

CONTEMPORARY ARMENIAN LITERATURE IN TURKEY:
THE LITERARY REPRESENTATION OF ARMENIAN IDENTITY AND
HISTORY

by

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The aim of this study is to place contemporary Armenian literature within Turkish historiography and to explore the main aspects of Armenian collective identity, memory and history. After a passive period in literary production, Armenian literature has started to revive following a passive period after the events of 1915. That revival also can be read as the reflection of the newly emerging Armenian visibility in the public sphere and the demand to demonstrate the Armenian cultural identity. In the literary works of this period, authors try to rewrite modern Armenian history, which is admitted as ruptured by the deportation from Anatolia in 1915. Therefore, they feel the need to provide the connection between the past and present to be able to display a living Armenian identity in Turkey, instead of any nostalgic memory. This historicization project also aims to rearticulate the Armenian belonging to Anatolia, which is assumed as the ancient homeland of Armenian people. By that emphasis on the history, Armenian literature functions as a tool to prove and recall the Armenian existence in the memory, history and culture of Anatolia. In that sense, the lived experiences of Armenians within modern Turkish history gain importance in the literary works whether documented or fictionalized. In conclusion, despite their different literary approaches, those literary works play a constitutive role in the construction of Armenian collective identity, memory and history.

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Başlık: Türkiye'de Çağdaş Ermeni Edebiyatı: Ermeni Kimlik ve Tarihinin Edebi Temsili

Bu çalışmanın amacı çağdaş Ermeni edebiyatını, Türk tarih yazımı bağlamında değerlendirmek ve ortak Ermeni kimliği, belleği ve tarihini araştırmak amacıyla ele almaktır. Ermeni edebiyatı, 1915 olaylarını takip eden üretim açısından hareketsiz bir sürecin ardından tekrar canlanmaya başlamıştır. Bu canlanma, aynı zamanda Ermenilerin kamusal alanda yeni yeni artan görünürlüğünün ve kültürel bir kimlik edinme arzularının da yansıması olarak okunabilir. Bu döneme ait edebi eserlerde yazarlar, 1915'de yaşanan tehcir olaylarını yüzünden bir kopuş yaşadığını varsaydıkları modern Ermeni tarihini tekrar yazmayı denemektedirler. Bu sebeple, nostaljik bir hatıra yerine, yaşayan bir Ermeni kimliği yaratmak amacıyla geçmişle şimdiki zaman arasında bir bağ kurmaya çalışmaktadırlar. Bu tarih yazımı projesi, aynı zamanda Ermenilerin kadim ana vatanları olarak kabul ettikleri Anadolu'ya olan aidiyetlerini de tekrar vurgulamayı amaçlar. Tarihe yapılan bu vurgu sayesinde Ermeni edebiyatı, Anadolu topraklarının bellek, tarih ve kültüründeki Ermeni varlığını ispat etmek ve hatırlatmak işlevini gören bir araç niteliği görür. Bu açıdan, ister gerçek ister kurmaca olsun, Türkiye'de yaşayan Ermenilerin geçmiş deneyimleri edebi eserler açısından büyük önem kazanır. Sonuç olarak, edebi yaklaşımları açısından farklılık gösterebilirler de, bütün bu edebi eserler ortak bir Ermeni kimliği, belleği ve tarihi inşasında belirleyici bir rol oynamaktadırlar.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: AN OVERVIEW

Armenian literature in Turkey blossomed in 1990s after a less active period following the events of 1915. The events of 1915 actually ruined the artistic production of Armenians, due to both the loss of the intellectual class of an entire generation and the discriminatory policies of the Turkish Republic that led to the Armenians' invisibility in the public sphere. However, a surge in the number of literary works by Armenian authors in Turkey began in the 1990s, especially after the establishment of Aras Publishing House, which specializes in Armenian literature, in 1993. Until that time, although some authors continued to write, it is hard to speak of an influential and noteworthy literature for various reasons.

Armenian writers were writing mainly in Armenian, and the Armenian population that remained in Turkey after the deportation and in the wake of nationalist discriminatory policies excluding minorities, supplied relatively few readers. Moreover, for those writers it was hard to continue writing without acknowledging the events of 1915 or mentioning all they had lost. However, by the 1990s, there emerged new authors who wrote in Turkish. In addition, Aras Publishing translated many books from Armenian and other languages into Turkish. This new literary environment was welcomed by Armenian as well as some Turkish readers.

In this study, I aim to place contemporary Armenian literature within modern Turkish history and to explore an analysis of the modern Armenian identity and history. I consider the assumption that the literature is a social output rather than an artistic output that is entirely individualistic and divorced from context. Hence, since

the literature is a reflection of a society's social, economic, political and cultural lives, it brings us an important source to uncover some important dimensions of the Armenian community. Another important factor that led me to focus on this literature is the fact that the Armenian community tends to express its cultural identity and presence through its music and literature, rather than through political activism. Hence literature gains an importance for directly manifesting the Armenian collective identity. Therefore, the main aim of this study is to capture the main aspects of the contemporary Armenian collective identity and history, because by analyzing the literary works of Armenians in Turkey I want to capture their lived experiences within the contemporary historical context of Turkey.

As for the reason for selecting the Armenian community as the focus of my study, the crucial differentiation of Armenian and Turkish modern historiographies regarding the issue of the 1915 events plays an important role. Since the official Turkish historiography persistently denies the events of 1915 and legitimizes them as punishment against a rebellious community, the Armenian community is not only perceived as a non-Muslim minority, but mostly as "internal traitors". On the other hand, the Armenian people were forced to stay in silence after 1915, although the catastrophe is shaping their modern history. However, with the changing cultural identity politics worldwide, by the 1990s there emerged breaks in the wall of silence on both the Turkish and the Armenian sides. The Turkish post-nationalist discourse began to question Turkish national historiography and so the events of 1915 became an important problematic issue under question. That attitude, however, must be read in the context of the changing cultural politics that has gained an hegemony in the social sciences. At the same time, the Armenian community has become visible in the public sphere and has attempted to display its cultural identity. Through that

visibility they have started to confront the events of 1915 and other ensuing Turkification policies, to understand the meaning of those discriminatory events for their collective identity and to rewrite their modern history in a linear continuity that was ruptured by 1915.

When we analyze contemporary Armenian stories and novels, we confront commonalities on some basic themes, which provide us the basis of the Armenian collective identity. First, the sense of “displacement” and “non-belonging” construct the main concerns of Armenian authors. This displacement is not only the detachment of Armenians from a physical space in 1915, but also a detachment from the history of Anatolia, which has been homeland for thousands of years. Excluded from the history, memory and culture of Anatolia they are now perceived as “foreigners” in their own homeland. Because they could not represent their culture and history in Anatolia, the discontinuity in their history created by the events of 1915 led to a sense of displacement. Apart from this exclusion from the history and culture of Anatolia, the ensuing discriminatory policies of Republican Turkey, also have fortified that sense. In that framework, there are deliberate attempts by the authors to rearticulate their belonging to this land through displaying their lived experiences and cultural presence in the history of Anatolia. The important point here is that they are aware that their actual presence in Turkey is not enough to make them visible and a part of Anatolian history and culture. At this juncture, literary works have gained importance for their potential to expose Armenian historical presence.

Moreover, those writings also give us clues to the rewriting process of modern Armenian history after 1915 and the efforts to connect to the past. We can understand that the rupture at the end of 1915 created a hole in modern Armenian historiography due to the Armenians’ displacement from the space where they build

their history, and the dispersion of the Armenian population all over the world.

Therefore literary works are useful for the reconstruction of history, binding the past with the present and future.

The main body of my primary sources are the Turkish-language stories and novels of Armenian writers from Turkey. Although it would be hard to carry out an academic study on the Armenian literature in Armenian beginning with the modernization period of the nineteenth century, the contemporary literature was accessible to me since it is in Turkish. Used only one novel that was originally written in Armenian (it was translated into Turkish after the 1990s). The published books and articles about identity, minority literature and the history of Armenian modernization helped me to establish a theoretical basis for my study. I also benefited from the published books of and about Armenian literature in the diaspora, and thus had the opportunity to be able to compare two Armenian literatures in different spaces. I also examined secondary sources about Kurdish literature, particularly to pose different literary concerns about being a “minority” in Turkey. I interviewed the editor of the Armenian newspaper *Agos* to make sense all of the clues I picked up from the novels and to better understand the basic concerns of the Armenian community. All of these sources helped me to trace a theoretical and historical context within which I locate Turkish Armenian literature.

In my analysis of these literary works, certain concepts enabled me to draw a general picture of Armenian literature. Identity construction in relation to “space” and “common practices and repetitive performances” helped me to understand the Armenian community’s focus on displacement and its position vis-à-vis Anatolia. In addition, collective memory and collective identity also were key concepts for my analysis. Finally, I also looked at the importance of the historicization project in

these literary works and the way they function in drawing a linear and continuous history.

Like Marc Nichanian, an important Armenian critic, I think that “genocide” is a political word and I did not have any intention to discuss the “genocide”’s historical validity. Thus, for my study I rather preferred to use alternative words like “catastrophe” or “deportation” for the events in 1915 that the writers also choose in their writings.

For a comprehensive analysis, I categorized the Armenian authors into two groups. The writers of the first group, Mıgırdiç Margosyan, Agop Arslanyan and Kirkor Ceyhan, are the first generation after the catastrophe and are all Anatolian. Their primary aim is to document the past Armenian presence in Anatolian culture through their memoirs. By such documentary narratives, they attempt to prove and recall the Armenian existence in the past to give a historical basis for today. Memories also provide them the connection between the Armenian collective identity and Anatolian history. In so doing they manage to sustain the sense of belonging that they had lost after the deportation in 1915, because they can keep the memory of the historical presence of the Armenian community in their homeland, Anatolia. Hence, space, as the one of most important parts of the construction of identity gains tremendous importance in these stories and novels. They describe Armenian social, cultural, religious and economic lives in a very detailed way.

The details referring to the Armenian presence in Anatolia also integrate collective memories that were ruptured by the catastrophe within space and time. Those concrete memories in Anatolia also give the possibility of drawing the continuity after 1915 allowing the construction of a living Armenian identity, rather than a dead or frozen one. Hence the emphasis on Anatolia where these writers

portray the concrete memories of the Armenian community, provide us an effective basis for understanding the concerns about the Armenian identity, collective memory and the historicization of the Armenians' past experiences. Consequently, the past is connected with the present through the lost memories of survivors and their children.

Our first writer, Mıgırdiç Margosyan, was born in Diyarbakır in 1938. He spent his childhood in Diyarbakır and then came to Istanbul for his education, like many others, since Armenian schools in Anatolia had vanished after the deportation. He graduated from the department of philosophy at Istanbul University and, with the establishment of Aras Publishing, he immediately started to write. His published books in Turkish are *Gavur Mahallesi* (Gavur District) in 1992, *Söyle Margos Nerelisen?* (Tell Me Margos, Where Are You From?) in 2005, *Biletimiz İstanbul'a Kesildi* (To Istanbul Were Issued our Tickets) in 2007 and *Tespîh Taneleri* (Beads of the Rosary) in 2007. He has also books in Armenian, such as *Dikrîsi Aperen* (From the Banks of the Tigris) in 2010 and *Mer Ayt Goğmeri* (From our Regions) in 2005. In his literary works, Diyarbakır and *Hançepek Mahallesi* (Hançepek District), also known as Gâvur Mahallesi, play a primary role. He describes his and his family's life within the context of Diyarbakır after 1915. He builds up his writings on the basis of the "post-catastrophe" Armenian cultural and social presence in Anatolia, based on true stories. He also refers to the catastrophe itself with the fragmented memories that he heard from his family. In this way, he also contributes to the transmission of lived experiences from one generation to the other. We can notice that he points to the sense of displacement and non-belonging that Armenians feel in their "homes" by putting forth the changes and exclusion that they experience.

On the other hand, Agop Arslanyan, with his only book, *Adım Agop Memleketim Tokat* (My Name is Agop, I am from Tokat) in 2005, describes his life

in his “home”, Tokat. He was born in Tokat in 1934 and migrated to Istanbul to get an education like Margosyan, but he started to work and was unable to complete his schooling. However, he participated in the active cultural life of the Armenian community in Istanbul and wrote about Tokat in the Armenian newspaper *Marmara*. In his book he describes the changed life of Tokat after the loss of Armenian population and its cultural presence. He attributes the meaning of Tokat only to the presence of the Armenian community and its social and cultural life. So he supplies an entire monograph of that space for recalling the Armenian historical presence.

Finally, for Kirkor Ceyhan, the space upon which his Armenian identity is built is Sivas, Zara. Although his actual profession was something else, like the two writers above, he was dedicated to writing his memoirs on Zara. In his two books, *Atını Nalladı Felek Düştü Peşimize* (Evil Fate Shoed his Horse to Chase Us) in 2000 and *Seferberlik Türküleriyle Büyüdüm* (I Grew Up With Wartime Songs) in 2008, he describes the last days of the Ottoman Empire and the early Republican period in Zara.

Our second group of writers includes Markar Esayan, Karin Karakaşlı, Jaklin Çelik, Kevork Kirkoryan, Aret Vartanyan, Rober Haddeciyan and Rafi Kebabçıyan, mostly Istanbul Armenians who did not experience the catastrophe. Hence, in contrast to the first group, their literary works are not memoirs, but fiction. Their lack of memories of the catastrophe of 1915 and its aftermath leads them to develop fictional stories to fill the gaps between past and present and to construct an imagined collective memory. The important point is that most of these fictions include real Armenian historical figures integrated into the stories. In that context, they are trying to capture the real history with the myths they create and connect the past with the present to be able to overcome the sense of loss that the Armenian

community feels in their homeland. This connection and integration is also the realm for catharsis and healing. As a new generation, they are more willing to attempt to overcome the rupture created in their history and identity and find a path to healing.

The second issue that separates them from the first group is their urban identity. Except Jaklin Çelik, who tries to make a connection between Diyarbakır and Kumkapı, they construct an urban Armenian image, whether or not they are also engaged with the homeland image of Anatolia. They construct a new Armenian identity in connection with Istanbul as the last space where they can show Armenian cultural and social presence. We see again the dynamic and active lives of the Armenian community in urban areas such as Beyoğlu, Dolapdere, Kurtuluş, Şişli, Kumkapı and Yenışehir.

Markar Esayan was born in Istanbul in 1969 and studied in Bomonti Mihitaryan Primary School and the private Getronagan Armenian high school. Even though he graduated from the administrative science department at university, he is now a professional writer. He writes especially about issues surrounding his Armenian identity, in journals like *Agos* and *Taraf*. His literary works are *Şimdinin Dar Odası* (The Narrow Room of the Present) in 2005 and *Karşılaşma* (Confrontation) in 2007.

Karin Karakaşlı, on the other hand, was born in 1972 in İstanbul, and graduated from the Austrian High School and Boğaziçi University. She writes stories, novels and essays. Although she is more inclined to write about universal themes like love, heartbreak, longing and loneliness, she does not avoid reflecting on her Armenian identity and its history. She published the story collections *Başka Dillerin Şarkısı* (Song of the Other Languages) in 1999 and *Can Kırıkları* (Broken Souls) in 2002, a novel *Müsait Bir Yerde İnebilir miyim?* (May I Get off in a Suitable

Place?) in 2005 and a book of essays, *Cumba* (Oriental Window), in 2009. She was also a co-author of a book of research called *Türkiye'de Ermeniler: Cemaat, Birey, Yurttaş* (Armenians in Turkey: Community, Individual and Citizen) in 2009. She also translates novels, publishes her stories in several literature magazines and writes for *Radikal* newspaper.

Our third writer, Kevork Kirkoryan, is actually a figure outside the Armenian community. He graduated from Galatasaray High School and Boğaziçi University. He is not an active member of the community like Karakaşlı or Esayan. However, in the process of searching for his roots, he learned the Armenian language and mythology. He tries to salvage the unknown intellectuals of the Armenian past from oblivion. He also reflects their work in his literary works. In particular, his story book *Aşkın Kör Noktası* (Blindspot of Love) in 2005 is an attempt to bring several Armenian figures from the past to the present through fictional stories. On the other hand, he has also published a novel, *Atların Yelesinde Bir Veliefendi Romanı* (A Novel of Veliefendi on the Mane of the Horses) in 2002, and a book of stories, *Kev'gir Öyküler* (Kev'gir Stories) in 2000, which do not bear that tone of a quest for history and identity.

Jaklin Çelik, was born in Diyarbakır in 1968 and then moved to Istanbul when she was five years old. However, she has never forgotten Anatolia and its sincere and cosmopolitan life, and she tries to construct that life in Kumkapı, as an important place of settlement for Armenians, where she has lived for a long time. She has a different relationship with Istanbul. Besides her story collections *Kum saatinde Kumkapı* (Kumkapı in An Hourglass) in 2008 and *Yılanın Yolu* (The Way of the Snake) in 2003, she writes for *Agos*, does interviews for several magazines and newspapers, and publishes her stories in several literature magazines.

I have also included in my analysis one novel in Armenian, by Rober Haddecıyan, which was translated into Turkish in 1997. Haddecıyan's emphasis on the Armenian language for Armenian identity brings up another important issue for the Armenian community. So his only book, *Tavan* (Ceiling), bears a different emphasis for the construction of the Armenian identity and history. He is also aware of the problems in the transmission of Armenian collective identity and he sees the Armenian language as the bridge for that transmission.

For different perspectives on the Armenian identity, I also analyzed Raffi Kebabcıyan Kantaryan and his book *Konuş Halil Bey Konuş* (Talk Mr. Halil, Talk!). Born in 1945 in Istanbul, after his education at the German High School he moved to Germany for university and then continued to live there. His years in Europe and his Western-style education shape his outlook on Armenian identity and history. He employs a more critical approach towards both Armenians and Turks. He uses a perspective that is more analytical rather than a nostalgic or romantic when looking at history.

Our last writer, Aret Vartanyan, is primarily a professional writer who keeps a distance from the Armenian community; his professional business life shapes his literature too. Born in İstanbul in 1978 he studied public relations and now works in that field. He has his own Internet site containing writings about different issues concerning life in general. He has two published books; *Sen ve Ben* (You and Me) in 2008, which is like a conversation with the reader and *Bir Nefes İstanbul* (A Breath of Istanbul) in 2009, which is the story of the multicultural life of Istanbul but without emphasizing Armenianness particularly.

