And Those Who Continued Living in Turkey after 1915

The Metamorphosis of the Post-Genocide Armenian Identity as Reflected in Artistic Literature

Rubina Peroomian

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Melkonian of Yerevan State University's Department of Turkish Studies and his students, and Dr. Ohannes Avedikian of the Organization of Istanbul Armenians in Los Angeles.

I thank Mr. Kemal Yalçın for his work, *Seninle Güler Yüreğim*, which inspired me to begin my research into the hitherto unknown and unfamiliar (to me) field of the responses of Turkish Armenian remnants, survivors of the Genocide, to the past traumatic experience and the role of historical memory in forging the identity of that segment of the Armenian survivors scattered throughout the world.

In this long, arduous, and challenging endeavor, my son, Dr. Vahé Peroomian, a space physicist by profession and a photojournalist in his leisurely pursuits, followed my writing step by step and made valuable comments and suggestions.

My deep and loving appreciation goes to my husband, Neshan, my strongest supporter in all my academic activities, celebrating my successes and helping me overcome the many obstacles in my way. I thank him for his moral and financial support in making this project a reality.

On the occasion of the second printing of this book, Professor Richard G. Hovannissian, first holder of the AEF Modern Armenian History Chair at UCLA, graciously agreed to write the foreword for which I am immensely thankful.

Foreword

Richard G. Hovannisian

RubinaPeroomian is in the process of creating a broad multivolume panorama of the Armenian Genocide as reflected in a variety of literary genres. Her initial work, Literary Responses to Catastrophe, focused on the ways in which Armenian writers down through the ages have responded to calamity and have attempted to find explanations for and to moralize on the tribulations of the nation. This subsequent valuable study explores new horizons in searching for the subdued voice of the small Armenian minority left in Turkey, primarily in Istanbul, following the genocidal years. She turns attention even to the silent or hidden Armenians. It is generally accepted that literary approaches are as effective, if not even more so, as detailed historical research in capturing and personalizing critical moments and extraordinary, perhaps unfathomable, human experiences. This has been demonstrated by the entire range of post-genocide Armenian literature.

Immediately after World War I, in a moment of freedom and

opportunity in Constantinople or Istanbul, surviving Armenian intellectuals began to try to comprehend what had occurred both on a personal and on a collective level. Their writing constituted the first step in an attempt to reconnect the disrupted Armenian cultural continuum. This movement was cut short in 1922, however, when many of the intellectuals, along with the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, were forced to emigrate hurriedly to foreign lands in the face of the impending occupation of the city by the triumphant Turkish Nationalist forces of Mustafa Kemal Pasha.

The Armenian community left behind the forbidding walls of Republican Turkey had only limited contact with the diasporan communities. There was, indeed, even a certain suspicion among the disinherited survivors scattered abroad regarding the Armenians remaining in Istanbul, in part because of their silence, their obligatory self-censorship, and sometimes it seemed their willingness to defend or rationalize the actions and policies of the Turkish authorities. They did, after all, continue to live with Turks on a day-to-day basis and considered this to be natural, in contrast with the dispossessed diasporans who were confronted with an iron curtain that ruled out any possibility of maintaining a physical connection with erstwhile homes, villages, towns, and cities.

The overt discrimination and violence of the 1940s and 1950s prompted much of the established and still-Armenian-speaking community of Istanbul to emigrate, its place being filled with Kurdish-speaking and Turkish-speaking hidden Armenians from the interior provinces who clustered around the Armenian Patriarchate in search of their lost identity and often of material assistance. On my first trip to Turkey in September 1955, shortly

after graduating from the university, I became a personal witness to the devastation wrought by the organized mobs in riots that extended from the Christian neighborhoods of Istanbul to the very tip of the Bosphorus. It seemed reminiscent of the actions of the organized mobs that had fallen upon the Armenian city quarters and villages during the widespread massacres under Sultan Abdul Hamid in 1895-96. The horror of September 1955 compelled many Armenians to abandon their beloved city to begin life anew in distant lands, retaining nonetheless their special familial and emotional connections with Turkey, the Turkish language, and Turkish culture.

