Keramat, began to move on foot or on ox-driven carts toward the train station thirty miles away. And the ghastly scenes of unimaginable atrocities follow, as Sarkis describes in detail their passage to Raqqa, Deir-al-Zor, Ras-al-Ain, to the outskirts of Mosul. On the way the caravan was dissipated. Sarkis was left with her mother. His father and siblings had succumbed to the hardship of the road. The two of them homeless in the streets of Mosul, begged for food during the day, and at night they slept in the street next to a building. One day, Sarkis back from his "scavenging mission," found his mother dead. He was left alone, an orphan boy wandering from a place to another, suffering from hunger, from the danger of being killed if caught, and from trachoma. He found one of his brothers slaving at the home of a wealthy Arab. The Arab agreed to take him too. After the War was over, the AGBU founded an orphanage in Mosul. Sarkis left the Arab's home and went to the orphanage where he stayed six months with cherished memories of caretakers and teachers there.

Sarkis' ordeal continues, out of the orphanage to Constantinople and back to Keramet in 1919. He wanted to see what had happened to his paternal home. What he found was excruciating. The house was stripped to the bare walls. In the dust covered bedroom where his parents slept, he "found a couple of strands of long brown hair. Could they be my mother's, I wondered? I sat up and ran my fingers along the strands and caressed them This was all that was left of my mother besides my undying

memories of her. I started to sob” (66-67). There was no way a few returning survivors could revive the village. Keramet was not safe. There was lawlessness. Thieves and murderers controlled the roads. “Young boys were especially vulnerable to kidnapping, torture, rape, and brutal murder” (68). Sarkis decided to move on, become a Greek soldier and fight. After serving the Greek army for a year-and-a half, he was discharged to find himself later under the fire of approaching Turkish army in Manisa and then Smyrna. He was a witness and a survivor of the Smyrna fire. He was almost executed by Turkish soldiers. and when asked later which experience had been worse: “the massacres and deportations into the wasteland of Syria, or the burning and destruction of the population and the city of Smyrna. Without hesitation, I would have to say Smyrna. I don’t think anyone can imagine the heartrending scenes that I witnessed” (91). The rest of Sarkis’ story is his passage to Greece, then Bulgaria and to France with Nansenian passport, and back to the post-war Iraq, mostly in Mosul, where he married Ellen’s mother in 1938, and Ellen was born in 1939. Sarkis went from a job to another, with no specific job-training or skill, until the family migrated to the U.S. in 1941 and settled in San Francisco. A typical life of newcomers to the U.S. with ups and downs, with difficulties to overcome the everyday challenges of the New World, follows. Sarkis is caught in that whirlpool of responsibilities to provide for the large family he had, wife and four children. And alcohol was the remedy lightening his soul and the heavy burden of life he was unable to carry. He was the embodiment of the Turkish moniker “leftovers of the sword” referred to Armenians who undeservedly survived. He was physically scarred on his head and his leg. And he was psychologically scarred. He tried to remain in control of his temper, but when somehow he was reminded of the Turkish atrocities, he could not refrain.

What was interesting to me, as I mentioned in the beginning, is Ellen’s own interjections in response to the Turkish atrocities and the fate befallen to her family and her nation. Sarkis’ story is jammed between two narratives by Ellen Sarkisian Chesnut. The first is her pilgrimage to the places his father and mother had lived and passed as refugees through Turkey. That was in 2009. She needed to understand and build a context physical and historical for her father’s story. She had gone out of her way to bring in the historical facts, to collect information about the village, the people, the victims and their experience. The introductory narrative comes in the beginning, but what differentiates it from historical surveys accompanying similar memoirs is that Ellen Sarkisian Chesnut associates each historical fact with the personal experience of involvement in that event.

The second is her contemplation of life as a second generation survivor of the Armenian Genocide living with parents, who were anything but normal compared to the easygoing American families she used to know. Looking back to her upbringing, she could clearly see the impact of the ordeal each one of her parents had experienced during the massacres and deportations. “When we were growing up, his rages would come and go. Sometimes he would be so understanding and speak so softly and sweetly, like the father we always dreamed about. At other times he would be critical of us all and beside himself with anger. I tried to understand, but could never discover the reason for this split-personality” (p. 158). They loved their children but never showed them affection, “very little as we grew older, when we could have used them” (147). No emotional support, no expression of pride about their children’s achievements. Ellen

tries to find the reason and he attributes it to superstition and the evil eye. That is, of course, true. But there is also the trauma of orphanhood and homelessness in her father that has forced him to play tough guy, with no unnecessary emotions. "I think, life would have been so much easier for all of us growing up," Ellen thinks in retrospect, "if both Father and Mother had been more outgoing with affection and had not kept all their good thoughts about us to themselves" (147). One time their father had told them "I love you kids very much" and the children "were struck dumb and very surprised" (ibid.).

The most dramatic crash between the two generations occurred with her younger sister Janet. She was an artist, a free soul, the more acculturated one in the family. It was mid 1960s in America, especially in Bay Area, and the trend to move out and live free without constraints, make artistic experimentations, use recreational drugs, was the ideal of youth drawn in the Hippie movement. This happened to many Armenian families in that period of time. But if the parents were not emigrants with a burden of culture and traditions of the Old World, if they were a little more permissive of the New World ways and lifestyle to creep into their family, could they prevent the breaking of moral order and family life? Janet had a turbulent life. She lived with her American boyfriend, who betrayed her along the way, and she returned to her family with broken wings, but the family supported her all the way. In late 1960s the three of them except for the youngest sister, Lucy, had moved out. Father's alcoholism and Mother's stressful life leading to heart attack and eventual death was Lucy's to bear.

Deli Sarkis passed away on April 19, 1995, 7 years after his beloved wife, Evelin, and when the Diasporan Armenians were preparing to commemorate the eightieth anniversary of the Genocide. He died peacefully knowing that "A long time ago, we had forgiven him for the difficulties of growing up with such a wounded, but at the same time such a vibrant and charismatic human being."

The narrative ends with a pledge that Ellen and her sister Lucy make to keep his father forever in their hearts, "and his story, along with that of our beloved relatives and the villagers of Keramet would be with us also" (166).