This study is composed of three main chapters, in addition to an introduction and a conclusion. In Chapter Two, I ask why Armenian literature gained momentum

in the 1990s. Accordingly, I draw an overall picture of the multicultural environment of the 1990s and the development of that increasing visibility. There is also the comparison with diasporan Armenian literature that helps us consider the shared identity and historical problems. I have also made a comparison between Kurdish literature, which is centered also on issues of identity and history.

Chapters Three and Four are divided according to my categorization of the authors. In Chapter Three, I focus on Anatolian narrative literary works and their emphasis on documentation through memoirs, and a historicization process based on true facts, and their perception of the “other,” meaning Turks. Finally, in Chapter Four, I will analyze the fictional literary works of urban Armenian authors. In that chapter, we will see that the historicization process in their writings is not based on “facts” per se, but on “myths” that also will encourage the process of catharsis and healing for the Armenian community. In addition, we will gather different perspectives on “Armenianness” in order to avoid generalizing about some kind of homogenous Armenian identity. With that aim, I also look at different aspects of Armenian identity that carry different concerns apart from the historicization issues.

CHAPTER 2

THE CONTEXTUALIZATION OF CONTEMPORARY ARMENIAN LITERATURE IN TURKEY

The Visibility of Armenian Identity in Light of Changing Cultural Policies in Turkey

How can it be that we suddenly begin to see what we have ignored for many years?¹

In this section of the chapter, I want to understand the increasing availability of published Armenian literature beginning in the 1990s and the atmosphere that was conducive to that increase in writing as well as in reception. Rıfat Bali writes that even simply by looking at publishing houses we can see the increasing popularity of publications from different ethnic groups.² This trend, both in writing and reading, could not even have been imagined in the 1970s and 1980s. Therefore, we must first ask *why* this significant increase in the demand for and supply of literary works from different ethnic groups, which had been neglected during the Republican period, emerged. Within that context we will try to understand how and why Armenian literary outputs are very much welcomed in recent years both by Armenian and some Turkish readers. This fruitful atmosphere for Armenian cultural representation has actually been triggered by the changing cultural and political policies in Turkey and

¹ Quoted from the back cover of Markar Esayan's novel, *Karşılaşma*. Markar Esayan, *Karşılaşma* (İstanbul: Hayy Kitap, 2007). “*Uzun yıllar yok saydığımızı, ne olur da görmeye başlarız birden?*”

² Rıfat Bali, *Entelektüel Âlemin Yeni Dokunulmazları: Azınlıklar*, 12 February 2008, http://www.rifatbali.com/images/stories/dokumanlar/entelektuel_alemin_yeni_dokunulmazliklari.pdf, [15 September 2009].

in the global context in general. In other words, within a particular cultural and political context, the social and cultural visibility of Armenians is dramatically supported and well-received by some group of Turkish people, mostly liberal and leftist, thus allowing them to increase their visibility with time. At this juncture, we cannot consider the rising visibility of Armenians –especially cultural visibility, as evidenced by many recent artistic productions– as separate from an intense and conscious reception by intellectual circles and the community at large.

As Arus Yumul argues, the issue of ethnic identity, which was once seen as awkward and even offensive within dominant intellectual circles, has become significantly and suddenly popular and even fashionable, in the literal sense of the word.³ While for the Kemalist nationalist elites, the issue of minorities seemed irrelevant and contradictory to the utopian goal of a united and homogenous Turkish nation, for leftist intellectuals regional and ethnic demands raised with regard to identity were meaningless within the universal ideals of socialism and were rejected in the name of those universal norms and identities. Within that context of the 1970s and 1980s, we may actually say that minorities were only on the radar of nationalist and rightist publishers and were the main actors in several separatist conspiracy theories and anti-minority academic projects based on the changing nationalist context and political clashes of the time.⁴

For instance, the terrorist activities of ASALA (Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia) against Turkish officials in Turkey and abroad beginning in the mid-1970s and continuing throughout 1980s, the issue of Cyprus dividing Greeks and Turks on the island and resulting in the so-called “Cyprus Peace

³ Arus Yumul, “The Exclusive Qualities of Modernity/Post-modernity,” in *Modernity and Multiculturalism*, ed. Helsinki Citizens Assembly (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), p. 309.

⁴ Rıfat Bali, *Entelektüel Âlemin Yeni Dokunulmazları: Azınlıklar*.

Operation” and heightened Turkish nationalism, and finally the Karabagh war between Azerbaijan and Armenia, raised antagonism toward all non-Muslims in Turkey.⁵

However, with the relative democratization and civilization movements in Turkey by the mid-1980s following the coup d’etat, minority issues started to gain importance and popularity in intellectual circles. At the same time, minorities became more visible in the public sphere, especially in the cultural arena, and started to become incorporated, gradually, into the victimhood discourse against the nationalist state authority. We can see two basic factors causing this mutually-triggered transformation on both sides. First, there was the current understanding of multiculturalism and identity politics maintained in the West since the collapse of the bipolar world system and the rising demands for local rights.

Turkey, also, was under the influence of this trend within the relevant period of democratization and civilization, with particular energy coming from the critics of the concept of a dominant, homogenous Turkish national culture and identity. The other factor was the Kurdish issue’s increased importance and legitimacy, particularly among leftist intellectuals. A separatist movement in the eyes of the Turkish nation-state and a liberation struggle in the minds of the PKK (separatist Kurdistan Workers Party) and its sympathizers, that identity-based controversy influenced other minority groups and subjugated identities to seek recognition and greater rights.

When looking at minority rights, we should take into account the process for the European Union membership in which Turkey is engaged. The rights of all social

⁵ Rıdvan Akar, “Minority Policies in the Republican Era,” in *Modernity and Multiculturalism*, ed. Helsinki Citizens Assembly (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), p. 36.

groups in Turkey vis-à-vis the state have recently become significant on the national agenda in relation to Turkey's impending European Union membership.

The Copenhagen criteria regarding respect for human rights, institutionalized democracy and the protection of minorities and other groups have increased awareness of minorities in Turkey, who have been neglected for many years and have endured discriminatory policies. Hence, these advances have been accompanied by a remarkable change in the conception of Turkish society itself, a change that can be discerned in the attitude of Turkish leaders in recent years. For instance, there has been a new defensive and corrective political emphasis on the concept of the Turkish nation as "encompassing the population of Turkey as a whole with no distinction of religion or ethnic background" in order to maintain the unitary structure of the state within that context of localities.⁶ While Tansu Çiller (former prime minister and leader of the True Path Party) declared that, "the concept of a nation in Turkey is based on joint values, joint political beliefs, a joint future and the will to build that future in unison,"⁷ on the other side Mesut Yılmaz (Leader of the Motherland Party and former prime minister) said "(...) since there is no ethnic majority in Turkey there is similarly no ethnic minority."⁸ The political rhetoric in the 1990s thus aimed to re-instill the sense of 'unity and togetherness' as a self-defensive policy in the wake of recognizing the presence of the revival of ethnic minorities.⁹

On the other hand, as mentioned above, critiques of a homogenous Turkish nation and culture, and all the Turkification policies of the official state under that

⁶ David Kushner, "Self-Perception and Identity in Contemporary Turkey," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 32, 2 (April, 1997), p. 225.

⁷ Quoted by Kushner; Turkish TV, 20 July 1993, quoted in BBC, Survey of World Broadcasts - The Middle East, Africa and Latin America (hereafter SWB-ME), 23 July 1993.

⁸ Quoted by Kushner, Mesut Yılmaz, Turkish TV, 27 August 1992, SWB-ME, 29 August 1992.

⁹ Karin Vorhoff, "Let's Reclaim Our History and Culture!: Imagining Alevi Community in Contemporary Turkey," *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, 38, Issue 2 (July, 1998), p. 13.

target, have been very widespread among leftist and liberal intellectuals. The dominant trend of multiculturalism has led them to question the meaning and frontiers of the nation-state and generally deal with what Aksoy calls the “representation of the minority cultures to the dominant culture of the nation-state.”¹⁰ In this framework, multiculturalism is supported and headed by the criticism directed at modernity, which is assumed to be inclined toward “eradicating local customs, mores, ethnicity and religious diversity and to replace them with a rational universalist socio-cultural identity.”¹¹

Similarly, Yumul considers development to be the collapse of the concepts of modernism and its overarching umbrella of the “nation,” and she tries to understand multiculturalism and its declared identity emphasis.¹² For her, “while modernity is suppressing the identity and the culture of the other in the name of a partial universality, post-modernity is an approach exalting the diversity.”¹³

Nevertheless, as Sumul also criticizes, that growing interest in others and minorities is not always conscious, and is mostly emptied of all its political meaning. They (the minorities) are materialized and transformed from political opposition into alternative lifestyles.¹⁴ Henceforth, “the sudden recognition of otherness and diversity is marketed in the cultural supermarket by means of art, literature, music, kitchen, doctrines and rituals.”¹⁵ Consequently, the detachment from history and

¹⁰ Nazan Aksoy, “On Multiculturalism,” in *Modernity and Multiculturalism*, ed. Helsinki Citizens Assembly (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), p. 53.

¹¹ Aksoy, pp. 53-54.

¹² Yumul, pp. 309-311.

¹³ Ibid., p. 311.

¹⁴ For that categorization, see Raymond Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980).

¹⁵ There are a vast number of book and music CDs in the market showing also the materialization of the diverse cultures such as Boğos Piranyan, *Aşçının Kitabı* (İstanbul: Aras Yayınları, 2008); Hüseyin Irmak, *Yaşadığım Kurtuluş İstanbul'da Bir Kadim Semt* (İstanbul: Aras Yayınları, 2003); Ertuğrul Aladağ, *Kentimin Öyküsü Muğla'da Rum İzleri* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları,

context that is wrought by the materialization process makes the minority identity more and more static and frozen, rather than alive and present. In that framework, the words of Hrant Dink (assassinated Armenian editor-in-chief of the journal *Agos*) are apparently meaningful and critical to both nationalist ideology and the fashionable multicultural trend that turns them into frozen goods, where he says;

“(...) I am from Turkey, I am Armenian, Anatolian to the bone. (...) I have watched my destiny with my country’s struggle for freedom. I did not get the rights that I enjoy or do not enjoy just as this moment, gratis. I have paid their burden, I’m still paying it. However, I’m fed up with both this “Our Armenians” flattery and the “Traitors among us” provocations. I am frustrated with both the exclusion, which makes me forget that I am a normal citizen, and the overwhelming embrace, which makes me feel suffocated.”¹⁶

Moreover, we will also see that problematic in the literary works of the younger generation, which will be examined especially in Chapter 4.

If we turn back to Armenian visibility, which is relatively more complicated than that of the other non-Muslim minorities, we realize the important place of the 1915 Armenian catastrophe in Turkish official historiography. As is easily seen, the events of 1915 are as much a rupture in Turkish historiography and the construction of the national identity as in Armenian historiography. Therefore, the silence regarding the events of 1915 was both on the Armenian and Turkish side. While the Armenians had been forced to be in silence and did not talk about their pains and

2004); Cemşid Bender, *Kürt Mutfak Kültürü ve Kürt Yemekleri* (İstanbul: Berfin Yayınları, 2003); Sema Temizkan, *Bizanslı Yemekler: Musevi, Rum, Ermeni Mutfağından Seçmeler* (İstanbul: Özgür Yayınları, 2002); Sula Bozis, *İstanbul Lezzeti İstanbullu Rumların Mutfak Kültürü* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2000); Fuad Rahman and Miriella Galletti, *Kürt Yemek Kültürü* (İstanbul: Avela Yayınları, 2001); *Ermeni Masalları* (Pencere Yayınları, 2009) and so forth.

¹⁶ Hrant Dink, “Living on This Soil,” in *Modernity and Multiculturalism*, ed. Helsinki Citizens Assembly (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), p. 79. “*Türkiyeliyim, Ermeniyim, iliklerime kadar da Anadolu muyum. (...) Şu anda yaşayabildiğim ya da yaşayamadığım haklara da bedavadan konmadım. Bedelini ödedim, hala da ödüyorum. Ama artık bazı kesimlerin ‘bizim Ermenilerimiz’ pohpohlamasından da içimizdeki hainler kıskırtmasından da bıktım. Normal yurttaş olduğumu unutturan dışlanmışlıktan da boğarcasına kucaklanılmaktan da usandım.*”

losses, official Turkish historiography preferred denial and selective amnesia.¹⁷ In so doing, Turkish nationalist historiography epistemologically manipulates the role and significance of Turkish groups at the expense of all others through their selective employment and deployment of history.¹⁸ Therefore while minority groups are destined to be ignored and disdained, they also are dehistoricized within the national discourse.

However, with the 1990s came some significant transformations and a break in the wall of silence, as Varjabedian calls it.¹⁹ Knowing that “historiography aiming at knowledge production is also by its nature engaged as an ethical exercise in a promise of justice to the other, to the excluded,” we may now argue that there is the new agency of Armenian experience which is excluded in the nationalist discourse.²⁰

In addition, that break in the wall of silence has come not only from the Armenian side, but also from the Turkish one. The “*post-nationalist critical narrative*,” as Fatma Müge Göçek has called it, has begun to directly or indirectly question and criticize the nationalist master narrative that has ignored and manipulated modern Turkish history.²¹ If we look at her periodization of Turkish historiography, we see that it consists of four stages. The fourth stage, which she calls the post-nationalist period, comprises the period from 1982 to the present and starts with the neo-liberalization of the Turkish economy, media and communications

¹⁷ Hrag Varjabedian, “Historicization of the Armenian Catastrophe: From the Concrete to the Mythical,” in *The Armenian Genocide: Cultural and Ethical Legacies*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2007), p.143.

¹⁸ Fatma Müge Göçek, “Turkish Historiography and the Unbearable Weight of 1915,” in *The Armenian Genocide: Cultural and Ethical Legacies*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2007), p. 339.

¹⁹ Varjabedian, p. 143.

²⁰ Göçek, p. 339–340.

²¹ Fatma Müge Göçek, “Reconstructing the Turkish Historiography on the Armenian Massacres and Deaths of 1915,” in *Looking Backward, Moving Forward: Confronting the Armenian Genocide*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2003), pp. 209-230.

under Turgut Özal’s presidency. She notices that this liberation process created “pockets of public space not controlled by the Turkish state and it was within those spaces that social groups finally started to discuss what their own society meant in their own terms.” The interesting part of her paradigm is the fact that the political pressure and policy imposed upon society by the military and its continued civil authority also have encouraged people to focus on non-political topics such as identity formation.²²

Hence, starting with the early 1990s, we start hearing Turkish voices outside official Turkish historiography considering the events of 1915. Göçek categorizes these voices into three clusters.²³ The first group intentionally focuses on the events of 1915 and criticizes the persistent Turkish denial of the events. For instance, Taner Akçam’s *Türk Ulusal Kimliği ve Ermeni Sorunu* (Turkish National Identity and the Armenian Question) in 1992, *Ermeni Meselesi Hallolunmuştur: Osmanlı Belgelerine Göre Savaş Yıllarında Ermenilere Yönelik Politikalar* (The Armenian Question is Solved: Policies Towards Armenians during the War Period According to Ottoman Documents) in 2005, *1915 Yazıları* (The Writings of 1915) in 2010, *Türk Ulusal Kimliği ve Ermeni Sorunu* (Turkish National Identity and the Armenian Question) in 1992, *Siyasi Kültürümüzde Zulüm ve İşkence* (Persecution and Torture in Our Political History) in 1992, *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility* in 2007, *Ermeni Tabusu Aralanırken: Diyalogdan Başka Bir Çözüm Var mı?* (As the Armenian Taboo Disappears: Is There Another Solution Beside Dialogue) in 2002 and *İnsan Hakları ve Ermeni Sorunu* (Human Rights and the Armenian Question) in 1999, and Taner Timur’s *Türkler ve*

²² Göçek, “Turkish Historiography and the Unbearable Weight of 1915,” pp. 352–353.

²³ Göçek, “Reconstructing the Turkish Historiography on the Armenian Masssacres and Deaths of 1915,” pp. 224–225.

Ermeniler: 1915 ve sonrası (Turks and Armenians: 1915 and its Aftermath) in 2001 are the most critical publications about the Armenian catastrophe that also inform Turkish readers about the history of the Armenians.

The second group focuses on topics in Turkish history, not emphasizing the events of 1915, but exploring the historical context that led to those events, such as analyzing the Young Turks, the Committee of Union and Progress, and the circumstances of the Armenian community. We may include in that group works such as the Türk Tarih Vakfı's *75 Yılda Tebaadan Yurttaş Dođru* (From Subject to Citizen in 75 Years) in 1995, Osman Selim Kocahanođlu's *İttihat-Terakki'nin Sorgulanması ve Yargılanması: Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıtları* (The Interrogation and Trial of the Committee of Union and Progress: Proceedings of the Ottoman Assembly) in 1998 and Fuat Dündar's *İttihat Terakki'nin Müslümanları İskan Politikası (1913-1918)* (The Muslim Settlement Policy of the Committee Union and Progress) in 2001.²⁴

We hear those critical voices in some remarkable periodical journals too. For instance, *Birikim Aylık Sosyalist Kültür Dergisi* (Birikim Montly Socialist Culture Journal), *Toplum ve Bilim* (Society and Science), *Toplumsal Tarih* (Societal History)

²⁴ Apart from those names, there are some other intellectuals and researchers like Fatma Müge Göçek, Ragıp Zarakolu and Ayşe Günaysu who try to break that wall with articles and historical research. In addition to those names there are academics and writers who are interested in Turkish discriminatory policy and implementations against non-muslim population in the pursuit of economic, political, social and cultural Turkification. For instance Ayhan Aktar's, *Varlık Vergisi ve 'Türkleştirme' Politikaları* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000) and *Türk Milliyetçiliđi, Gayrimüslimler ve Ekonomik Dönüşüm* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006); Rıdvan Akar's *Aşkaale Yolcuları: Varlık Vergisi ve Çalışma Kampları* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları,1999), *Varlık Vergisi / Tek Parti Döneminde Azınlık Karşıtı Politika Örneđi* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları,1992), *İstanbul'un Son Sürgünleri / 1964'te Rumların Sınırdışı Edilmesi* with Hülya Demir (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları,1994); and Rıfat Bali's *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri: Devletin Örnek Yurttaşları* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009), *II. Dünya Savaşı'nda Gayrimüslimlerin Askerlik Serüveni: Yirmi Kur'a Nafia Askerleri* (İstanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2008), *A Scapegoat For All Seasons: The Dönmes or Crypto - Jews of Turkey* (İstanbul, Isis Press, 2008), *1934 Trakya Olayları, Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri-Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (İstanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 1999), *Musa'nın Evlatları Cumhuriyet'in Yurttaşları* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), *Devlet'in Yahudileri ve "Öteki" Yahudi* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri - Aliya: Bir Toplu Göçün Öyküsü* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003).

and *Tarih ve Toplum* (History and Society) have special issues about minorities and the Armenian question.