RubinaPeroomian carefully traces the impact of all these developments on Armenian literary output, identity, and culture in Turkey. She discovers that in time there was a gradual elevation in the sound level of formerly only whispering voices. For example, previously Armenian newspapers had consistently refrained from publishing editorials reflecting on the great national calamity or expressing any opinions at variance with official state positions. Rather, the press in a defensive, self-protective strategy tried to keep its readership informed by simply translating, without commentary, excerpts from the Turkish media relating to Armenians. This practice began to change at the turn of the twenty-first century. A new generation of more integrated Turkish Armenians became bolder and more outspoken. They were participants in Turkish civic and political movements, interacted with Turkish intellectuals, and sought innovative ways to reach the increasingly assimilated Turkish Armenian youth. Hrant Dink and his bilingual newspaper,Agos, best represent this generation.

The Armenian rediscovery of a voice did not, of course, oc-

cur in isolation but rather was an integral part of a much broader phenomenon in Turkey,that of questioning established norms and narratives. The more spirited of the Armenian writers could dare to shed the mantle of oblique universal themes for contents having specific relevance and reference to the traumatic experiences of the Armenian people. Topics that had been taboo for so long cautiously made their entry into the public arena, stimulating a conscious revival of Armenian identity.

Historical memory, too, gradually resurfaced both on the side of the victims and the side of the perpetrators of 1915. This development extended to the secret, hidden Armenians as well as to Islamized and often entirely unaware Armenians who had to overcome the shock of learning of their Armenian bloodline, a stigma against which they had been carefully guarded by the older generation. FethiyeÇetin, with her story of Heranush in My Grandmother, perhaps best exemplifies the amazing process of self-discovery by a perplexed but steadily transforming generation.

Despite the widespread attempts at camouflage, there is outside the strictures of official history an enormous reservoir of memory in regions from which the Armenians have been virtually eliminated. On a personal note, for many years I declined to travel to these areas, not wanting to see what I knew would be the case, that is, a vanishing Armenian landscape. Yet when I did begin my journeys in the eastern half of Turkey in the twenty-first century, I was surprised to discover just how much memory had survived and was perpetuated through transmission from generation to generation. The Kurds, who now populate much of that land, were ready to admit with remorse their role in the Armenian massacres, to point out the former fields, shops, and

homes of Armenians, to relate stories about a close relative having been born Armenian. In more than one place I was taken some distance simply to see a very aged Kurdish-looking woman who as a very young Armenian girl in 1915 had been taken in by Kurds and eventually married to a member of the Kurdish family. Nearly a century after the great calamity, persons who had long since converted to Islam and who knew not a word of Armenian were still recognized and identified as Armenian. Under more favorable circumstances, this reservoir of local memory may be tapped far more deeply and productively.

Dr. Peroomian draws these diverse themes of literature and memory together in this volume, which is a second revised printing of And Those Who Continued to Live in Turkey after 1915. It is fortuitous that the release of this volume comes shortly after the publication of her third book on the subject, titled The Armenian Genocide in Literature. That study explores and assesses Armenian literature produced by the exiled survivors of the genocide, by the bewildered orphan generation, and by the pessimistic self-demeaning, yet romantically nostalgic, writers in acculturating and assimilating Armenian communities, as in the case of the cluster of intellectuals in Paris. Peroomian will next assess the literary manifestations of the second and third generations, who are now writing not only in Armenian but also and even more so in the languages of their countries of birth. Her work is far from being descriptive alone, as it attempts to analyze—to grasp—the depths of emotion, the trauma, and the complex psyche of the survivor and orphan generations. She enters the pages of her writing and often acts as a direct observer, commentator, and critic. With this and its preceding and subsequent companion volumes, RubinaPeroomian will have produced an encompassing and enduring contribution to the field.