Having already mentioned the way that Turkish critical attitudes on behalf of Armenian experiences have increased the visibility of Armenians, we now have to describe Armenians' efforts and projects to increase their own visibility and to acquire their full rights in the multicultural environment.

First, we have to mention that the most important element of Armenian visibility has been the body of published works aiming to prove their very existence and narrate in particular their cultural history. A major step toward this goal came with the establishment in 1993 of Aras Publishing, an İstanbul-based publishing house that identifies itself as the “window onto Armenian literature.”²⁵

The third group that Göçek identifies, which is also the main focus of this study, is those literary works that reveal both fictionalized and documented Armenian history and identity. For Göçek, the importance of those works is the fact that they are the products of an emerging civil society. She points out that the writers of these works are not defending any thesis, but instead are illustrating a post-nationalist stance, drawing an alternative historicity and framework to better grasp the Armenian identity. As an attempt to introduce the Armenian community to Turkish society, Aras Publishing publishes its books in both in Turkish and Armenian. Especially with memoirs, which have been the first movement in this regard (whether translated into Turkish or written in Turkish), Armenian writers have found a way to speak of their ancient existence in Anatolia, expressing their entire social and cultural lives and forgotten histories. That process also helped them to construct and revive their own collective memory and transmit it to later generations.

²⁵ Aras Yayıncılık, http://www.arasyayincilik.com/store/Getron_About.asp, [15 September 2009].

At this juncture, we should note that the literary responses are employed in favor of the visibility of the Armenian community. That aim also is seen overtly in the effort of Aras Publishing to present the biographies of Armenian writers after significant research and make their Armenian identity known. It can be also argued that the literary works and their creators act as representatives, giving us the opportunity to grasp this community's collective identity, history and life with all its elements. Another strategy that allowed Aras Publishing to increase visibility and make Turkish people aware of Armenians in literature is the publisher's regular attendance at book fairs since 1998.²⁶ The panels at those fairs have become places in which the reader and the writer contact each other, making Armenian identity alive.

The second written source from which Turkish society has been able to discover Armenian culture is the first bilingual Armenian and Turkish weekly newspaper *Agos*, which has been published since 1996. The fact that the founders of the newspaper, including Hrant Dink, come from the same Armenian leftist circles as the creators of Aras Publishing suggests a similar mission to be recognized by and become integrated within the larger Turkish society of which they have been a part since 1915 and to solve the problems that they confront on both an institutional level and in their daily lives.²⁷ *Agos'* opting to publish in both Turkish and Armenian shows that the newspaper's founders wanted to be accessible to Turkish readers as well. The fact that the founders' and journalists' desire is to be active members of Turkish society as opposed to publishing a closed community newspaper makes them more sensitive to the problems of Turkey. Moreover, *Agos'* willingness to reveal problems within the Armenian community and to discuss its own relationship to the

²⁶ Aris Nalcı (editor of *Agos* Newspaper), interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 18 September 2009.

²⁷ Ibid.

Armenian Patriarchate, one of the most important community institutions, also underscores *Agos*' ambition to open itself up to Turkish society.

The History of Armenian Literature until the 1990s

The Armenian language always has been one of the most vital elements for the construction and propagation of the Armenian identity, along with the central role of the church. The lack of any centralized political entity throughout centuries pushed Armenians toward a powerful, centralized church and the protection of the native language for the maintenance of ethnic-cultural identity.²⁸ As Marc Nichanian, a prominent critic of Armenian origin, says, "language is the only parameter of continuity."²⁹ In that framework, the maintenance of the Armenian language provided for the collectivity of the nation even before the modern period. The Armenian language is therefore the proof of Armenian existence, which sustains a sense of historical continuity despite political breaks. Hence, the protection of Armenian language and the production of cultural works such as literature and art offer the possibility of reproducing the ethnic-cultural identity. For this reason, literary works give us the opportunity to grasp the process of the construction of ethnic identity and Armenian historicization in relation to Turkish society at large.

I will look at 1915 as a breaking point in Armenian literature as in the historicization of Armenian history, because this year is considered as a rupture for the deep-rooted Armenian civilization. Before that time, the symbol of the so-called rebirth of the Armenian nation was the creation of the Armenian alphabet by Mesrob

²⁸ Günay Göksu Özdoğan, Füsün Üstel, Karin Karakaşlı and Ferhat Kentel, *Türkiye'de Ermeniler: Cemaat-Birey-Yurttaş* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2009), p. 59.

²⁹ *Nouvelle Armenie*, April 2009.

Maṣtotz in 405 AD. As I have mentioned above, the alphabet became the symbol of the continuity of Armenian identity in literature, culture and science despite all crises, political and military defeats and religious divisions on Anatolian lands. Until the first secularization efforts in literature in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, the themes of which were nature, love and longing, there was the intensity of religious texts and Armenian folk tales.

The first modern movements in literature began with the establishment of the Armenian press in the sixteenth century, as Boğos Levon Zekiyan notes.³⁰ After that time, according to Zekiyan, there began an Armenian modernization period giving birth to the enlightenment and cultural renaissance of Armenians in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The most interesting literary and academic productions of this period are Turkish language works written using the Armenian alphabet. Despite efforts to maintain a sense of identity, Turkish was still a shared means of communication and expression for Armenians. Accordingly it is worth noting that this is also the result of the lack of any secular educational institutions and the low rate of literacy in Armenian, apart from the dual linguistic structure of the empire.

By the late eighteenth century, along with the Ottoman modernization period, the movement in press, education and politics paved the way for a cultural renaissance and rebirth of Armenian culture. Zekiyan divides this process into two periods; the period between 1700-1840, which he refers to as *veradzınunt* (rebirth), and the period between 1840-1915, which he calls the *zartonk* (awakening), symbolizing secularization in all social and cultural spheres.³¹

The “awakening” period became the point of discussions about the modernization of the Armenian language and the secularization of literature. These

³⁰ Boğos Levon Zekiyan, *Ermeniler ve Modernite* (İstanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2002), p. 33.

³¹ Ibid., p. 34.

discussions were concerned with the enlightenment of the community and raising the literacy rates. In that period, under the influence of the French Revolution in 1789, the liberation of the Armenian “nation” and the national collective were the main themes that shaped Armenian writers. The journals were the stage for these intellectuals to show those ideas of collectivity in their literary and political writings. We actually can see efforts toward a national literature in that period reflecting the longing for homeland and a unified nation. Moreover, writers in this period were focused on the future of the entire Armenian collective, including those who were under Russian rule, instead of only the community that lived within Ottoman territories. This also indicates the concern with collective identity.³²

We see two basic themes in that period in literature. The first one is Armenian romantic poetry focused on Armenian nationhood and love of homeland represented by Ghevond Alişan and Mıgırđıç Hırimyan (Hırimyan Hayrig), Beşiktaşlıyan, Turyan, Hayguni, Misak Metzarents and Madteos Zarifyan, and Siamanto (Adom Yacanyan).³³ That emphasis on Armenian collectivity later was integrated with the traumatic spirit of 1915.

The second trend is a more realistic one focusing on an accurate portrait of Armenian society and its daily life in the Ottoman Empire, represented by Kevork Ayvazyan, Harutyun Sıvacıyan, Hagop Baronyan and Yervant Odyan. It may be said that this realism is the result of a certain attempt by Armenian writers to know and identify the Armenian identity and society, to analyze by categorizing it and to document it. For instance, there were writers like Arpiar Ariaryan, Krikor Zohrab, Jirayr Gamsaragan, Aram Andonyan and Yeruhan who questioned the stratification

³² Vahé Oshagan, “Cultural and Literary Awakening of Western Armenians, 1789-1915,” *Armenian Review* (Fall 1983), pp. 60-62.

³³ Pars Tuğlacı, *Ermeni Edebiyatından Seçkiler* (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1992).

of society and its relationship to the Ottoman social order. On the other hand, an Armenian woman writer was involved in women's issues and focused on the place of Armenian women in social life.³⁴

Apart from this modernized tendency centered on İstanbul, Armenian literature also was written and shaped in its relationship to Anatolia, because Anatolia as the ancestral homeland of the Armenians was an important part of the Armenian identity. That is why, with the coming of the nineteenth century, some Armenian writers began to write about "Armenianness" as attached to its original geography. This also brought about the division between İstanbul and Anatolian novels ('*kavaragan kraganutyun*' in Armenian) and concerns about identity. Anatolian novels and other literary works described towns and villages, and the bond they established with that geography. In the early twentieth century they started to reflect the political, social and historical changes in Anatolia. In that context, they are like the documentation of the period leading up to 1915 and help to construct a historicization of the Armenian past that was ruptured in that year. Hampartsum Gelenyan, with the pen name Hamasdegh and Hagop Mintzuri (1886-1978), documented Anatolia with the context of all its cosmopolitan life and social and political transformations.

Zekiyan argues that all of those literary works reflect the efforts of the Armenians to survive and to *remain* Armenian in the face of modernity.³⁵ For him, the modernization period for Armenians, including the infamous tragedy of 1915, made the survival efforts, the by-then seemingly natural characteristic of Armenian ethnic identity, more visible and more epic. In that manner we can say that all the literary works of the modernization period until 1915 are actually a product of a

³⁴ Oshagan, pp. 63-67.

³⁵ Zekiyan, p. 115.

community which, in the absence of any political centralization, is concerned with survival and is aware of the social and political transformations of the century.

At the same time, the dramatic events of 1915 led to the loss of Armenian writers and so, literally, the literature. Armenian intellectuals and artists were arrested and deported to Anatolia, most of them never to be seen or heard from again. Some of them migrated to other countries, continued to work there and constructed the intelligentsia of the diaspora. Therefore the loss of these intellectuals created a significant hole in Armenian cultural and political life and until the 1930s there was no Armenian literary production to speak of in Turkey.

Yet the conditions of Armenian life in the 1930s were not conducive either for continuing the development of a modern literature that had already begun, or for a new start in response to the rupture of 1915. First, the concrete realities of the period after 1915 and the period before and after the establishment of the Turkish nation-state did not yield a free atmosphere in which a writer might be able to write about the events, the places they were deported from or to, longing for the homeland, the wealth they had lost, the loss of loved ones, exile, victimization, pain and massacre, even as those were the shared facts and sentiments of the collective nation.³⁶

Secondly, the literary responses to that kind of huge trauma have been tentative. Armenians could not live and express themselves as they had before 1915. For Hagop Oshagan, Armenian writer and critic, although there is the possibility of creating art out of the Armenian catastrophe, he also realizes that “Western Armenian literature being a product of social, political and cultural determinants reacting on an artist’s individuality, intellect and creative mind died with the

³⁶ Özdoğan, Üstel, Karakaşlı and Kentel, p. 86.

genocide of 1915.”³⁷ It is thus impossible to continue to create art in the same pre-1915 tradition. He also emphasizes that this is due to the failure of understanding the meaning of the transformations of the nineteenth century. He complains about the fact that despite the modernization period, the rising intellectual class and all the literary and political writings, no one was able to interpret the clues of the coming catastrophe, which victimized an entire civilization and its norms of artistic creation.

The idea underlying this argument is the fact that for Hagop Oshagan, Armenian writer and critic, the events of 1915 were “not unprecedented, but a culmination of the previous ones.”³⁸ That is why he believed that there should have been a tradition to cope with such unjust and inexplicable events and to provide for the collective survival of Armenian identity. This can be seen in his statement, “For two thousand years (sometimes five to ten times in one century) our people have experienced their 1915s.”³⁹ Hence, he believes that no one was able to anticipate 1915 or grasp the history. Nonetheless, other critics and intellectuals, like Perroomian, trace the impossibility of fully grasping the Armenian catastrophe and finding the means, especially literary means, to deal with it, to the fact that the paradigm of responses to previous catastrophes throughout history was disrupted by the “enormity of the genocide of 1915.”⁴⁰ For us, it is possible to argue that the Armenian modernization process and Armenian literature were forced to pause for decades. The transition has been sustained by stories of the catastrophe and efforts for reestablishing a national collective literature.

³⁷ Rubina Perroomian, “Problematic Aspects of Reading Genocide Literature A Search for a Guideline or a Canon,” in *Remembrance and denial: The Case of the Armenian genocide*, ed. Richard Hovannisian (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1998), p. 181.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 179.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 179. For Perroomian’s quotation, see Beniamin Tashian, Mairineru Shukin Tak: Grakan Zrutis H. Oshakani Het (In the shade of the cedars: A literary discussion with H. Oshagan) (Beirut: Altapres, 1983), p. 19.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 179-180.

Indeed, despite this entirely negative environment and the barriers confronting Armenian writers, Armenian literature in the Armenian language started to develop again, slowly, in the 1930s. Some important writers such as the leftist writer Zaven Biberyan (1921-1984); Antan Özer, whose play *Buzdolabı* (Refrigerator) was staged at the İstanbul City Theater; Marmara newspaper Editor-in-Chief Rober Haddecian (Haddeler), whose novel I have analyzed in my forth chapter; and the masters of classic Armenian language Arto Cümbüşyan and Vart Sigaher; as well as Yervant Gobelyan, produced remarkable works.

Besides these names who were born in the first years of the republic, a new generation of writers started to write and give momentum to Armenian literature, such as Karin Karakaşlı, Kevork Kirkoryan, Jaklin Çelik. The difference among these authors is that they wrote in Turkish instead of Armenian. Although there were some objections from nationalist Armenians to those stories and novels written in Turkish, and accusations that their writers were “Turkish-minded” (*Türk kafalı*), for one of the Armenian intellectuals Yetvart Tovmasyan, these assertions missed the point; he argued that writing in Armenian for Armenian people was not something to be proud of, but was normal, like eating or drinking water, and that the more important achievement was to be able to write in other languages.⁴¹ He also gave examples from the most famous Armenian writer, Levon Sürmelyan and William Saroyan, who wrote in English. He claimed that they did not lose something from their Armenianness, but that it was Armenianness that had gained a great deal. These ideas also spoke to the pressure to display their “Armenianness” that pushed Armenian writers to write in Armenian.

⁴¹ *Agos Newspaper*, 05 November 1999.

Conceptualization of Armenian Literature in Comparison with Diasporan Literature

For a more comprehensive analysis, the comparative dimension must be incorporated into this thesis. Therefore, I will first examine the role and the situation of literature in the diaspora and in Armenia as well.

As a starting point, we will look at discussions of Armenian diaspora literature, at its mission in Armenian historiography and the construction of national identity. We will start with ideas about the overall definition of that literature to better analyze our thesis. First, this is because of the fact that attempts at identification can point to the position of Armenian literature in the diaspora, with the need to insert it into a category depending on several commonalities. These commonalities in the literary works are of course the result of the intentional, and sometimes unintentional, aims of their Armenian authors. Secondly, by that conceptualization we can better compare the two literatures and add more depth to our analysis.

As a beginning, we can see that in the diaspora, scholars evaluate the literary works of Armenian writers in a framework limited by the '*great catastrophe*' that the Armenian people experienced in 1915. Therefore we see that there is a tendency to consider the entire body of Armenian literature as "genocide literature", or "post-genocide literature." That conceptualization helps us to localize diasporan Armenian literature in order to explore the historicization of the catastrophe for the generation after 1915 and its place in the history-writing process. In other words, for historians, such a segregation about the genre of this literature helps to hold the concerns of Armenian writers about the historiography and collective identity of diasporan

Armenians.

For Armenian literature in the diaspora, there is a shared opinion that “Armenian literature is a repository of echoes of these responses to catastrophe,” as Perroomian overtly expresses.⁴² It is clear that the events of 1915 have totally changed overall attitudes towards the arts in Armenian diaspora culture. Parallel to Turkey, Armenians in the diaspora began to produce a huge body of literary works by the mid-1980s relating to the “Event (*Eghern*) of the Armenian Catastrophe (*Aghed*)” in which the legacy and its unresolved issues are still alive.⁴³ Therefore the memory of the catastrophe and its symbolic meaning of injustice present a common bond that links most diasporan literature. According to Hagop Oshagan, who was among the first to identify this sort of segregation as essential and meaningful, “genocide literature” has taken its own shape as a specific genre to be able to access the traumatic Armenian collective identity.⁴⁴

For Perroomian, by that classification we may admit “genocide literature” as encompassing a “unique body of artistic creations triggered by a traumatic, unprecedented collective experience in the history of the Armenian people.”⁴⁵ In that sense, diasporan writers are seen as the ones trying to confront the catastrophe, comprehend and deal with it, no matter what the basic themes in their novels, and they eventually get to 1915 whether they call it a catastrophe, aghed, event or genocide.⁴⁶ Marc Nichanian presents an important argument about the relation

⁴² Rubina Perroomian, “New Directions in Literary Responses to the Armenian Genocide,” in *Looking Backward, Moving Forward: Confronting the Armenian Genocide*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2003), p. 157.

⁴³ Varjabedian, p. 143.

⁴⁴ Perroomian, “Problematic Aspects of Reading Genocide Literature,” p. 175.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

⁴⁶ Rubina Perroomian, “Historical Memory: Threading the Contemporary Literature of Armenia,” in *The Armenian Genocide: Cultural and Ethical Legacies*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2007) p. 97

between catastrophe and literature in his book *Writers of Disaster*.⁴⁷ Here Nichanian is aware of the fact that the events of 1915 loom over Armenian literature and finds that because of their refugee status, Armenians are more inclined toward that kind of literature. The most radical view comes from Lorne Shirinian, diasporan Armenian literary scholar, who sees genocide itself as the symbol of Armenian literature. For Shirinian, to understand the texts of Armenian-North American literature and even every sort of cultural and artistic product, one has to take genocide as the basis.⁴⁸

According to all these diasporan intellectuals, in order to be successful at absorbing the meaning of the Armenian genocide as both a terminus and a beginning for the Armenian people and for Armenian art, and to make it work as the touchstone of the Armenian national consciousness in the diaspora, Armenian genocide literature must be read and written about. And it is not only as a burden for their victims but also to free themselves and their psychological, emotional and creative responses to the catastrophe, just as with Jewish Holocaust literature.⁴⁹ Hence the literary works are seen within the limitation of the literature of genocide as a topical genre of Armenian literature, whether the genocide is an overt narrative theme or only a hidden motif.

Similar to the Turkish-Armenian community in general, the survivors of the events of 1915 seem to have opted to remain silent in order to be able to overcome the trauma that they experienced. However, although the next generations did not experience the intensity of the trauma, the painful and devastating memories and the

⁴⁷ Marc Nichanian, *Writers of Disaster: Armenian Literature in the Twentieth Century: Volume One, The National Revolution* (Princeton, NJ, and London: Gomidas Institute, 2002).

⁴⁸ Lorne Shirinian, *Armenian-North American Literature: A Critical Introduction: Genocide, Diaspora, and Symbols* (Lewiston, Ontario: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), pp. 90-113.

⁴⁹ Lorne Shirinian, "Survivor Memoirs of the Armenian Genocide as Cultural History," in *Remembrance and Denial: The Case of the Armenian Genocide*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999), pp. 168-175.

sense of displacement wrought by the catastrophe are transmitted by fragmented memories. So the next generations are now using this trauma as the inspiration for their literary creations in order to fulfill several tasks for which they feel a responsibility.

The first and fundamental one of those tasks is to convince the other, the rest of the world, of the existence of the “*genocide*” and the trauma it involved. Accordingly, the catastrophe itself becomes an issue to be solved and conceptualized. The authors from subsequent generations have tried to come terms with its impact and find expression for the rage and anger that they feel in the face of the denial in the official Turkish historiography. To be able to voice all those feelings they need to convince non-Armenians about the catastrophe and the sense of displacement that they have. At this juncture, for Perroomian, Armenian literature may be admitted as an “expression of this necessity.”⁵⁰ The documentary character of the novels is useful as a proof of the existence of their pain, aided by historical narratives. In spite of the fact that they are artists, it would not be an exaggeration to say that they become the political and historical defenders of the genocide. This dilemma carries them to the point of the creation of genocide literature through which they try to convince the world about their people’s collective catastrophe. Unlike the case of Jewish literature of the Holocaust in which the writings are the material that fortify the memory of the genocide, Armenian writers try to prove their experience to the world by the historicization of their trauma and pain. However, in Jewish Holocaust literature, novels can gain their power less from the content inside than from the reader’s already intact knowledge of what “will be befall the Jews after the novel

⁵⁰ Perroomian, “New Directions in Literary Responses to the Armenian Genocide,” p. 158.

ends.”⁵¹ Therefore, the author absolutely needs a frame of reference to create an effective and persuasive narrative. To this end, they try to discover the trauma in the past, integrating it with the present pain of orphanhood. Their existence far away from the homeland, Anatolia, and their efforts to be able to participate in a new order abroad, has lead them to establish a documentary or fictionalized literature to prove their existence and to provide for recognition of the catastrophe.

For instance, Michael J. Arlen’s *Passage to Ararat* in 1975 (also translated in Turkish as *Ararat Yolculuğu*) is an important attempt at carrying out such a goal.⁵² The novel, which attracted considerable interest from non-Armenian readers, is a voyage to understand what it means to be an Armenian in relation to the catastrophe. The author tries to and wants to understand the historical context in which the catastrophe took place, because he knows that understanding the Armenian soul of the twentieth century will be possible only by understanding the Armenian catastrophe. He is also aware of the fact that describing the massacres of 1915 cannot explain anything about Armenian history and identity.

Similarly, David Kherdian’s semi-autobiographical novella, *Asking the River*, is a story of a quest for identity shaped around the catastrophe, which is taken as ever-present.⁵³ Although again, there are not many passages describing the catastrophe itself, it is the central component of the entire story, which is assumed to have broader meaning and impact than just a tragic fact. The protagonist wants to

⁵¹ Edward Alexander, *The Resonance of Dust: Essays on Holocaust Literature and Jewish Fate* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1979), p. 149.

⁵² Michael J. Arlen, *Ararat Yolculuğu*, trans. Bahar Öcal Düzgören (İstanbul: Pencere Yayınları, 2008).

⁵³ Barlow Der Mugrdechian, “Across the Chasm: From Catastrophe to Creativity,” in *Looking Backward, Moving Forward: Confronting the Armenian Genocide*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2003), p. 73-76. For the book that he analyzes, see David Kherdian, *Asking the River* (New York: Orchard Books, 1983).

understand the entire trauma and also know the Turkish “other,” whom he has never confronted.

Finally, another documentary-oriented novel is *Three Apples Fell from Heaven* by Micheline Ahanorian, which is focused directly on the event itself, trying to integrate all the fragmented memories of her grandmother and mother.⁵⁴ Here, again, the author’s main problematic is to find her past and her original Armenian identity, which cannot be held apart from the catastrophe. In so doing, her main target is to understand the meaning of the catastrophe, which opens the way to the present. Otherwise, she thinks she will not be able to have an original identity of her own, and will feel the displacement and non-belongingness for the rest of her life.

As a result, obsession with gaining recognition of the trauma that the Armenian people experienced is a theme that continually surfaces in the Armenian literature of the diaspora. This recognition will be their salvation from the ignorance and lack of awareness and will open the door to healing and to constructions of the future.

The second task that diasporan Armenian authors bear is the concern for the actual nation-building process. In other words, we cannot hold these literary responses to the catastrophe as separate from their functional character, whether they are documentary or fictionalized. The works concerned with the catastrophe of 1915 keep the Armenian national spirit alive and establish a shared collective memory for a united nationhood.

At this juncture we have to also look at Armenia’s literature to see all the parallel and common attitudes toward the nation-building process in order to better understanding its function toward that aim.

⁵⁴ Varjabedian, p 165. For the book he analyzes, see Micheline Aharonian Macrom, *Three Apples Fell from Heaven* (New York: Riverside Books, 2001) pp. 53–54.

Before the independence of Armenia in 1991, the Soviet regime in Armenia was sought to create a new Soviet citizenship with nationalist aspirations toward the overarching sense of belonging within the Soviet Union as a homeland. Accordingly, the historical memory was ruptured by censorship. In pursuit of a Soviet identity, there were policies that favored forgetting the past, severing ties with the past and adapting to the future of the communist Soviet regime. The literature of that period, therefore, was expected to be national in form, socialist in content in accordance with the general Soviet model. Hence, writing about the Armenian catastrophe with Armenian nationalist intentions was labeled as masochism⁵⁵ and inappropriate to the soul of the Soviet communist regime. Although there were some periods allowing for patriotic sentiment, like World War II, they were generally limited to a patriotism for Armenia rather than any nostalgic, distant Armenian past. In particular, covert reference to the Armenian catastrophe or a longing for Anatolia were not tolerated although there are a few numbered literary works that we must not disregard.⁵⁶ However, despite the official restrictions and censorship, memories were transmitted from one generation to the next and in particular periods, like during the Karabagh movement in 1988, as demonstrated by historical writings.

With the independence of Armenia in 1991, although the literary milieu was changed into a freer environment, the role of the catastrophe was still in question. There was a general understanding, inherited from the Soviet regime, that the pain of the catastrophe was basically the concern of the diaspora. Citizens of Armenia tended to emphasize a coming to terms with the Soviet era, rather than returning to the glorious past of the Armenians.

⁵⁵ Peroomian, "Historical Memory: Threading the Contemporary Literature of Armenia," p. 114.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 103–104.

However, on this point I do not mean to suggest that there is a total lack of nationalist reaction or memory of the great catastrophe in post-Soviet-Armenian literature after 1991. I would argue instead that there are nationalist sentiments following the Soviet era and that the memory of the catastrophe is functionally utilized as part of the nation-building process and the discovery of the past. A healing of the rupture of historical memory under Soviet rule is sought through understanding the unique experience that Armenians endured. The writers of contemporary Armenia, for Perroomian, now try to find their own nationalist literature and canon but also take into account the Stalinist period as their other theme. We have to also consider the role of the catastrophe in the literary responses of Armenia's writers within the framework of Turkish-Armenian and Armenian-Azerbaijani relationships in order to better comprehend the meaning of the catastrophe for a united nation in the international arena. The catastrophe is also the symbol of the demand for justice, and the path to catharsis for an independent nation-state.

Consequently, although we see some parallelism between diasporan and Armenian literary responses to the catastrophe, there is still a considerable difference in their attitudes. For Armenia the catastrophe and its effects are now like tools for the rediscovery of the past and the construction of the nation for a nation state, whereas for the diaspora they are functional in the sense of preventing assimilation into cultures far from the motherland. The issue of recognition of the catastrophe also does not find much place in Armenia. Nevertheless, as in the case of Turkey, the catastrophe is the "silver thread," as Perroomian says, that connects the historical memory and the collective identity of all Armenians in the world.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Perroomian, "Historical Memory: Threading the Contemporary Literature of Armenia," p. 117.

If we turn to Turkey, we see a different kind of literature from the genocide literature that we have discussed above. I think that calling Turkish- Armenian literature genocide literature is a wild and inappropriate generalization if we also take into account their minority position in their homelands. That is to say that their actual presence in Turkey and the practices of living together with Turks lead to a more distinct literature, but a one which still contains the catastrophe as the keystone of collective memory.

Before depicting Turkish-Armenian literature supported by a minority discourse, I first want to divide contemporary Armenian literature into two basic categories. First, we see that there are a great many memoirs from the first and second generations discussing the effects of the catastrophe. Those memoirs are the first confrontations with the impact of the catastrophe for the Armenian collective memory.

Although there is the commonality with the diaspora with regard to survivors' memoirs, we can also see the differentiation. Whereas in diasporan literature the survivor's memoirs are generally focused on the events and the process of deportation, Turkish Armenian literature is focused on the aftermath of the deportation and puts out a very powerful nostalgia for the old Armenian presence in Anatolia. In the diaspora, despite the awareness of the impossibility of wholly representing the catastrophe in writing, there was also an urgent need to tell it for the sake of a collective Armenian identity displaced from its homeland. The distance from the homeland leads them to write harshly about the catastrophe that caused that displacement. Hence, the scattered memories of the survivors are employed by the first generation to be able to narrate an experience that they have never lived. On the other hand, in Turkey, the fact of their continued existence in the homeland

contributed to the development of a different kind of literature that I do not want to label with a simple categorization like “genocide literature”.

Diasporan genocide literature, not unlike Jewish Holocaust literature, is merely an attempt to be able to narrate the tragedy with all the harrowing and brutal details, with an aim of understanding its real meaning for Armenians and showing the injustice they faced. Accordingly, in the novels of the diasporan Armenian genocide literature, there is an abundance of brutal eyewitness material. However, in the Turkish-Armenian case, the issue is far more complex. Even in the memoirs, we see that there is avoidance of those kinds of brutal scenes. The first generation absolutely describes several things, but, as Perroomian quotes from Rosenfeld, the literature saves itself from being reduced to “screams and whimpers.”⁵⁸ There is the tendency to mention catastrophe in a historical context rather than to present it as a list of massacres. The authors of memoirs try to find their history beginning with the deportation and understand its impact for their own history and for national history. For instance, Mıgırdıç Margosyan describes the catastrophe in terms of its impact on Diyarbakır and also shares his own history afterward. On the other hand, Agop Arslanyan describes his Tokat utilizing the deportation period as the cause of the loss.

Regarding these literary works, we can mention the fact that apart from the massacres, the main motivation for those writers was to record the existence of Armenians in Anatolia to defeat the sense of loss. In other words, the main focus is on the life of Armenians in Anatolia rather than the tragic details of the deportation. They know then the impossibility of creating a real representation of the pains that

⁵⁸ Perroomian, “Problematic Aspects of Reading Genocide Literature,” p. 179. Quoted from Alvin Rosenfeld, *A Double Dying: Reflections on Holocaust Literature*, 2d ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 24.

their ancestors suffered. The reality that they can transmit to subsequent generations is, ultimately, their existence in Anatolia.

The authors of the other group prefer to write fictional stories and novels, which makes sense given their lack of any lived experience. The catastrophe is again the hidden or covert theme in their literature. Their literature is again not seeking to document the pains but rather trying to defeat the sense of loss and to offer proof of Armenian existence.

At this point we have to pause and indicate that there are of course some reasons for not mentioning the traumatic details of the massacres and only mentioning the name of the pain. First, official Turkish policy does not allow for such expressions and the denial of the “genocide” is an obstacle for such an overt expression. Hence the effort to prove that “genocide” happened allows it to prove the existence of Armenians in Anatolian and Turkish history. The other reason behind such a silent reaction toward the catastrophe itself is the fact that Armenians live together with their persecutors, namely Turks. The practice of living together with the oppressor is also an important factor that prevents them from characterizing the Turk entirely as the cruel “other.” As I will show in the third chapter, Armenian writers in Turkey feel the need to portray a dual Turkish identity, instead of any one-dimensional oppressor. Whereas they portray the harassment that they endure as Armenians, they also try to depict other Turks who are on their side. Thus the Turk is both the oppressor and a partner in coexistence. The lack of such a togetherness and sharing of a common life, for diaspora writers, and never having a confrontation with the persecutor, is also the cause for more detailed stories of the massacres among those writers. The presence of Armenians as minorities in a larger Turkish population

in their own homeland is the reason that I prefer to categorize the literature of Turkish-Armenian writers as *minority literature*.

Despite the fact that I do not disregard the catastrophe as the most important touchstone of Armenian identity and its historiography, we have to also admit that there is much more different direction to draw the picture of the genocide. As Fredric Jameson claims that Third World literature is only the sum of the national allegories, I think that Armenian novels are bound by identity concerns.⁵⁹ In other words, we would not be amiss to say that this literature is like the '*Third World literature*' in a Third World literature.

Turkish Armenian literature may be perceived as the extension of the nationalist literature of the nineteenth century that was ruptured by the 1915 events. We can say that with the multicultural movements and identity politics that I have mentioned before the re-interpretation of Armenian experiences also shows itself in literature. These re-interpretation efforts, unlike those in literature from Armenia and the diaspora, take place in the homeland living alongside the Turkish majority. Therefore, their novels are not only the representation of the catastrophe in a lost history. Actually it is alive, not dead, and their history containing the 1915 catastrophe is at most a part of their particular identity. In that manner their texts should be understood in the light of minority-majority or subordinate-ruling dichotomies. Therefore, I claim that it is better to evaluate their literature as that of a minority group in the pursuit of establishing its own collectivity and overcoming the hegemonic majority to be able to survive. In that context, the 1915 events may be

⁵⁹ Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text*, No. 15 (Autumn, 1986), pp. 65-88.

counted as the cornerstone in their history writing process together with the other anti-minority implementations imposed by the hegemonic Turkish state.⁶⁰

For that reason, it is better probably to talk about Armenians as a minority group that has as Mohamed and Lloyd write, “certain shared experiences by virtue of their similar antagonistic relationship to the dominant culture which seeks to marginalize, eradicate or devastate them all.”⁶¹ In such a situation, a minority discourse gains importance, based on the assumption that despite all the diversity and specificity of their cultures, minority groups nonetheless share the common experience of domination and exclusion by the majority. Hence, as in the case of the Armenian community in Turkey, the minority discourse is the product of damage more or less systematically imposed on cultures of minorities by the dominant culture.⁶²

I think we do not fall into exaggeration if we see the literary works of the Armenian community as a part of that struggle toward the majority and dominant culture, rather than a deliberate attempt to establish a genocide literature. In the texts we can easily follow the efforts of the subordinate group experiencing different realities and interpreting these realities differently from the dominant group. Here the representation is the principal realm of struggle as a living part of the community.

⁶⁰ A law in 1932 stipulated the employment of Turks in some particular occupations with the intention creating an urban and Turkish working class and restrict the viability of minority groups, the “Citizen, Speak Turkish” campaign was introduced in 1933, provocative actions in Thrace forced 15,000 Jews to leave their homes and move to İstanbul in 1934 and a resolution distorting the management structure of minority foundations passed with the intention of weakening the power of these communities in 1936. Moreover, “20 Reservist Recruits,” the forced military service where non-muslims were forced to work in building activities, passed in 1939; the ‘Wealth Tax’ was imposed on non-Muslims with the purpose of decreasing their influence of economic life and opening way for a Turkish bourgeois in 1942; ‘Minorities Report’ was declared in 1944 aiming to clear İstanbul of Greeks before the 500th Anniversary of İstanbul’s Conquest and decrease the number of Jews and Armenians, the incidents of September 6/7 occurred in İstanbul where properties belonging to non-Muslims (mainly Greeks) were destroyed in 1955; and about 40,000 ‘Rums’ with Greek passports were deported in 1964.

⁶¹ Abdul R. Jan Mohamed and David Lloyd, ed. *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) p. 1.

⁶² Ibid., p. 4.

Nearly all the novels and stories represent their minority position and the unequal struggle towards the hegemonic power. We absolutely can see all the economic, social, cultural and political anti-minority implementations in those efforts. For instance, the incidents of September 6/7, *20 Kur'a Askerlik* (20 Reservist Recruits) or the Wealth Tax take their places whether in memories or the fictional narratives. Even in the fictional narratives, the minority discourse is always on the scene, whether as a main or hidden motif.

On the other hand, besides the literary reactions to the Turkish hegemonic initiatives, there is also another visible function of that minority discourse in the literature. As Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari argue, in minority literature there is the tendency to articulate the collective consciousness.⁶³ For them, this literature, political by its nature, functions as a means to sustain the active collectivity and consciousness. The act of writing has to be held as an archival work as Mohamed and Lloyd say, to form a counter-memory separate from the official history and the collective memory of the dominant group of people they confront in their daily lives.⁶⁴ Armenian writers are totally aware of the fact that the hegemonic culture subjects them to a deliberate control by trapping them in their ghettos without history and identity at the end of initiatives and actions geared toward forgetting and ignoring their memory and history while damaging their culture. To be able to overcome this means of control, cultural and artistic practices providing a construction of collective memory and history offer recognition by the majority as a living entity, not a part of a dead nostalgic memory of a so-called “cultural mosaic.” To be precise, these activities need to be understood as a strategy for national survival among the dominant group, which is seen as the cruel enemy in the

⁶³ Claire Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze* (London; New York : Routledge, 2002), pp. 103-122.