Introduction

Two decades and some years ago, when I chose Armenian Genocide literature as my specialized field of research and as the topic of my dissertation, I could never have foreseen how deeply this field of study would engulf my academic endeavors, my community activism, my life. Dealing with the enormity of material and the emotional impact of this field of epic grandeur is a daily struggle. The present book, and the trilogy it is a part of, sum up only a portion of my aspired undertakings in this field. I am still hoping to reach closure, if at all possible, in this bottomless sea of my people's struggle to cope with and eventually transcend the Genocide in their past.

In the first monograph[1] of my projected trilogy, itself a follow-up to *Literary Responses to Catastrophe: A Comparison of the Armenian and the Jewish Experience*,[2] I focus on the literary responses of generations of Diasporan Armenian survivors to the traumatic past of their parents and grandparents. I trace the transmission, from the first generation to the next and the next, of the lingering pain and the memory of having survived a cataclysm that was later recognized as the first large-scale genocide of the twentieth century.[3]

In the present volume, the second in the trilogy, I shift my focus to trace the effects of that past traumatic experience on the formation and metamorphosis of the identity of generations of Armenian survivors who continued living in Turkey. I have therefore chosen "The Metamorphosis of the

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[1] Forthcoming. (The aforementioned monograph was published before the present 2nd edition and was titled *The Armenian Genocide in Literature, Perceptions of Those who Lived Through the Years of Calamity*.)

[2] *Literary Responses to Catastrophe* was an expanded version of my dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a doctoral degree at the University of California, Los Angeles, in June of 1989. The book was published in 1993, under the auspices of the Von Grunebaum Center for Near Eastern Studies at UCLA, by Scholars Press in Atlanta, Georgia.

[3] Despite this scheme for the first monograph, projected in the 2008 edition of the present book, the published monograph, *The Armenian Genocide in Literature*, covers the literary responses of the first generation survivor-writers and the Orphan Generation, as well as an extensive discussion of a number of survivors' memoirs. The literary responses of the second and third generation Diasporan survivor-writers will be discussed in a future volume, thus turning the projected trilogy into a quartet.

Post-Genocide Armenian Identity as Reflected in Artistic Literature" as the subtitle of this monograph to emphasize this shift.

I intend to complete the trilogy with a volume on the study of the reflections of the historical memory of the Armenian Genocide in Soviet Armenian literature, in which the Genocide was a forbidden subject. I will demonstrate that, despite the hostile atmosphere in which not only writing about the past and the Turkish atrocities but also speaking about them was a punishable crime, the memory of the Genocide was transmitted in the stories of grandparents in the confines of their homes. This memory subtly but unmistakably resounded in literary works, which interestingly also incorporated the collective memory of subsequent persecutions during the Soviet era. In this final volume of the trilogy, I will highlight the impositions of Soviet ideology and state policies upon the treatment of Armenian history and the collective memory of the traumatic past. To tie in with the thesis I develop in the present volume, I will draw a comparison between the prevailing atmosphere of fear in then-Soviet Armenia and the state of mind that governs contemporary Turkish society.

The basis of the focus in the present volume—from literary responses to the transgenerational sense of Armenianness—is twofold. First, in my readings of genocide literature and my study of the effects of the Armenian Genocide on generations of survivors, I came to realize that the nation's past traumatic experience had a definite role in the formation of the Armenian sense of ethnicity and identity through time. This realization necessitated an approach with a different angle, with an emphasis on the construct of identity—ethnic identity

in particular—again in artistic literature, as before. This shift, or this modified approach, is reflected in articles that I have published and presentations that I have made in recent years.