⁶⁴ Mohamed and Lloyd, p. 6.

historiography and genocide literature of the diaspora. Here the cruel enemy is the group that the Armenian minority must live with and the image of the cruel enemy is differentiated in that sense, as I have explained. They are turning now to a somewhat dominant and hegemonic group from which they protect and preserve their identity and relieve it from a timeless and spaceless static image. Armenian authors believe that their national survival can be sustained only if their physical existence and history is recognized by the majority.

Therefore, even though we cannot speak of any homogenization in Armenian literature regarding all the different methods and concerns that we will see in the following chapters, the expressed commonalities of exclusion and domination by the majority stimulate a kinds of literary solidarity with which we may categorize Armenian literature as minority literature. As I said before, we absolutely should keep in mind the fact that minority discourse is itself a “product of damage, damage more or less systematically inflicted on cultures of minorities by the dominant culture,” so as the most enormous damage in Armenian history, the catastrophe maintains its place as the main theme in that literature.

At this juncture, literature gains importance as the realm in which to construct collective memories with a sense of solidarity against the hegemonic culture. In other words, the exclusion and the subjugation of the Armenian people also give a strategy for resistance and survival, helping the creation of a more powerful collective identity interrogating the hegemonic structure.

Two Minorities, Two Literatures: Armenian Literature in Comparison with Kurdish Literature

For our study, it is also meaningful to compare the literary works of two important minority groups in Turkey. Although both are labeled “exile literature” broadly speaking,⁶⁵ they actually show different literary concerns that prevent us from generalizing them in one category of minority literature.

Here I want to look at Kurdish literature as a minority literature and compare it with Armenian literature within the minority reflexes. Our comparison is basically on the different approaches to the literature and language. Whereas in Kurdish literature the main emphasis and self-realization is on the Kurdish language, we see a different stance in Armenian literature. I want to analyze this difference and the similarities in the context of domination and resistance against the cultural and political hegemony of the Turkish nation-state. The nation-state insistence on a shared national language poses a threat to the existence of the other minority groups within these territories. In the Kurdish case the language is urgently considered to be the most important part of the identity, which we can see if we consider the demands for cultural rights centered on language issues. According to those demands and emphasis, the main concern of Kurdish literature particularly is based on the Kurdish language, which can be contrasted with the concerns of Armenian literature.

For the Kurdish community, to have Kurdish literature written in the language of the majority group seems like an obstacle and raises political and theoretical questions about self-realization and self-representation. Considering the Kurdish language to be the most important and essential product of the Kurdish political, social and cultural collectivity, the literary works also are supposed to be in Kurdish to put the real identity against the hegemonic Turkish nation-state. Hence, whereas Kurdish literature also is seen as an exile literature, its concern basically is

⁶⁵ Mehmed Uzun, *Küllerinden Doğan Dil ve Roman* (İstanbul: İthaki Yayınları, 2005), p. 29.

centered on the language issue. The Kurdish language is seen as both the tool and the symbol of the resistance toward the imposition of Turkish as the national language. Moreover, the use of the Kurdish language to create literature is also an issue of late modernization.⁶⁶ Hence, as we think of the Armenian cultural modernization period based on the modernization of the Armenian language by the eighteenth century, we may better understand the insistence on Kurdish language for the novel, which is a symbol of modernity.

That is why the theoretical discussions about Kurdish literature are centered on a literature written in Kurdish, whereas in Armenian literature it does not pose a problematic issue. Even Aras Publishing is open to supporting Armenian literature written in Turkish. As a result, in my opinion, although both literatures are focused on their ethnic identities and on the exclusion and displacement of these identities by the dominant majority, the distinction shows itself within the context of linguistic hegemony perceived by the sides.

With the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, İstanbul's central position for Kurdish language and literature ceased to have the same dynamism, and because of the Kurdish revolts, the Kurdish language fell under a ban. Those pressures and prohibitions on the Kurdish language make it a particularly essential and vital part of Kurdish identity. The minority rights that were provided for in the Treaty of Lausanne included non-Muslim populations, but excluded Kurdish minorities. Thus the institutional education of Kurdish language minorities was prevented, while non-Muslims were able to continue enjoying educational and publishing rights in their own languages. The Kurdish language is locked in oral tradition, even though it is confronted with several inhibitions also, in the century of

⁶⁶ Uzun, *Küllerinden Doğan Dil ve Roman*, p. 23.

national self-determination. If we take into account Benedict Anderson's arguments relating written literary works with nationalization, we may understand the importance of the Kurdish language and its vital role in the recent Kurdish nationalization process.

Despite several attempts at publishing Kurdish works, the censorship by the Turkish state has made the widespread dissemination of written works among the Kurdish community difficult and Kurdish writers have started to produce abroad. The best-known modern Kurdish writers, Mehmed Uzun, Firat Cewerî, Hesenê Metê, Rojen Barnas, Mustafa Aydoğan, Süleyman Demir, Mehmed Dehsiwar, Fawaz Hûsen and Emin Narozi have published their literary works abroad. Only after 1980 were the Turkish Kurds able to find the opportunity to write novels, influenced particularly by socialist thoughts.⁶⁷

Apart from socialist ideas, Kurdish writers also realize the necessity to repair the collective memory that has been destroyed over centuries. Therefore, Kurdish novels have become both the realm of the resistance and struggle of a minority group and the means to construct the collective memory. In other words, establishing a national literature, namely a canon, is one of the most important tools for repairing the collective memory and rewriting the history, together with its power of resistance and struggle for a unified national culture.

Here we see both the difference and the similarity between Armenian and Kurdish literary works. While Armenian literature is similar to Kurdish literature in that it contains efforts for the construction of the collective identity, it is also the realm of the demand for the recognition and catharsis for Armenian community. On the other hand, Kurdish literature is a more powerful and effective realm for the

⁶⁷ Ömer Türkeş, "Bir Dil, Bir Edebiyat, Bir Kimlik Yaratmak," *Birlikim Aylık Sosyalist Kültür Dergisi*, no. 134–135 (June/July 2000), pp. 161–169.

struggle for freedom and self-determination. For that clear aim to produce the national canon, the Kurdish language is admitted as the natural necessity depending on the idea that national literature can be written only in the national language.⁶⁸ For T rke  this is the only way to grasp the legitimacy of the language and then the identity. Mehmed Uzun, the famous Kurdish writer, has been the primary actor in writing novels in Kurdish and rewriting the history of the Kurdish people. Similar to Armenian writers Markar Esayan and Kevork Kirkoryan,⁶⁹ he also writes about national characters in the past and brings them to the present in his novels. Using the same technique as the Armenian writers, he recreates the forgotten and neglected Kurdish history and allows it to be known by the Kurdish community.

Are not Memduh Selim in *Siya Evine* or Celadet Ali Bedir-han in *Bira Quadere* in a way Kurdish intellectuals of today? We should not forget that the information creating these novels are products of people’s state of mind at the present. The information and efforts trying to recreate the past are obtained in today’s conditions.⁷⁰

The construction of a national literature provides access to to Kurdish reader. This access to the Kurdish reader is the main concern for Kurdish writers, to be able to provide for the collective identity and consciousness. However, the Armenian literature after the 1990s illustrates a different direction. The break in 1915 and the loss of the Armenian intelligensia have prevented the development of a national literature and canon. After the republican period the Armenian writers continued to write in Armenian for their own readers. Nevertheless, by the 1990s, with the establishment of Aras Publishing, there emerged the need and trend to write in Turkish, as I have already mentioned. The works that are written in Armenian are

⁶⁸ Mehmed Uzun, *Bir Dil Yaratmak* ( stanbul:  thaki Yayınları, 2008), pp. 154-157.

⁶⁹ In Chapter 4, I will analyze this history writing process.

⁷⁰ Uzun, *Bir Dil Yaratmak*, p. 169. “*Siya Evine’deki Memduh Selim ya da Bira Quadere’deki Celadet Ali Bedir-han, biraz da g n m zdeki K rt aydınları deęil mi? Unutmayalım, bu romanları yaratan bilgi, duygu ve ruh hali g n m z nd r. D n  edebi olarak yeniden yaratmaya  alı an bilgi ve uęra , g n m z n ortamında elde edilmi tir (...)*”

translated into Turkish also. Even the first generation writers Agop Arslanyan, Mıgırdiç Margosyan and Kirkor Ceyhan wrote their stories and novels in Turkish alongside their Armenian works in the journals. For the second and third generation, on the other hand, we have to mention that it was also their inadequacy in Armenian language that led to their production of literature in Turkish.

At this point, we have to ask ourselves why the language of the majority is preferred for Armenian literature and not for Kurdish literature. It can be said that Armenian literature, as the representative of the Armenian community, is accessed and read by the larger community. This means Armenian writers want to express their distinctiveness and their collective identity using the shared language. As I will explain in the following chapter, besides the role of literature for the construction of the Armenian collective community and consciousness, the Armenians' main concern seems to be to prove their existence, whether cultural or physical, and their history, in Turkey. That aim leads them to write with the language of the hegemonic power in order to access the larger society. Writing in Turkish also is the means for the catharsis and reparation of their identity. That is to say that rather than being a closed community that is ignored and unknown by the larger society, they now want to be a part of that society by being recognized and known. They wanted now to prove their sense of displacement and their painful history in order to be able to look toward their future instead of being obsessed with the past. In other words, the role of the authors thus is to be able to confront Turkish official historiography and to come terms with the past and be able to be visible again in the larger society. That visibility, Eriksen writes, at the end of ethnic revitalization, signifies "the end of a long history of discrimination and neglect, and an investment of pride and dignity

into a formerly stigmatized cultural identity.”⁷¹ Hence, although there are some concerns about the future of the Armenian language and the assimilation fears as a minority group in the larger society, the Turkish language is not seen as hegemonic or requiring resistance. The reason behind that attitude is certainly the freedom that Armenians have had to learn, educate and publish in their own native language, under the protection of the Treaty of Lauzanne.

On the other hand, the relationship among Kurds, Kurdish language, the Turkish nation-state, and literature is quite complex, and too deep to be analyzed in this study. However, as Eriksen writes, we may certainly regard Kurdish ethnicity as a “purely political kind of process whereby individuals seek to maximize power.”⁷² To that point, literature, by its symbolic and also functional meaning, is an important element in the demand for power. Kurdish authors both resist the hegemonic language by employing their minority language and demonstrate their demand for power within the Turkish nation-state. In so doing, their literature becomes both the symbol of self-determination resistant to linguistic hegemony and the call for political power of a national group.

⁷¹ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, “Linguistic Hegemony and Minority Resistance,” *Journal of Peace Research*, 29, no. 3 (August, 1992), p. 317.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 317.

CHAPTER 3
ANATOLIAN NARRATIVE NOVELS
DOCUMENTING THE ARMENIAN PRESENCE IN ANATOLIA

The displacement that the Armenians faced as a result of the deportations in 1915 meant that they had to leave behind their homeland, Anatolia. This physical uprooting from the homeland damaged the integrity of Armenian identity, culture, and collective memory; Anatolia, as a shared space for thousands of years, had produced a sense of collectivity and togetherness, which were fundamental forces in the construction of identity. Henceforth, there emerged a rupture in the continuity of Armenian historical consciousness and a gap between the past and present.

The displacement brings the feeling of exclusion from the homeland and so from its memory, history and culture leaving their identity out of space and time. Therefore some of the Armenian writers have felt the necessity to constantly rearticulate their belonging to this land through an emphasis on their history, because despite all the evidence of their existence in Anatolia, it is not enough to make them visible and existent in this place. Thus, there is the need to prove and recall the existence in the past to give meaning to the present today. In that sense, the memoirs, by their narrative nature, relate that past as well as creating an Armenian collective

memory and forming a layer of envisioned Armenian social life.⁷³ For Lorne Shirinian, the hope is that as time passes and the events of the genocide become a distant and vague rumor, the memoirs will be a substitute for memory and that as a document they will be able to give a credible representation of the unimaginable.⁷⁴ That is to say that the writers, by their memoirs, try to prevent the disappearance of the collective memory, in favor of a social cohesion, because through other Armenians' memories the rest can complete their own experiences and attach to the community they belong.

In this chapter, I will examine three popular writers of contemporary Armenian literature in Turkey and in the diaspora as well. Mıgırdıç Margosyan, Agop Arslanyan and Kirkor Ceyhan, whose work can be identified as “memoirs,” help us to better capture the vital relationship between the Armenian identity and Anatolia. In the second part of the chapter I will examine the documentary character of their writings aiming at a total historicization process based on the “true” and “concrete” facts. The cities in Anatolia that these writers describe are like social, economic and cultural monographies after 1915. For Margosyan, this city is Diyarbakır, for Arslanyan it is Tokat, and for Ceyhan it is Zara.

Anatolia as the Space for Constructing Armenian Identity

Is the reason we had to take the road the desiccate of our famous 'hamravat water' coming from the shoulders of this smoking old volcano named Aydzyami in Armenian, Çiyaye Reş in Kurdish and Karacadağ in Turkish and carried with weighers, trenches, clay tiles and gutters to the seven thousand year old city Diyerbekir, the name of which is subjected to many stories and fairy-tails, to its streets, khans, hamams, houses and to our bowls we call 'hemirbat'. Or are we forced

⁷³ Shirinian, “Survivor Memoirs of the Armenian Genocide as Cultural History,” pp.168-169.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.169.

to go to İstanbul because the chimneys of our houses the walls of which are built by masterful stonecutters with iron miters and later covered with basalt stones sculpted with splayed hammers and the roofs of which made up of dust do not give out smoke any more or is it because there are no beans, lentil, cracked wheat, molasses, salt, oil, flours or even a single piece of bread to eat in our cellars opening to courtyards? Diyarbakır... İstanbul...⁷⁵

Regarding the aim of representing the Armenian identity and drawing ethnic boundaries in literature, we can observe two important factors. One of them is the cultural elements, including the cultural beliefs and practices that refer to a certain group of people and create a construction of insider and outsiders. The other is the geographical elements within which the practices and experiences help to establish the differentiation of the identities in the relationship between the other inhabitants.⁷⁶ As Jimmy Sanders says, this element “used to define an ethnic group to geographical origins, and therefore social origins, that are foreign to the host society.” The geographical elements have an objective basis, but they are also partly subjective. Those geographical elements also give the writers the possibility of demonstrating the proof of the physical and cultural presence there and provide a sense of belonging that is ruptured by the 1915 events.

Here the sense of belonging is the key factor that led these writers to write narratives on Anatolia, because the Armenians, losing the integration between their

⁷⁵ Mıgırdiç Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri* (İstanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2007), pp. 10-11. “*Adı şiirlere türkülere, öykülere konu olmuş, masallarla yoğrulmuşken, Ermenice aydzyami ler, Kürtçe çiyaye reş, türkçe karacadağ denen başı dumanlı bu eski volkanik dağın sırtlarından yamaçlarından kopup gelen ve kantarlarla künklerle oluklarla arklarla yedibin yıllık kent amida'yai diyerbekir'e, Diyarbakır sokaklarına küçelerine hanlarına hamamlarına evlerine sokak aralarındaki musluksuz kastallarına dağılan ve tas tas içtiğimiz bizin hemırbat dediğimiz adıyla sanıyla meşhur hamravat suyumuz kurduğu için mi yola revan olmuştu? Yoksa duvarları usta taşçılar tarafından demir gönyelerle, pergellerle ölçülüp ardında da keskilerle murçlarla taraklı çekikçilerle tıkırt tıkırt tıkırt yontulan siyah basalt taşlarla örülen toprak damlı kireç badanalı evlerimizin bacaları artık tütmediği için ya da taş avlulara açılan loş serin kilerlerimizdeki bulgur, dövme, mercmek, nohut, fasulye, yağ, tuz, pekmez veya un küplerimiz boşaldığı ve yiyecek bir lokma kuru ekmeğimiz bile kalmadığı için mi biletimiz İstanbul'a kesilmişti? Diyarbakır... İstanbul...*”

⁷⁶ Jimmy M. Sanders, “Ethnic Boundaries and Identity in Plural Societies,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 28 (2002), pp. 327-328.

history and geography, time and space coordination, feel non-existent in Republican Turkey. In other words, the loss of memory about the land brings the non-existence in Anatolia. With the deportations, the Armenian identity is thought to exist now only in certain cities like İstanbul and is locked in some images such as that of the urban, rich and educated. Nevertheless, the lost identity of the Armenian people is very much located in Anatolia, which is denied and then forgotten by the collective memory of both the Turkish and new Armenian generations. Thus, as a response to the immense tragedy lived in 1915, memoirs give us the clue to the search for “home” and then for “self-discovery,” because these events not only killed the people, but also erased them from this geography’s history. Margosyan, Ceyhan and Arslanyan’s writings aim to re-locate the Armenian existence in Anatolia and integrate collective memories within time and space to construct a more “valid” Armenian identity.

Novels are the narratives that keep the memory of the presence of the Armenian people in Anatolia and the rupture of that presence, due to the attempts at Turkification mentioned in the second chapter.

The memory created by those novels is very much linked to “space.” It brings to life the story of a group of people embedded in a specific historical time and space. All the traditions, practices, beliefs and customs are shaped in specific historical and cultural contexts. To be able to understand present day “Armenianness” in Turkey, it is necessary to focus on these historical and cultural contexts in the given space called Anatolia. With those novels, a sense of belonging is created and transmitted, by giving a very detailed picture of their day-to-day experiences of this land.

Margosyan, Ceyhan and Arslayan's novels tell not only true stories, but also supply clues about Armenian lifestyles, gendered organizations, foods, songs, games of the children, official education, relationship with the state and so forth, in Anatolian lands. By giving all those details, the writers actually create a documentation, supplying an archive of their culture, practices, traditions, religious beliefs and social context. The Armenian presence in Anatolia is then documented by stories and transmitted to younger generations detached from their original identities and also to the broader Turkish society, who also ignores the community's existence and acknowledges them as "frozen others" in a timeless and spaceless identity. However, we should not forget the fact that every attempt of remembrance devoted to the past, even if it is documentary in nature, actually includes a sense of fiction. The important thing, from this point, is what to remember and what to erase.