The second and more important reason is the fact that I could not rely on Turkish-Armenian literature to explore the Turkish-Armenian literary responses to the Catastrophe. There were none. Surviving Armenian intellectuals gathered in postwar Constantinople made superhuman attempts to overcome the devastating effects of the destruction of the Armenian people and to find the means, that is, literary directions, to transcend the Catastrophe. The short-lived *Bardzravank* literary movement initiated in 1922 by Vahan Tekeyan, Hagop Oshagan, Kostan Zarian, Shahan Berberian, and others was an attempt toward that goal. That movement and the literary output it entailed promised a new revival in the history of Western Armenian literature.[4] The path to reach that revival necessitated facing the past, comprehending the Catastrophe, confronting and responding to it. Oshagan's *Kayserakan haghtergutiun* (Imperial song of triumph) best exemplifies the new direction.[5]

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[4] A periodical of the same name, *Bartsravank*, was published as the organ of this literary movement in 1922. The movement and its periodical met their end under the threat of the Kemalist advances on Constantinople.

[5] Oshagan, *Kayserakan haghtergutiun* (1983). In his preface to this collection of five stories from this period, Oshagan gives his interpretation of the events of 1915 and the role of Kaiser Wilhelm as an indifferent bystander to the events. He discusses the German conspiracy in a later work, *Mnatsordats* (1932–33). For a discussion of these works, see the chapter on Oshagan in Peroomian, *Literary Responses to Catastrophe* (1993), pp. 173–215.

However, the movement and the thriving literary activities in Constantinople were cut short by Mustafa Kemal's threatening advance toward Constantinople. Armenian intellectuals fled the country in fear of renewed persecution. In fact, the turbulent period between September 1922, with the Kemalist army's occupation and burning of Smyrna (Izmir), and October 1923, with the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey, was the only opportunity to escape the country. After the establishment of the Republic and until 1946, no exit visas were issued. "The doors were closed," and those intellectuals who remained in Constantinople/Istanbul were mostly persecuted. As a result of the prevailing atmosphere of fear and political pressure, the cultural life of the minorities was dead. The established Armenian writers of the pre-1915 era, unable to freely express the suffering of their people, refrained from writing at all, or resorted to occasional outbursts of abstract melancholy.

Despite the unfavorable atmosphere, the post-World War II Turkish-Armenian, or rather Istanbul Armenian literature—since after Mustafa Kemal's coming to power in 1923 and the inauguration of the Republican era in Turkey, Constantinople/Istanbul has been and is the only center in Turkey where Armenian literature is produced—has made significant strides in artistic expression. In fact, the Istanbul Armenian literature of the past few decades has made a great leap forward after long years of searching for a new direction to rise above the stagnation caused by the unyielding Turkish political stance against Armenians and especially the Turkish denial of the historical truth of the events before the Republican era. In light of the precariousness of the right and

the ability of minority peoples to practice their religion and establish schools, media outlets, and other cultural institutions,[6] Turkish-Armenian intellectuals walked a tightrope, always cautious not to cross the line. And so, writers stayed away from the theme of the nation's collective suffering of the past. For decades, Istanbul Armenian literature, and poetry in particular, developed by following the path of modern international literature,[7] with no limits or constraints in form and content and with humanism and

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[6] Little is left today of the thriving Armenian cultural, religious, and educational life of pre-1915 Constantinople. The periodical press that mirrors the life of the community is comprised of *Zhamanak*, founded in 1908, *Marmara*, founded in 1940, the theatrical journal *Kulis*, founded in 1946, *Lraber*, the newsletter of the Patriarchate, *Sourb Prkich*, the organ of the Sourb Prkich Hospital, and *Agos*, the newest periodical in Armenian and Turkish. They all have continued uninterrupted. In addition, other periodicals such as *Shoghakat*, *Nor San*, and *Handes Mshakuiti* have resumed publication after decades of silence. The Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul oversees the religious and cultural life of the Armenian community as before (since the fifteenth century). There are more than 35 churches in Istanbul, of which only about ten are in operation, compared to 47 functioning churches in 1915. Some of these churches have been turned into mosques. There are also two Protestant and six Catholic Armenian churches functioning. There are 18 Armenian schools, orphanages, and a hospital in operation, and seven Armenian cemeteries, Shishli being the most famous among them.