In this connection, physical displacement has a symbolic meaning. The displacement makes now all these memories meaningless and displaced. All that remains from the dynamic social context of the Armenian people, who had their own churches, houses, and foundations, are touristic remnants, as we cannot find any proof of the Armenian people except in the tales of the buried gold treasures of the Armenians who left during the deportation, and the sentence "Once upon a time, there were Armenians here." So the homeland and the presence of the Armenian people is detached from the present and stories turn into fairytales that people try to remember. So the stories are derived from a problematic of loss and belonging to a specific land. The present living experience is displayed through the visibility of the Armenian people in the towns, when representing the history of Anatolia.

"Brother, I am the son of this land. I have a four-thousand year history here. Why do you follow me? Where I come from and where I am

going is obvious. Thank God, I have nothing to worry about; there is nothing I am scared of.”⁷⁷

The land from which they are detached is the place where they spoke their own language, they produced, they transmitted their culture to subsequent generations, they worshipped in their churches, they got married within the rules of intergroup marriages and so on. In the works of those writers, without any exception, all these practices are repeatedly mentioned and strictly attached to the space where they lived. These repetitions provide us the descriptions of several cities, towns and villages in Anatolia envisioned with a multicultural environment rather than the homogenous Turkish one that is prevalent today. For instance in *Gavur Mahallesi* (Hançepik Neighborhood), which Margosyan described in his books *Tespîh Taneleri* and also *Gavur Mahallesi*, he draws a picture of Armenian, Kurdish, Turkish and Jewish communities that lived together according to their own cultures. However, despite that nostalgic and mosaic picture, I have to also add and not disregard the fact that it is the Armenian presence that gives the meaning to this land rather than the multicultural environment and any other community. It is strongly emphasized that this was after their departure from Anatolia that those lands lost all their meaning and turned into something ordinary, empty and meaningless.

Gesi vineyard is the most famous vineyard in Kayseri. The vineyards in Tokat were founded by Çoğur Ohannes, who migrated from a village in Kayseri, Gaymısr to Tokat by bringing grapes with him to Tokat.

“Gesi vineyard was the grape-depo of Kayseri. We had such good grapes, you would think that the peel of the fruit was melting in your mouth. Then we lost those vineyards, they flew away from us. We were deported to Tokat, but I managed to take six roots of ‘Avşar dudağı’ grapes with me and built a new vineyard in Tokat,” said Ohannes Aga. I was a little thoughtless and asked: “What happened to your vineyards in Kayseri, Ohannes Aga?”

“We have heard that they have been all torn up. The people who

⁷⁷ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri*, p. 271. “Kardaşım! Ben bu memletin evladiyam, hem de bu toprağhta dört bin seneliğ gemişim var! Benim neyimi takip edisen? Gettiğim yol belli, geldiğim yol bellidir. Allahıma şükür annım açığıdır, korğhacak bi şeyim de yoğhtır.”

replaced us have torn up all the products and burned them in bakery ovens. It is said that the bread made in those oven were not only delicious, but also smelled like grapes.”⁷⁸

In the sentences above, the meaning given to Anatolia is productivity, wealth and abundance of the soil. Although the Armenian image in Turkey is “urban,” these writers focus on their rural roots in Anatolia, now forgotten and neglected.

Obviously, they establish an attachment to the space that they call “home,” in the sense of productivity. The richness of the crops and the abundance of the soil are presented as the achievement of the Armenian identity. This particular relationship between the soil and the Armenian identity brings the concept of ownership of and belonging to the Anatolian geography.

The second point of the productivity of the Armenian people in these towns and villages is artisanship, which is the assumed profession for Armenian people. In fact, the Armenian men, from their childhood, are trained in crafts such as jewelry, ironworking, leatherworking or woodworking. So this production-based relationship established between the Armenian identity and Anatolia strengthens the belonging to the land. Arslanyan emphasizes the productivity of the Armenian people as artisans and explain how they enriched their lands and how without their community the meaning of life has been lost. He describes a classic and typical market scene in Tokat, qualifying their distinct identity, giving Tokat its meaning and fame.

I used to work with a very talented artisan, Yervant Evren, in summers. Our shop was beneath Mr. Celal’s. On the other side of our shop was

⁷⁸ Agop Arslanyan, *Adım Agop Memleketim Tokat*, (İstanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2005), p. 10. “Malum, Gesi bağları Kayseri’nin en ünlü üzüm bağlarıdır. Tokat’ta Gesi bağlarını, Kayseri’nin Garmışr köyünden göçmüş olan Coğur Ohannes ağa memleketinden getirdiği üzüm devekleriyle kurmuştu. “Gesi bağları, Kayseri’nin üzüm deposuydu. Öyle üzümlerimiz vardı ki, ağzına aldığı anda kabuğunun eridiğini zannederdin. Sonra o bağları kaybettik, elimizden uçup gitti, Tokat’a sürgün olduk ama ben ‘Aşar dudağı’ üzümünün altı tane kökünü bin bir zorlukla alıp buraya getirdim, yeniden bağımı yaptım” diye anlatırdı Ohannes ağa. Haddini bilmezsin biri olduğum için hemen sorardım: “Kayseri’deki bağlarınıza ne oldu Ohannes babuş.” “Duyduk ki bağlarımız hep sökülmiş. Yerimize gelenler yılların emeği olan üzüm devenlerini kesmişler, ekmek fırınlarında yakmışlar. Derler ki, o fırında yapılan ekmek hem üzüm kokuyormuş, hem de tadına doyum olmuyormuş.”

Kibir Dikan and right beneath that was the shop of the famous Suren Usta, who used to deal with antique Tokat works. Nearby the Suren Usta of Gagoş, there was Aram *usta* who was known as master of niello and was famous for old Armenian works. Beneath that was Boğos Usta, who was cleaning the shoes masterfully. Goba Sarkis, on the other hand, was the one who knew the secrets of low-cut shoes. All of the shoes of important public officials were cleaned by either İncelerin Aram or Goba Sarkis.⁷⁹

However, with the departure of the Armenians, Tokat is no longer the old Tokat. It is argued that it was the Armenians who made Tokat, and other parts of Anatolia, dynamic, productive and rich in agriculture and artisanship.

The building in front of you is Asri Han. The makers of the hand-painted or hand-printed cloth of Tokat who were so famous all had shops in this building. ‘Yazmacılık’ is not a small business for Tokat, approximately 30-40 households were surviving with this business. It is the second biggest business in Tokat after nursing. My countryman İşnar Agbi was telling me: “The name of Tokat’s hand-printed cloths was gone to England. There were people who were selling cloth to Manchester. We had difficulties producing enough amounts of cloths to our neighbour cities.”

The fabric women used to cover their heads named ‘Çıt’ were dried in colorful strings. These fabrics that are usually flower-patterned had all different names. (...). The patterns that Didoz and uncle Kirkor was drawing, the prints of Pese Nazar and the master work of Aram of Tatos. Armenians in Tokat were the masters of this work. After they left Tokat and went to different places around the world, ‘Yazmacılık’ lost its old value. The shops I know, shops everybody knows and trust all disappeared in Tokat.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 59-60. “Ben yaz tatillerinde, yetenekli bir zanaatkar olan Yervant evren’in yanında çalışırdım; dükkanımız Celal beyinkinin yanındaydı. Öbür yanımızda Kibir Dikan usta, onun yanında da antik Tokat işleriyle meşhur Gagoş’un Suren usta. Onun hemen karşısında Balcıların Hovagim usta. Gagoş’un Suren ustanın hemen yanı başında eski Ermeni işlerinde çok görülen savatın piri Aram usta. Yanında ayakkabıları gıcır gıcır Boğos usta. İskarpınların sırrını ise ünlü kunduracı Goba Sarkis usta bilirdi Bütün devlet büyüklerinin ayakkabılarını ya İncelerin Aram ya da Goba Sarkis yapardı.”

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 60. “Karşıda gördüğüm bina Asri han. Tokat’ın ünü her tarafa yazılmış yazmacıları bu handadır. Yazmacılık küçük iş değildir Tokat için, aşağı yukarı otuz kırk evin ekmek kapısı, şehrin bakıcılıktan sonra en çok para kazandıran işi. Hemşerim İşnar ağbi anlatırdı: “Ta İngiltere’ye kadar uzanırdı Tokat yazmalarının ünü. Manchester’a yazma satanlar vardı Tokat’tan. Hele komşu şehirlere, güneydeki komşularımıza mal yetiştiremiyorduk.” Kadınların başlarına taktıkları çıt denilen örtüler rengarenk iplere asılıp kurutulurdu. Genellikle çiçek desenli bu yazmaların her birinin adı farklıydı: (...)Hele Didoz’un Kirkor amcanın çizdiği desenler, boya ustası Pese Nazar’ın baskıları, Tatos’un Aram’ın ustalığı... Tokat Ermenileri yazma işine damgalarını vurmuşlardı. Onlar kum taneleri gibi dünyanın dört bir yanına dağılınca yazmacılık da eski değerini kaybetti. İyi bildiğim, herkesin bildiği, tanıdığı, güvendiği dükkanların hiçbiri kalmadı Tokat’ta. (...)”

The artisanship also created the sharp difference between the Muslim and Armenian identity. Arslanyan's anecdote about military service illustrates the self-perception of Armenians in Anatolia and their powerful bonds with artisanship. In that anecdote, Sarkis *çavuş* (sergeant) says "Hi, *usta* (master)" when he meets with a new guy who is silent. However, this word makes him crazy and he says, "God, forgive me! Am I an *usta*? I am glad I am Muslim, why should I be an *usta*?"⁸¹ Because masters in Anatolia were mostly Armenians, he did not want to hear any reference to the Armenianness. In this instance, Sarkis Usta replies as "Why are you angry, shrimp! You couldnot become an *usta* even if you worked for a hundred years; I am taking back my greeting!"⁸² The words of another Turkish man who wanted to soothe Sarkis are important and draw a more precise picture:

Chief, sorry about these boys but they are soldiers. We are a soldier-nation. The soldiers are our dearest people. So, do not worry about them. At the end, they are all uneducated people.⁸³

Anatolia as the geographical element of the Armenian identity is extremely powerful in Margosyan's novels and stories. The local language, the daily lives, the relation with Diyarbakır and the cultural practices related to that space are so important. One of the Armenian authors, Oşin Çilingir, finds Margosyan's efforts meaningful for establishing the consciousness of the community in relation to the space. He says, "If the testimony of Margosyan did not exist, the cultural tissue woven with the differences that are attributed to Diyarbakır would be forgotten and not remembered again."⁸⁴

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 62-63. "*Tövbe estağfurullah! Ben usta mıyım. Elhamdüllillah Müslümanım, neden usta olayım ki?*"

⁸² Ibid., p. 63. "*Ne parlıyorsun götten bacak! Adam sen yüz yıl uğraşsan yine usta olamazsın, selamımı geri aldım!*"

⁸³ Ibid., p. 63. "*Behey muhtar, bunların kusuruna bakılmazı bunlar asker. Biz asker milletiz, bunlar bizim gözbebeğimiz, keyfine bak, ne de olsa cahel genç.*"

⁸⁴ Oşin Çilingir, "Kafle'den İnsan Manzaraları," *Agos Newspaper*, 01 December 2006.

In Diyarbakır, as the main space of Margosyan's novels, the cultural practices and the relationships among the inhabitants play the main roles in establishing the differentiation of the symbols of the identities, with the assumption that the space is the mirror of certain and specific lifestyles and different cultural realities.⁸⁵ For instance, in his first Turkish novel *Gavur Mahallesi*, published in 1992, Margosyan describes Diyarbakır and Hançepik District (*Gavur District*) of the 1945-50s. By all the comprehensive descriptions based on the places, buildings, ceremonies and inhabitants, he makes a monograph of the living space.⁸⁶ The presence of the Armenian people constantly is framed in the details of the relationships in the daily lives between Kurdish, Turkish, Jewish and Armenian communities. The panorama before 1915 is also described depending on the flashbacks in the relatives' memories. Margosyan's definition for the Armenian people as '*kafle artığı*' (remnant of deportation) also represents for us the feeling of displacement from their own lands. He constantly uses this term to be able to tell the fact that all the native inhabitants had been deported from these lands and the rest had been resigned to living together with and under the power of '*dacıs*' (Turks).

The insistent noting of details of daily life are attempts at drawing pictures of an ordinary Armenian in Anatolia. Margosyan, using the local dialect of Diyarbakır, establishes a folkloric background where Armenian people were active members with their uncomplicated, naïve yet deep lives. Regarding all the small and numerous details the reader easily can forget the real theme of the novel and find him/herself

⁸⁵ John Urry, *Mekânları Tüketmek*, trans. by R.G.Ögdül (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 1999), pp. 20-28.

⁸⁶ Rahim Gür, "Söyle Margos Nerelisen?," *Küçük Menderes Newspaper*, 01 August 2000. "You go downhill from Balıkçıbaşı. It is a slightly sloping street, then you will see 'Minara Çarık'. This four-legged minaret is an architecture masterpiece. Right beside the minaret you see the bell of the Armenian church. Sometimes, the voices of azan and the bell of the 'zangoç' go together but friendship and love never disappears. There is a bridge of love between Kurds and Armenians. They call each other 'Kirivo, kirve'. Margosyan simply reveals a monography of a district: Quite narrow streets, 'örteme's, adobe and stone buildings, accommodating people..."

lost in the fairy world of Margosyan, built on facts. Margosyan's aim to show and recall the presence of the Armenian people in Diyarbakır give us an idea about the collective memory again.

This emphasis on the space is meaningful if we analyze the current hegemonic discourse in Turkey that neglects and has erased the presence of non-Muslims in Turkish territories with their deportation. The Armenians who were displaced from their own ancient social and cultural context that shaped their identities lost also their belonging to a specific geography that gave meaning to their experiences. Hence, taking into account that loss of the connection with a given geography, the narrative forms of literature and the folkloric emphasis gain importance. Paradoxically, the emphasis on these folkloric elements also bears the risk of transforming the minority culture into a nostalgic entity, within an overall multicultural trend.

We see also Arslanyan's efforts to document all the examples of the culture that he remembers in Tokat by giving also the evidence of their presence there:

With seven churches and eleven Armenian villages, about twenty, twenty-five thousand people were living in Tokat. The contribution of these people to the economy of Tokat and neighbour cities was massive. For instance, the first sawmill in Tokat was founded by Armenians.⁸⁷

He also describes the life of Armenians in İstanbul where he went to work. Tokat remained his homeland and İstanbul was only beautiful when it looked like Tokat:

We took the road and went to Haydarpaşa by boat. The entire road until Kartal was full of gardens, mansions and fruit gardens. My God, this is Tokat! The same vineyards, the same gardens. In Surp Nişan Church, there was an enormous crowd. It was a beautiful ceremony. (...) Phaetons,

⁸⁷ Arslanyan, p. 90. "Yedi kilise ve on bir Ermeni köyüyle Tokat'ta yirmi ile yirmi beşbin arası Ermeni yaşamış. Bu insanların Tokat ve çevresindeki şehirlerin ekonomilerine katkısı çok büyükmüş. Mesela Tokat'taki ilk hızarhaneyi Ermeniler kurmuşlardı."

drinking phaetons like in Tokat, vineyards, people speaking Armenian. It was like a dream and I was asking God not to end it.⁸⁸

From his last words in the book, we understand that this not the geographical characteristics that make Tokat a missed homeland, but rather those that make his “Armenianness”:

I have seen some dream cities, the Po plain in Italy with huge vineyards, the glamour green of Burgonia in France... None of them could replace the place of Tokat in my heart. The little city called Tokat was better for me than the places where holy books were placed between Dicle and Fırat. Like a good song, it was always in my heart. I always dreamed about Tokat. We woke up with my mother and dealt with our cows, cleaned the barns and collected tomatoes from the garden. In the evenings, we lighted fire through heating stove, made fosul kebab. My father cut pastrami in large slices, I went to storeroom and put pickled cabbage, cucumbers and chard in a bowl. I put the already boiling vine in a bucket and drank it all secretly (...) When the day comes, we all will go to the place we really belong, but it is a fact that my longing for my birthplace Tokat will never end. My name is Agop and I am from Tokat.⁸⁹

Different Armenian Identities in Different Geographies:

Anatolian and İstanbul Armenians

Margosyan’s literature, called ‘*kavaragan kraganutyan*’ (village literature) in Armenian, offers an important perspective from which to understand the debate

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 163. “Yola çıktık, vapura binip Haydarpaşa’ya geçtik. Kartal’a kadar bütün yol bağlarla, bahçelerle, köşkerle, meyve bahçeleriyle doluydu. Allah’ım Tokat bu, Tokat işte! İşte aynı bağlar, aynı bahçeler. Surp Nişan kilisesinde mahşeri bir kalabalık vardı. Çok güzel bir ayin yapıldı. (...) faytonlar, Tokat’taki gibi çeşmeler, üzüm bağları, çoğu Ermenice konuşan bir kalabalık. Bir rüyada gibiydim ve tanrı’dan beni bu rüyadan uyandırmamasını diliyordum.”

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 177-179. “Rüya gibi şehirler gördüm, İtalya’da Po ovasını, göz alabildiğine uzanan üzüm bağlarını gördüm, Fransa’da Burgonya’yı, o göz kamaştıran yeşillikleri gördüm ama hiçbiri Tokat’ın yerini tutmadı. Tokat denen o avuç şehir, kutsal kitapların Dicle ile Fırat’ın ortasında yerleştirdiği cennetten daha güzeldi benim için. Bir garip şarkı gibi içimde hep var oldu, hep ona dair düşler kurdum. O düşlerde gündeğümünde annemle birlikte kalkıp ineklerimizi çobana saldık, ahırını itinayla temizledik, bahçeye inip domates, isot topladık, akşam olunca sobadan mangala ateş çektik, fosul kebabı yaptık, babam pastırmaları fukara yaması gibi iri iri kesti, kilere inip anamın kurduğu pazı, hıyar, lahana turşusunu tasa koydum, elimdeki bakraca henüz kaynamakta olan, daha sönmemiş üzüm şarabını, mırmırıkı doldurdum, bir maşrapa da anamdan gizli kafama diktim... (...) Günümüz geldi mi hepimiz gerçek yerimize gideceğiz; ama şu bir gerçek ki doğduğum yere, memleketime, Tokat’a olan tutkum hasretim hiç sönmeyecek. Adım Agop, memleketim Tokat.”

about the Armenian identity, İstanbul versus provincial.⁹⁰ This debate presents a differentiation in the Armenian identity and the possibility to understand that there is no homogenous or unique identification.

The fact that Anatolia gave birth to the Armenian identity and played a primary role in its construction shows itself in the distinction between Anatolian and İstanbul Armenianness. In fact, today İstanbul is the cultural and living space of the Armenian people, with institutions such as school, churches, the Patriarchate, foundations and so forth, that shape the Armenian identity. However, in those novels İstanbul is also the place where the Armenian language could be learned, after the deportation. For example in *Adım Agop Memleketim Tokat*, Arslanyan states that whereas his mother was educated in an Armenian school in Tavra, which was typical before deportation, the new education center was İstanbul.

However, it is obvious that the togetherness and shared space of Anatolia is not the same as that of İstanbul. İstanbul is not seen as a part of their identity. Here we see the importance of the shared space and the feeling of home, rather than any ethnic bond. The heavy emphasis on Anatolia raises us a question about İstanbul as a part of the identity, and we are confronted with the fact that it is a very different spatial meaning for those writers. İstanbul's meaning for them is not the shared Armenian identity but rather a confrontation in their history and the clash of urban/rural.

Margosyan makes a clear distinction between this Armenianness and thus prevents the homogenization of the Armenian identity. For him, it is the space that makes sense of an identity, not the ethnic group of people: the daily practices, the sense of togetherness and so forth. For instance *Tespîh Taneleri* attributes identity to

⁹⁰ Özdoğan, Üstel, Karakaşlı and Kentel, p. 76.

the geography. He tells of the establishment of Surp Harç Tıbrevenk, an Armenian school in Üsküdar, for training priests. For that school, the patriarch wanted to enroll Armenian children from all over Anatolia. This news created suspicion among the Armenians in Diyarbakır. Their discussions point out the approach of Anatolian Armenians to the Armenians in İstanbul and the distance between them. This conflict was first of all related to deportation times. The Anatolian Armenians thought the Armenians in İstanbul were indifferent to their pain. So the pain, exile and longing are attributed only to Anatolian Armenians. The dialogue below clearly shows the distance and suspicion between them.

“Our relatives were about to die out in Kafle and now they ask us to send our children to become ‘vertebed’ so we cannot see our grandchildren! Why, are there no Armenians in İstanbul so that he has to come here? We did not get any news from İstanbul since forty years and now do they set their eyes on our children? No, nothing good comes for us from people in İstanbul, never...”⁹¹

Furthermore, another passage also put forward the contention between the two groups of people and the mistrust towards the Armenians in İstanbul. A priest who is responsible for explaining the new school in Diyarbakır sees these fears and tries to end them by emphasizing that they are not different, they are all Armenians in origin and it is only the history that has pushed them apart.

My honorable brothers, I understand you and you are absolutely right. After the deportation, the Armenians who survived went to different places around the world and a disconnection among the Armenians occurred. Whom should we blame then for the loss of communication between the Armenians in Anatolia and İstanbul? If we should blame someone, should we blame the Armenians in İstanbul or the Armenians in Ankara, Kastamonu, Sivas, Amasya, Kayseri, Diyarbakır, Harput and Hatay, in short the Armenians living in various villages around

⁹¹ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri*, pp. 84-85. “İstanbul’dan bi tane vertebed gelmiş, çociğ topli... Çociğlari İstanbul’a götüri, vertebed yapmağ isti... Zatani züryetımız Kafle’de kökünden kurımağtan zor kurtulmuş şimdi çociğlarımızı “İstanbul’a götür, vertebed yapa ki, oğ çociğımız da züryetini heç görmiyağh! Niye, İstanbul’da Ermeni yoğh mi ki, kağhmiş buralara gelmiş? Kırğh senedir İstanbul’dan bize bi ğheber yoğhken, şimdi bizim çoliğ çociğımıza mi göz tikmişler? Yoğh babam yoğh, İstanbullılardan bize hiç bi zaman ne ğher gelir ne de bereket...” Vertebed (Vartabed) is the priest who has the authorization of preaching.

Anatolia? In my opinion, there is no one to blame. Instead of looking for someone to blame, we should appreciate this opportunity. Looking for someone to blame is useless.⁹²

Despite those arguments, the fear, concerns and mistrust of Anatolian Armenians toward the ones in İstanbul stemmed from more subjective perceptions. Most importantly, they each put the other in a position deeply different from themselves. The Armenians in Anatolia saw themselves as more dependable and naïve, while the Armenians from İstanbul were considered unreliable and cunning, which would have been very unusual for in an Anatolian man.

This division is built strictly on the geographical differences and the rural/urban segregation stands out in one of the anecdotes about Antranig, an Armenian from İstanbul, who wants to go Lice, a town in Diyarbakır, and stays a day in the center of Diyarbakır. Because he is Armenian and he is from İstanbul, the native Armenians become very happy and glad to have him. They host him as a guest in their homes. They show all the Anatolian hospitality to him, because he is also Armenian. However, he steals all the money he finds. That experience creates a very big disappointment among them and gives again a reason to think about their different identities. They think of going to the police, but they are also very ashamed:

“No, no, babos, no! We are not going to the police because one person among us is dishonorable. Instead of making ourselves silly in front of others, we should keep this as a secret and wait for this wound to slowly disappear. I am not sorry about the gold but I am sorry about singing the Antranig Pasha song. I am just sorry about that.”⁹³

⁹² Ibid., p. 186. “*Muhterem biraderlerim sizleri anlıyorum, yerden göğe kadar haklısınız. Seferberlik yıllarında, Tehcir’de ölenlerden geride kalanların dünyanın dört bir bucağına dağılmasıyla Ermeniler arasında maalesef bir kopukluk oldu. Nitekim İstanbul’daki Ermenilerle sizin gibi Anadolu’nun bir köşesinde yaşayanlar arasında da bir kopukluk olduysa suç kimde? Böyle bir suç şayet var ise bu İstanbullu Ermenilerde mi yoksa Ankara’da, Kastamonu’da, Sivas, Amasya, Kayseri, Diyarbakır, Harput veya Hatay’da velhasıl Anadolu’nun muhtelif şehir, kasaba ve köylerinde yaşayan diğer biraderlerimizde mi? Bence ne onlarda ne öbürlerinde! Biz aramızda suç ya da suçlu aramaktansa bu imkanın kıymetini bilmeye çalışalım; yani bağcı dövmektense üzüm yemeye bakalım!*”

⁹³ Ibid., pp.184-185. “*Yoğh baboş, yoğh! Biz kendi içimizden bi tene süti boziğ çığıdı diye oni da gidip polese şikyat edersağh, yazuğ bızım Haylığımız! El aleme rezil rüsva olmağıtansa, bu yara kendi içimizde kalsın, yavaş yavaş kabuğ bağlasın. Giden altunlara acımiyam; hama ağhşam*

The disparity between these two groups of people is also about their degree of consciousness about their Armenianness. Although the Anatolian Armenians are aware of their distinct identities and are very close to each other, the Armenians from İstanbul, perhaps due to the very tragic and dramatic history created by the 1915 events, do not necessarily underline this identity, probably since they are less likely to have experienced this pain and the sense of exile. A dialogue between an Anatolian Armenian and Armenian of İstanbul that takes place in a cemetery in İstanbul, illustrates the two deeply different concepts of Armenianness.

Then, he recognized a man standing behind another man who was praying near a grave. He crossed himself and prayed, too. After the praying, he approached the man and said in our language:
 "Eğper, yes el Hay im..."
 After he saw that the man just looked at his face very awkwardly, he turned to me and said in Turkish:
 "My brother, I am Armenian, too! My name is Arntranig Bezazyan... I came from Diyerbekir...
 The man looked at our Anto's face and said:
 "What should I do? There are so many Armenians here!"
 So, Vertebed... We are ready to die for the Armenian and he is telling me I do not care about you being Armenian!⁹⁴

The second dimension of the outburst is the geographical differences which give way to the inferiority of the Anatolian Armenians in the eyes of those of İstanbul. The latter saw the former as "rural and inferior" as a people. In the orphanage that Margosyan stayed in during his first days in İstanbul, an Armenian child named

Antranig Paşa şarkısı söylediğime yaniyam Baboş, allahvekil yalavuz ona yaniyam!..." For Armenians Antranig Paşa is a very important freedom fighter in Anatolia and he is like a national hero. Here Margosyan means that this figure also belongs to them, not to the Armenians in İstanbul.

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 178-181. "*Sora bağhi ki bi adam bi mezerın başında durmış düe edi adamın yanında duri, yüzine ğhaç çığhari, içinden o da düe edi. Düe bittiğtan sora adama yanaşı, bizim lisanımızla diyi ki: "Eğper, yes le Hay im..."*
Bağhi ki adam yüzine ters ters bağhi, bu sefer de döni Türkçe söli: "Kardaşım, ben de Ermeniyem! İsmim Arntranig Bezazyan... Diyerbekirden gelmişem... Adam bizim Anto'nun yüzine bağhi bağhi sora da ne diye begenisiz. "Ne yapayım burada o kadar çok ermeni var ki!" Yaaa, Vertebed hazretleri.. Biz Haylığ için canımızı veriyiğh adam diyi ki bahan ne senin Haylığından!" 'Hay' means Armenian in Armenian.

Karekin always made him feel this inferiority and associated his Anatolian identity with rudeness and laziness, because for him Anatolia meant laziness.

These are also unemployed people. They gather in front of the wall of the mosque.(...) Most of them came from Anatolia as you did! Just when we thought that things were good between us, Karekin underestimates us by saying we came from Anatolia, I thought he was got a kick out of doing that.⁹⁵

There was also a notable mindset among the Armenians in İstanbul that assumes a resemblance between the Armenians and the Kurds of Anatolia. For them, Anatolia, which was seen as the essentialist element of Armenianness by the Anatolian Armenians, was actually the land that made them similar to Kurds rather than to the “true” Armenians. Again, the first day Margosyan and his friends went to the orphanage, their arrival was made known with the comment, “Kurds have come from Diyarbakır...”⁹⁶

Despite these claims, for Margosyan the original Armenian identity is to be found in Anatolia rather than in İstanbul. Because of the fact that Anatolia was the homeland of the Armenians, those were Anatolian Armenians that carried the responsibility and the history of that identity. In fact, the words of Keşiş, who was a very respected person in the Patriarchate, indicate the critical role of the Anatolian Armenians in classical Armenian history. When the director of the Bezciyan School, the junior high school where Margosyan attended until Getronagan High School, is surprised at the Armenian that Margosyan speaks, Keşiş intervenes and says:

As you see Diraduryan efendi, the Armenian language spoken in various places around Anatolia is not so different from the language spoken in İstanbul after all. Even though we are not aware of it, it is possible to see traces of the old language in the Bible, krapar. The

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 190. “*Bunlar da işsiz güçsüz insanlardır. Her sabah burada, cami duvarının dibinde toplanırlar. (...) Çoğu da sizin gibi Anadolu’dan gelmişlerdir!*” *Tam aramız düzeldi düzeliyor derken Karekin durduk yere yapacağını yapıyor, bir punduna getirip Anadolu’dan geldiğimizi başımıza kakarak küçümsüyor, bundan galiba içten içe bir haz duyuyordu.*”

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 120. “*Diyarbakır’dan Kürtler geldi...*”

Armenians in Anatolia speak the Armenian language of the place they are living. (...)⁹⁷

Ultimately, as I said before, İstanbul is the place where a standard Armenian education was received and a class mobilization was experienced whereas Diyarbakır was the space where they experience a living identity and transmit it to subsequent generations. However, we must also keep in mind the fact that İstanbul also gave the sense of “home” to the different sides. Yet Margosyan was also aware of the fact that after deportation, the lack of a strong Armenian community and the Turkification policies brought some difficulties into their lives, like the problems with their names, their funerals, weddings or religious traditions in the churches. For instance, while in the public school in Diyarbakır he confronted difficulties about his different name, when he went to İstanbul, to an Armenian school, he felt the sense of belonging and the sense of “home” because everybody else had Armenian names and nobody asked about his name. He became an ordinary person, as he had never felt in the public places in Diyarbakır. In that manner, we can say that in İstanbul he obtained his identity differently from his homeland without any question. Actually we can argue that Margosyan realized the loss of Armenian existence in Anatolia after the deportation and felt like he was a foreigner in his “home” regarding these details in their daily lives.

In Diyarbakır, Gavur Mahallesi Hançepek, every teacher who came to ‘Nazif’ or Cumhuriyet School, usually hosting Armenian children, asked our names and we told our names very silently, almost whispering. Since it is the first time for the teacher to hear names like Arisdages, Jirayr, Mıgırdiç’i, Arusyag, Arşaluys or Ardemis instead of Ahmet, Mustafa, Ali, Kemali Hasan, Ayşe, Fatma, Zeynep, he had difficulties understanding and said: “What, what, I didn’t get it” ...⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 317-318. “*Diraduryan efendi, görüyorsunuz. Malumunuz üzere Anadolu’nun çeşitli yörelerinde kullanılan Ermenice ile İstanbul ağızı epey farklılık arz eder. Aslında birçoğunda bazen biz anlamasak da, İncil’in dili eski Ermenice’nin yani kraparın izlerini bulmak mümkün. Anadolu’da kalan Ermeniler hala iyi kötü kendi yörelerinin Ermenicesini kullanıyorlar. (...)*”

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 16-17. “*Diyarbakır’da Gavur Mahallesi’nde, Hançepek’te, Ermeni çocuklarının genelde okuduğu süleyman Nazif ya da Cumhuriyet İlkokulu’nda her yeni gelen öğretmen adlarımızı*

The Imagination of a New Homeland: Armenia

Another place that is supposed to be held as a symbolic and imagined part of the Armenian identity is Armenia, namely *Hayasdan* in Armenian, re-established as a state in the Soviet Union. For Dentist Sarkis, the father of Margosyan, the bond with Anatolia is in danger of destruction and a new imaginary and utopian space has to be chosen as part of Armenian identity. However the interesting thing is the fact that he does not think of going to İstanbul, but to Armenia for salvation. According to him, the people who are safe from the deportation are there and he also wants to go there to find his history, present and future there.

“Do you know that Russia opened its doors and Armenians all around the world are going to Armenia? Get ready, we are going too!”⁹⁹

Ironically, the longing for an unknown homeland, Armenia, shows us the awareness of the loss of the actual homeland. This awareness takes them to a search for a new one to be able to live their original identity and transmit it to the next generations. It is also the place where they are not ignored and are accepted as Armenian. They may even be “big men,” like generals.

“Our two young people who got lost in Kafle became generals, do you know?”¹⁰⁰

In Arslanyan’s *Adım Agop Memleketim Tokat* also, this enthusiasm for Armenia can be seen. He sarcastically tells their adventure of that immigration:

sorduğunda utanıp sıkılarak, kızarıp bozarak, yutkunarak, adeta fısıldarcasına isimlerimizi söylerken; Ahmet, Mustafa, Ali, Kemal, Hasan, Ayşe, Fatma, Zeynep yerine ilk kez duyduğu için Arisdages, Jirayr ya da Mıgırdıç’ı, Arusyag, Arşaluys, veya Ardemiş’i algılayamayan bu nedenle de Neee anlamadım bir daha söyle diyen öğretmenlerimize adlarımızı...”

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 262. “Ğhino bilisen? Rusya kapılarını açmış, dünyanın her yanından Haylar Ermenistan’a gidiler...Hezırlan biz de gidecağığ!”

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 262. “Kafle’de keybolan bizim köyden iki gencimiz Hayasdan’da general olmiılar, bilisiz?”

Most of them were preparing to go to Armenia, to the land they were longing for even though they did not even know what Armenia looks like. The older people forgot to say hello and saluted people with a song from Sadettin Kaynak, saying:
Tomorrow the trip begins,
To the place of lovers,
It is so good to have fellow travelers,
There is a trip tomorrow to the place where our heart belongs.¹⁰¹

As a result, the longing for Armenia can be summed as with the desire for a collective unity that would allow them to live with a sense of belonging. That unity, sustained within determined frontiers only for Armenians, also makes sense for the realization of a real “nationhood” of which they had been starved for many centuries. Consequently, the loss of the homeland and the feeling of being foreigners within Republican frontiers, makes Armenians more eager for a land in which they will start a new history in an Armenian world.

The Perception of the Other under the Strategies of Living Together

Being the constitutive element of an identity, the discourse of “other” is again dominant for these writers. We can handle this concept in two different, actually contrary, approaches. The first one takes the different groups in society with their complementary character. In other words, they are aware of the fact that they live together with many other ethnic and religious communities and think this is the main characteristic of Anatolia. For instance, Margosyan, using the folkloric language of Diyarbakır, describes the background of the Armenian identity attached to Anatolia with a language that is the mixture of Armenian and Kurdish. In fact, the local color

¹⁰¹ Arslanyan, p. 67. “Ok yaydan çıkmıştı bir kere. Pek çokları neye benzediğini dahi bilmeden yıllardan beri için için özlem duydukları Ermenistan’a gitmek için harekete geçiyordu. Ağbilerimiz “merhaba”yı unutmuş, ünlü bestekar Saadettin Kaynak’ın bir şarkısıyla birbirlerini selamlar olmuşlardı: Yolculuk var; yolculuk var, yarına; Sevenler diyarına; Yoldaş olmak ne mutlu; Gönünün uyarına yolculuk var.”

in the language is very common for this group of writers. Kirkor Ceyhan also uses the local dialects, which are very effective at dismantling the urban stereotype of the Armenian people, who are supposed to speak a different İstanbul dialect. Those dialects are especially dominant for dictating the shared life in Anatolia.

Apart from the language, the collective life in the town and villages in Anatolia also brings us a sense of the other that is articulated to the identity construction for the Armenian people. In Ceyhan's *Seferberlik Türküleriyle Büyüdüm* he situates others in the daily life of Zara, in Sivas, the rural and traditional community acts together whether they are Turkish, Armenian or Kurdish. For instance, when it rains in Zara, Muslims and Armenians react according to their cultures, but based on the same wishes. So everyone feels like an inhabitant and native of the same land, creating a higher sense of belonging.