[7] Being cut off from the outside world, Armenian intellectuals were introduced to international trends in poetry and literary movements—surrealism in the West and social-realism in the Soviet Union—mainly through modern Turkish literature and Turkish literary journals. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that the Istanbul Armenian literature fell under the influence of contemporary Turkish literature.

abstract contemplations of human traits and attributes as favorite themes. With a unique perception of the world and humankind, Turkish-Armenian writers and poets sang the love, hope, dreams and yearnings, the pain and suffering of mankind, and the struggle for equality and justice.[8] They successfully overcame their own emotions and replaced the "I" with the "collective I." They replaced personal struggle with the collective one. Zahrad (Zareh Yaldejian)[9] was one

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[8] Onnik Fchjian's poem, "Vacharorde" (The vendor) best epitomizes this trait in Istanbul Armenian poetry:

I sell oil; I sell honey,
Forgiving spirit,
Sincerity
Loving hearts I sell...
My baskets are filled with
Happiness, brotherhood
And I sell; I sell...
Vendor!
hatred,
lies and deceit I want from you.
Unfortunately, Madame, there are none.
They are all gone.

The poem is quoted in Haddejian, *Hushatetr - 15* (1999), p. 188. Haddejian cites this poem as the author's important and impressive first step by which he became known in Istanbul literary circles. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations in the present work are my own.

[9] Born in 1924 in Istanbul, Zahrad is a product of the post-WWII Turkish-Armenian cultural and especially literary revival. His poetry encapsulates the postwar period's invigorated cultural and religious activities, the booming of Armenian schools, churches, print press, art exhibitions, and cultural events in the atmosphere of socioeconomic recovery and relative political respite which ended with the revolution and military coup of May 27, 1960, the

principal figure and a pace-setter in post-World War II Istanbul Armenian poetry, followed by Zareh Khrakhuni (Arto Jumbushian).[10] This strong inclination toward internationalism drove Turkish-Armenian writers to initiate attempts of rapprochement with Turkish writers and poets. They organized literary events dedicated to Turkish literature and invited Turkish intellectuals to participate. The frequency and popularity of these events gave rise to resentment in some. Rober Haddejian quotes Hagop Martayan expressing his concern in this regard in one of the meetings of the organizing committee: "We need to think of our own bread." "Our bread, that is, our culture," Haddejian comments, "is in the lion's mouth. We had to take control of it."[11] With all this being said, it would be a fallacy to suggest that post-World War II Istanbul Armenian poetry entirely shunned themes of Armenian national interest and did not reflect the Turkish-Armenian experience. In an analysis of Istanbul Armenian modern poetry, Hilda Kalfayan explains,

> Images, often surrealistic, and especially symbols come to the aid of the Istanbul Armenian poet to create multiple meanings that lend themselves to multiple interpretations.... The national remains obscure, barely noticeable; the poetry sounds harmless but reaches the reader's intelligence. It

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assassination of Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, the demise of his democratic government, the liquidation of the parliament, and the arrest and incarceration of political leaders.

[10] Zareh Khrakhuni was born in Istanbul in 1926. Aside from his poetic creations, he is known as a critic, analyst, and staunch supporter of Istanbul Armenian modern poetry.

[11] Haddejian, *Hushatetr - 15* (1999), p. 201.

reaches through art, through images, never expressed directly.[12]

Indeed, both Zahrad's and Khrakhuni's poetry best elucidate this phenomenon. They sing the pain of human beings in their struggle for justice and to attain and preserve their identity as human beings, but with a nationalistic approach and interpretation, that struggle can epitomize the Armenian Cause.[13]

Unable to pursue the cause of the Armenian nation in dispersion, and sometimes even unaware of that cause,[14] Istanbul Armenian poets of the 1950s espoused the cause of humanity, especially in their own country where injustice prevailed. An important work by a group of Turkish-

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[12] Kalfayan, *Bolsahay nor banasteghtsutiune* (1998), p. 11.

[13] Khrakhuni's poem titled "Patmutiun" (History), about the brothers Remus and Romulus and the birth of Rome, begins with the following four lines:

Their totem was wolf
And ours was lamb
Here is the issue
The rest is history.

One cannot help thinking that the poet was alluding to the history of the Turkish-Armenian relationship.

[14] Rober Haddejian (Rober Haddeler) attests that Armenian intellectuals of the 1950s had no contact with Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora outside Turkey and did not know much about the life, the literature, and overall the cause of the Armenians outside Turkey. He also maintains that the Diaspora, in turn, was unaware of Turkish-Armenian literature and believed that it was basically dead. The weekly literary insert first published in *Marmara* in 1955 was to fill that gap and become the pulse of Istanbul Armenian literary life. See Haddejian, *Hushatetr - 15* (1999), pp. 20–1.

Armenian writers and poets, titled *A Panorama of the Istanbul Armenian Literature of the Republican Era* (1957), encapsulated the spirit and the direction of Istanbul Armenian poetry of the time and attempted to reach Armenians outside Turkey.[15] In the epilogue to this publication, co-editor Vardan Komikian wrote,

> As it can be clearly seen, the Istanbul Armenian literary-artistic movement continues its evolution in parallel with Diasporan Armenian and international progress in this domain, within the limits of circumstances and influencing factors. Nevertheless, this movement has been able to free itself from the inferiority complexes imposed by today's egocentric and unyielding critics as well as by the unaware and thus indifferent observers outside Turkey.[16]

This was not only a rationalization of the state of Istanbul Armenian art and literature of the time, but even more, it was a manifesto bridging the gap of 35 years since the *Bardzravank* movement, proudly announcing the birth of new literary figures who shared their predecessors' talent and drive.

Later on, as the grip of the military regime tightened, many of these writers and poets, who entertained themes of human justice, brotherhood, and equality among human

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[15] Tsovak, Komikian, and Haddejian, *Hamaynapatker hanrapetakan shrjani Istanpulahay grakanutian.*

[16] Cited in Haddejian, *Hushatetr - 15* (1999), p. 219. For a comprehensive description of this important work and its role and place in Istanbul Armenian literature, see pp. 222–4.

beings, came to be considered socialists (leftists), and were persecuted and imprisoned by the government.[17]

The experience of Istanbul Armenians and their perception of the past have only recently burst into the open, principally through a new but cautious trend in the literature produced by Turkish-Armenian literati. Their venture to write their stories about the Armenian past in Turkish, or to translate original Armenian works into Turkish, is particularly notable. In an article on the question of silence in the Turkish Republican past, Fatma Müge Göçek touches upon this new trend in Turkish-Armenian literature and discusses the hesitance of Turkish-Armenian literati to break the silence and write about their traumatic experience. She attributes this hesitance to

> self-censorship because of the precariousness of their societal location, leading them to mention, in the narrative that took them 75 years to present to the Turkish-Muslim national audience, the Armenian massacres that formed an indelible component of the memory of their parents and grandparents....[18]

Was it self-censorship or plain fear of persecution? In a situation where even speaking the Armenian language in

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[17] Persecutions were heightened especially after the military coups of March 12, 1971, and September 12, 1980, when a widespread hunt for socialists (communists) took place. The military would break into the homes of Turkish and Armenian intellectuals and arrest them if books by Nazim Hikmet, Karl Marx, and others were found.

[18] Göçek, "Silences in the Turkish Republican Past" (n.d.). In this article, Göçek provides a contextualization of the Armenian experience in the Turkish narrative and in particular discusses the works of two Turkish-Armenian writers, Hagop Mintzuri and Migirdic Margosyan.

public was considered against the laws of proper public behavior, not tolerated and subject to harassment, how could Armenians speak their mind about such a sensitive subject? Characteristically, Toros Toranian, a Syrian-Armenian writer visiting Istanbul in 1963, attests to his encounter with a group of Armenian intellectuals in the street. In his excitement at having met them, he greeted them in a loud voice and asked about an Armenian writer he very much wanted to meet. Coincidently, the writer he was seeking was among this group. Very perplexed about this audacious and loud pronouncement of his name in the streets of Istanbul, he muttered words that no one could hear, and a lady in the group, a contributor to the Armenian newspaper *Marmara*, jumped in with a scolding tone: "Sir, if you will speak loud, speak Turkish. If you have to speak Armenian, then speak in a low voice. *Burası Türkiye, anladın mı?*" (This is Turkey, do you understand?)[19]

The trend to write about the Armenian past in the Ottoman Empire in Turkish-Armenian literature is still taking its first shaky and cautious steps. Newspaper articles in *Marmara* and *Zhamanak* are trying to shed some light on the present affairs of the Armenian community without much reference to the past. The contribution of *Agos*, a weekly paper in Turkish and Armenian, is tremendous. This paper, which still continues to be published after the assassination of its longtime editor Hrant Dink, reached the Armenians in Turkey, especially those who came to Istanbul from the interior of the country and did not have an Armenian education—Istanbul

[19] Toranian, *Istanbulahayere ke kanchen* (1997), p. 22.

being the only place where the existence of Armenian schools was tolerated. But more importantly, *Agos* aimed to spread accurate information about Armenians and Armenian affairs in the wider Turkish society.[20] Aside from the press, a scant number of authors, such as Hagop Mintzuri and Migirdic Margosyan, have also ventured into the realm of memoir-writing. However, the prevailing norm is still to stay within the accepted limits. In fact, when describing in simple images the nostalgic memories of their birthplaces in the interior of Turkey, these writers did not speak of the memory of the massacres and deportations, "the exile," which could not have died in the minds of the elders and would have most probably lived in the stories they told their children.

Not only did the literati refrain from writing about the Armenian suffering, but even ordinary Armenians, themselves survivors of the massacres and deportations, kept silent about their traumatic experiences and did not share them with even their closest Turkish friends. Kemal Yalçın confesses at the end of his book, *Seninle Güler Yüreğim* (You rejoice my heart),[21] that

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[20] The birth of *Agos*, or rather the emergence of the need for a bilingual paper, is a phenomenon. Reports have it that Archbishop Mesrob II Mutafyan, Patriarch of Istanbul Armenians, called on a few Turkish-Armenian intellectuals active in the Turkish press and formed a press council to respond to inquiries from the Turkish media, or to provide accurate information about Armenians to Turkish media where news about Armenians was usually distorted and falsified. This endeavor generated the need to publish a Turkish-Armenian paper, and gradually *Agos* was born. Hrant Dink served as editor-in-chief from the outset until his assassination, after which Etyen Mahçupyan succeeded him.

[21] My reference is to the Armenian translation of this book, *Hogis kezmov ke khayta*, by Archbishop Karekin Bekjian (2003).

it was very difficult to win the trust of his Armenian interviewees to speak freely and without apprehension. There had always been a cautious reservation, a conscious or subconscious drive to hide their past when talking to a Turk.

Given the lack of sufficient Turkish-Armenian literature, I therefore had to rely mostly on recent Turkish literature—those few works that audaciously treat the subject of the Armenian massacres and deportations in Turkey. I read all that was available to me and tried to trace in them the sense of Armenianness and the perception of the past, or the persistence of the memory of the past in generations of Armenian survivors who continued living in Turkey. Of course, because of my lack of knowledge of the Turkish language, I have relied on translations into Armenian, English, or French (in some cases the work was in English original), or on studies and analyses of Turkish literature in those languages.

Will modern-day literary criticism and analyses of Turkish literature be able to bring to light what was not said? Will this unravel the knot of an unsettled account between the personal experience of the Turkish writer and the collective experience that was not only Armenian but also Turkish? I hope that it will. I hope that there will be an increasing number of sources, narratives, and literary analyses available to future scholars interested in this subject. In the meantime, let this volume serve as a beginning, a genuine attempt to loosen the knot of a forbidden past.

Preamble and Focus

Ethnic affinity, with all its related elements and characteristics, is an important component of an Armenian's identity. Sociologists may argue that a person's identity is dynamic; it is a feeling and a perception that can change through time and in different circumstances. However, they too admit that in the construct of a person's identity, ethnicity is rather fixed, or at least, more rigid and less susceptible to change. As a trend in the ongoing globalization of the modern world today, some have argued against ethnicity being a universal phenomenon, even "irrelevant in several situations."[1] Aside from the

[1] Algis Prazauskas, "Ethnic Identity, Historical Memory, and Nationalism in Post-Soviet States," Center for Studies of Social Change Working Paper (March 1995), *Columbia International Affairs Online*, http://www.ciaonet.org. Accessed August 30, 2006.

exigencies of the process of globalization and sociologists pushing their argument against ethnic identity in favor of that process, there indeed exist many nation-state situations in which there is not an "other" to compare or to come into conflict with the "I." This is especially true in nation states with a population of homogeneous ethnic origin and religious belief or with the strong domination of a single ethnic and religious majority ruling over a weak and oppressed minority. In the case of the Armenians, especially in the Diasporan communities, the concept of ethnic identity has a strong conceptual construct, even if that ethnic identity has experienced setbacks in the process of sociopolitical change through time, even when generations of Armenians are undergoing assimilation and acculturation. In the relationship of "I" and the "other," in this context, the latter is not always a recognizable persona, like the Turk who committed genocide against the Armenians and caused the survivors to scatter in the world and become the new Diaspora.[2] That "other" can be

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[2] The concept of Diaspora is not new for Armenians. Diasporan Armenian communities have existed for a very long time. They consisted of Armenians who for one reason or another chose to leave Armenia and settle in a foreign land. However, those Armenians could return to Armenia whenever they wanted or maintain close ties with her. That was when a country named Armenia with her indigenous population of Armenians existed, even if mostly under the yoke of a foreign power. The Armenian Diaspora gained a new meaning after the Armenian population of Western Armenia was exterminated. The survivors were driven out of the country, scattering in the world, some joining the existing small communities, others forming new ones. "Armenia," the Armenian *vilayets*, was obliterated in the Ottoman Empire. Constantinople and Tĭbilisi, the cultural centers of Western and Eastern Armenians respectively, lost

a combination of all the forces at work to obstruct the Armenian people's right to perpetuate, to become whole, a nation rooted in its historic homeland.

The concept of ethnicity in a person's identity is a complex structure with common history, language, race, religion, traditions, and a territorial belonging among the elements with the most impact at its core. Common history and especially the collective memory of that history, "the dammed up force of our mysterious ancestors within us,"[3] is chosen as the building block as well as the vantage point of this study. I do believe that "history is a crucial element in the making of identity," and "people without history... are people who have been prevented from identifying themselves from others."[4] In the case of the Armenians, an ancient people with a rich history of cultural output, military victories and defeats, prosperities and tribulations, the element of common history in their identity gains added importance. Moreover, I believe that the impact of history or the collective memory of that common history, on the concept of ethnicity and the construct of ethnic identity, is

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their function after WWI. The postwar small Republic of Armenia established in the easternmost part of historic Armenia was Sovietized and locked behind the Iron Curtain. As a result of these historical changes, the face of the classic Diaspora changed too. There was no Armenia to maintain the umbilical cord that spiritually nourished the Armenian communities abroad.

[3] See Olick and Robbins, "Social Memory Studies" (1998), p. 106. The authors cite T. Schieder (1978) who quotes Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1902) as the first to use the term "collective memory," referring to this force as "piled up layers of accumulated collective memory."

[4] Friedman, "History and Politics of Identity" (1994), p. 117.