The bold Arif said: "Oh, wonderful, it is raining quite strong, this year we will gather harvest early," and rubbed his face with his hands. The old uncle Artim drew a big circle with his three attached fingers and brought his hand to his forehead. He makes a cross by saying park diroç1, park diroç1.¹⁰²

This complementary character of the others also can be accepted as a multicultural understanding, a sense of tolerance and nostalgia. Margosyan, for example, integrates those differences under one shared umbrella in order to live peacefully together. For him, all is actually the same in the Anatolian identity and these are the differences that makes the communities different. Hence, living together without any conflict is not a utopia, but it is the reality of those lands. For instance, in his words below, he attributes the differences only to religion; otherwise different people can

¹⁰² Kirkor Ceyhan, *Seferberlik Türküleriyle Büyüdüm* (İstanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2008), p. 16. "Kel Arif " ooh ooh maşallah süphanallah eyyam iyi başladı, iyi rahmet düşüyor, bu sene çift erken çıkacak" diye ellerini yüzünden sıvalayarak geçirir, Yaşlı Artim emmi, sağ elinin üç parmağını bir araya getirip hava da büyük bir daire çizerek alnına götürür, park diroç1, park diroç1 diye haçını çıkarırdı."

be unified easily under one identity as “being from Diyarbakır,” or actually from “Anatolia.”

In the place we live, Diyarbakır, we as so-called humans created by God were living together in peace. Our God was the same, but our prophets were different. In order to show our Gods our gratitude, we built ‘God-houses’ to pray for him. We just used different languages, expressions, rituals and beliefs. The names of our Houses of God were also different. For some of us, the house of God was mosque, and for some of us it was havra (synagogue). Some built minarets, some built bell-towers but for the same purpose, to be closer to God. Some of us said ‘Allahuekber’ from minarets whereas others use bells to collect people in Houses of God. There were also people who try to bring more to these houses without even calling from minarets or ringing bells.¹⁰³

Despite the fact that otherness is perceived as a complementary element in some ways, it is also obviously true that it is assumed to be experienced only in the public sphere. By public sphere we mean the places where different people come in places that are open to the public and interact with each other with some social, cultural and economic motivations. For example, in market places or various cultural spaces like the cinema or theatre.

However, in the private sphere, this division is more visible. Whereas the public sphere, where the services, products and artisanship are produced, is admitted as the place that the identity can be sustained regardless of interaction among different communities, the private sphere is by its nature the space that has to be protected to protect the identity against any threat of hybridization that may be the end of an authentic identity. Particularly the issue of marriage illustrates the sharp

¹⁰³ Mıgırdiç Margosyan, *Söyle Margos Nerelisen?* (İstanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2005), p. 52. “Bizim oralarda, Diyarbakır’da ulu Tanrı’nın yarattığı ve sonran adına “insan” dediği canlıların bir kısmı, hep birlikte paşa paşa yaşıyorduk. Tanrımız birdi ama peygamberlerimiz farklıydı. Yüce Tanrı’mıza şükranlarımızı sunmak üzere, O’na kul ve köle olarak dualarımızla ulaşabileceğimiz “Tanrı evleri” inşa etmiştik. Ama Tanrı’ya seslenirken değişik dil, değişik ifade, değişik tören ve değişik inançlar sergiliyorduk. Tanrı evlerimizin adları da değişti. Bazılarımıza göre Tanrı’nın evi cami, bazılarına göre kilise, bazılarına göre havraydı. Tanrı’ya seslerimizi daha iyi duyurabilmek için kimimiz Tanrı erimizin yanında yükseklikte birbiriyle yarışan minareler veya çan kuleleri inşa etmiştik. Kimimiz yandaşlarımızı “Tanrı evleri”ne toplamak üzere minare tepelerinden seslenip “Allahuekber” diyorduk. Bir kısmımız ise ‘ding dong’ makamında çan çalıyorduk. Çan çalmadan minareden seslenmeden, sessizce kendi “Tanrı evleri”ne yandaşlarını kendi yöntemleriyle toplayanlar da vardı...”

division between the communities and the perception of the other as banned from membership in one's community. Here "the more other" than the others is of course *dacigs* (Turks), who are accepted as totally different, despite the acceptance of them as the complementary element in their colorful and multicultural lives. For Margosyan, mixed marriage is the obstacle on the road to strong and pure identities.

Because Armenians, Assyrians and Keldanis were all Christians, they sometimes used to their daughters to each other. As a result, some daughters from Keldani families married Armenian boys whereas some Assyrian boys married Armenian daughters, leading the way to family relationships between these groups. But marriage of an Armenian with an Armenian or marriage of an Assyrian with another was the most demanded marriage. Marriage with a Kurd, Turk or to be more correct with a Muslim or so called 'Dacik' was not even something to think about. Such an approach would be considered as a crime against God, Jesus, and humanity! Nobody in Diyarbakır had committed such a sin since its foundation. Nobody had even the courage to think about something like that. There are things that are possible in the world and things there are impossible. Such a thing would go definitely to the group of impossibles.¹⁰⁴

The second approach perceives "the other" as the object of opposition. Here, especially, the Turks are perceived as "the other" with their antagonism and intolerance to the cultural and social life of the Armenians. This sort of other complicates a shared life in Anatolia and represents the exclusionist and intolerant "soul of the Committee of Union and Progress" which expelled Armenians from their homeland in the name of a homogenous Turkish nation.

During the funeral, kids from the neighborhood were singing a song. The lyrics of the song were not unfamiliar; they go through our neighborhood in mornings and evenings with this song. Some Turkish

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p 62. "Ermeni, Süryani ve Keldaniler Hristiyan olduklarından, zaman zaman az da olsa birbirlerine kız alıp verdikleri oluyordu. Böylece bazı Keldani ailelerin kızları Ermeni delikanlılarıyla evlenmiş, bazı Süryani delikanlıların da Ermenilerden kız alarak hasım akrabalık ilişkileri kurmuşlardı. Ama asıl istenen arzu edilen, bir Ermeni'nin Ermeni ile, veya Süryani'nin Süryani ile evlenmesiydi. Kürtlerle, Türklerle, daha doğrusu Müslümanlarla, toptan söylersek "Dacik"lerle böyle bir alışverişe girmek kız alıp vermeyi bir tarafa bırakın, böyle bir düşüncenin varlığı dahi kabul edilemezdi. Böyle bir yaklaşım hem Tanrı'ya hem İsa Peygamber'e, hem de insanlığa karşı işlenmiş bir suç, suçun ötesinde günahı! Böyle bir günahı Diyarbakır şehri kuruldu kurulalı hiçbir Allah'ın kulu işlememiş, işlemek cesaretini göstermemiş, böyle bir düşüncüyü aklının ucundan bile geçirmemiş, geçirememişti. Dünyada olacak şeyler vardı, bir de olmayacaklar. Bu tür şeyler kesinlikle olmayacaklar, olamayacaklar grubuna girerdi..."

families in Tokat got angry at them, tried to send them away, but they did not care and continued to caw like a bird or owl:

Ge ge ge gevur (infidel)

Cut his head with a cleaver

Put him in a vessel and boil like a Turkey

G ege g ege gevur! (infidel)

Exactly this song was sung in a graveyard accompanied with stones they threw without hesitation. The coffin was lying in the middle and people in the funeral were hiding behind trees. Suddenly, Maritsa showed up and began to yell: “Agas, dear boys, please do not do that! Let us bury our dead!”

One of them answered: “Infidels, you have no religion and no holy book. Take your infidel body and bury in another place!”

Boy, who told you that we do not have a religion or belief? We met god 600 years before you!” Der Mıgır showed the Bible in her hand and yelled : “And here you see our book!” The rain of stones increased at the same time. How can we cry for our loss?¹⁰⁵

For Margosyan, this confrontation with the different is actually imprisoned within the ghettos of Diyarbakır. The different others inhabit their own spaces to live their own practices. That is why he lives in *Gavur Mahallesi* which is reserved for non-Muslim people. We also see an allegory in the passage below referring to invasion of the others, particularly Turks, to their lands with meaningless antagonistic feelings. Here the otherness of the Turkish people is hand in hand with the “enemy” image. The allegory, that I have mentioned, indicates that hostility.

Everyone has his own space. We as Armenians living in Gavur District or the Muslim kids who could not find anywhere else to play ball-games and coming from other places like Alipaşa, Mardin kapı, Urfa kapı and try to send us away from our place? How come they try to

¹⁰⁵ Arslanyan, p. 36. “(...) Cenaze merasimi sırasında mahallenin çocukları dillerine bir şarkı dolamış bağırıyorlardı. Söyledikleri sözler yabancımız değildi, sabah akşam mahallemizden bu şarkıyla geçerdi. Tokatlı Türk aileler onları paylardı, kovardı ama onlar oralı olmaz, dudu kuşu gibi hırlamaya, baykuş gibi ötmeye devam ederlerdi:

Ge ge ge gevur. Boynunu satırla vur. Kazana koy. Hindi gibi kavur. G ege g ege gevur! İşte bu şarkı şimdi mezarlıkta icra ediliyordu, sakınmadan fırlattıkları taşlar eşliğinde. Tabut ortada, cemaat ağaçların ardında saklanmış vaziyette. Ben çocuk denecek yaştayım, korkudan ağlıyorum. Birdenbire Maritsa hala kalabalıktan önce çıktı ve haykırmaya başladı: “Ağalar, efendi çocuklar, etmeyin eylemeyin! Bırakın da ölümüzü gömelim!” İçlerinden biri atıldı: “Abe gâvurlar, dininiz yok, kitabınız yok, dinsiz kitapsız gavurun ölüsü hortlamış. Alın götürün, başka yere gömün.” “Oğlum sana kim dedi dinsiz imansız diye? Biz Allah’ı sizden altı yüz sene evvel tanıdık!” Der Mıgır’ın elindeki İncil’i göstererek ekledi: “Aha işte bu da kitabımız!” Taş yağmuru şiddetlendi coşmuşlardı bir kere. Ölüne mi ağlarsın?”

send us away when we not only do not go to their neighborhood but do not even use the bridges in their neighborhood!¹⁰⁶

However, we do not only see “this antagonist other” in the Armenian literature. I think this is a strategy of avoiding any sharp confrontation with the Turks with whom they still lived within the same borders. Therefore, it is hard for Turkish Armenian authors to draw a total image as “hostile other” like diasporan writers who do not actually confront Turks in their lives.¹⁰⁷ Hence, they develop some strategies to facilitate their lives in the same geography with Turks. At this juncture, they need the option to mention that kind of “a hostile other” by creating meaning indirectly or allegorically. For instance, the above allegoric narrative using the metaphor of “child” gives Margosyan the possibility to refer to the nationalist Turks who expelled the Armenians from their own spaces, although they were all innocent victims.¹⁰⁸

Similarly, it is not a coincidence that in the funeral scene, which I have mentioned above, it is children who humiliate the Armenians even in their most disconsolate moments. The emphasis on that victimization, on the other hand, as Stathis Gourgouris states referring to Benedict Anderson’s formula of the nation as “an imagined society”, provides to build the “nation as an imagined society imagining itself.”¹⁰⁹ In that way, writers also can unify the Armenian community, which is in silence due to living in the larger community of others, with the feeling of victimization and discrimination.

¹⁰⁶ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri*, pp. 27-28. “Herkesin kendi alanı var. Biz Gavur mahallesinde oturan Ermeni ğhaçolar mı yoksa kendi mahallelerinde top oynayacak yer bulamayınca ta Ali paşadan, Melik Ahmetten Mardin kapıdan Urfa kapıdan öte mahleleden gelip bizim mahleye, bizim gavur meydanına göz diken müslüman daciğ çocukları mı? Peki biz onların küçelerinden örtme altlarından geçmeyip, onların mahlesine gitmezken niye onlar hep bizim mahleye gelip üstelik bizi kovmaya kalkşıyorlar ki!”

¹⁰⁷ Özdoğan, Üstel, Karakaşlı and Kentel, p. 394.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 395.

¹⁰⁹ Stathis Gourgouris, “Tarihle Düş Arasında Ulus Biçimi,” *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 70 (Fall 1996), p.79. The term means ‘kendini imgeleyen bir imgelemiş topluluk olarak ulus’ in Turkish.

Moreover, this strategy also attributes these discriminatory behaviors not to the ordinary Turkish people with whom they have to live, but instead to the “exclusionist soul of official ideology” inherited from the Committee of Union and Progress. In other words, this is the continuance of this cruel ideology that causes discrimination against Armenians, and if it changed, everything would be changed. Margosyan’s father was a supporter of the Democrat Party in the 1950s, because he blamed İsmet İnönü, the head of Republican People’s Party (CHP), for their victimization. He thought he was the only person responsible for all their pain after deportation and if the Democrat Party was chosen it would be like a miracle and would change deeply all the attitudes toward Armenians:

When Ismet is gone, our luck will take a turn, Sago. If you ask why, the Wealth Tax, ‘20 Reservist Recruits’ and Ehtiyat Military Service, were all brought into force by him. You know what he did in Akhisar, Adana and Ceyhan! There are many roads he constructed! But we had enough. If the iron white horse wins all Muslims, Alevis, Sunnis, Armenians, Chaldeans, Jews or newcomers will be free to believe anything they want and go to mosque, church or synagogue. Our father says that when our children go to church, Muslim kids will not curse them, throw watermelon and cantaloupe pieces at them and will not break the windows of the church. We will not carry our dead people secretly using small side-streets. With a little help from God, we will also get our church back, which is now used as a depot by Sümerbank!¹¹⁰

Ultimately, if we have to also cite the other strategy of talking about “the hostile other” it is to show its heterogeneous character. Although the Anatolian Armenian identity is a unique and homogeneous as naïve and victim, their others, “Turks” are heterogeneous. They are not all brutal and ruthless; on the contrary, some of them

¹¹⁰ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri*, p. 270. “*Bahan Allah’tan da ayan olmuş ki İsmet gidecağ, kısmetimiz açılacağ Sago... Bağ niye dersen, Varlığ Vergisi’ni, İğirmi Sınıf Eskerliği, ehtiyat eskerliğini hepi o getirdi. Akhisar’da, Adana’da, Ceyhan’da az mi daş kırıdığh! Az mi yol yaptığh! Artup bızım de canımıza tak etti. (..) Evellallah demirkirat kazanırsa artuğ dacıg, alevi, sünni, hay, süryani, keldani, yahudi, muhcair, her ne olisa olsun kim neye inanisa inansın istiyen camisine gidecağ, istiyen kilisesine, isteyen hevrasına... der babamız kiliseye giderken dacıg çocığlar peşinden küfür etmicağlar, daş, karpuz, kavun kabuğı atmicağlar, kilisenin camlarını kırmiyacağlar... Ölülerimizi dar küçelerden, ara sukaklardan mezerliğa kadar ğhırğhız kimi gizli gizli götürmiyecağığ. Allah’ın yardımila şimdi Sümerbank’ın deposu olan böyüg kilisemizi de geri alacağığ!*”

helped Armenians during deportation time. Ceyhan claims, for example, that actually the majority of Turkish people supported them if he had to tell the truth.

Let's be honest. Not all the kids insult me by saying *Ermeni dölü* (Armenian sperm) or *gavur* (unbeliever). There are also people who protect me and say: "Shut up, how could being Armenian mean being *gavur*? You know the meaning of *gavur*? It means someone without any religion or belief. Is this the case for them, no!"¹¹¹

In *Adım Agop Memleketim Tokat*, Arslan says during the enthusiasm for immigration to Armenia, their neighbors were sorry and angry at them because they were leaving although they had done nothing bad to them. He says they all said "What did we do to you that you are hitting the road like this?"¹¹²

The Historicization Project by the Documentation of "True" Stories

"(...) One should know history very well. One should know how people who lived as a community began later to become a nation and how these people searched for their identities and what happened when the different identities of different people clashed. Only history can show that. Someone who does not know history, the real history, tries to explain everything with supernatural powers. So, they do deceive not only themselves they also deceive others. My son, what is happening today is not so different from that at all."¹¹³

The above comments, taken from *Seferberlik Türküleriyle Büyüdüm* by Kırkor Ceyhan, belong to his father, evaluating the history of Armenians during and after the *seferberlik* (deportation during World War I) in a framework of an absolute rejection of fatalism.

¹¹¹ Ceyhan, . p.51. "Şimdi eğri oturup doğru konuşalım. Çocukların hepsi de bana Ermeni dölüsün, gavur tohumusun demiyor. Hakçası beni sahiplenene de var. 'Sus ulan, Ermeni olmakla neden gavur oluyormuş? Gavurun manasını biliyon mu? Hepten dinsiz kafir demektir. Bunlar öyle mi ya' diye kollayanlar daha çok."

¹¹² Arslanyan, p. 67. "Ne zararımızı gördünüz ki böyle sokaklara dökülüyorsunuz?"

¹¹³ Ceyhan, p. 59. "(...) Tarihi ille tarihi çok iyi bilmek gerekir. Halkların ümmet olarak yaşadıklarını neden sonra nelerden sonra millet olmaya başladıklarını, millet olurken nasıl kimliklerini aradıklarını, karşısındakinin de kimliğiyle çarpışınca nelerin, ne hadiselerin meydana geldiğini ancak tarih gösterir bize. Tarihi bilmeyen, ama gerçek tarihi bilmeyen topluluk ve kişiler, bütün olup biteni bilinmeyen gök kuvvetlerine bağlarlar. Böylece hem kendileri aldanır, hem başkalarını aldatırlar. Oğlum bugün de olan dönen yaşanan bundan başka bir şey değildir."

The great rupture in Armenian history caused by the 1915 deportation and the official denial by the Turkish governments and their deliberate policies with the intention to erase the Armenian identity from Turkish historiography, has alienated the younger generations detached from their own history.

Oh, my destiny! The son of my only friend who survived the kافلة, come and eat! You used to say before putting the pastrami pulp with nuts in front of me. My grandmother Saro used to crack the nuts with a stone, wrap in a dried pulp and used to stroke my head when I was eating. (...) When I was eating my nuts with my pastrami pulp, I was neither able to understand Kافلة nor did I know about my grandfather, whose name you gave to me.¹¹⁴

Therefore the memory of the *catastrophe* is the most important and dominant element in the history of the Armenian people in Turkey and among the diaspora, as well. Literature, as one of the forms of representation, in this sense is a means to transmit that historical memory from one generation to another. Perroomian finds the representative power of literature in the fact that it “purports revelations as the synthesis of the relationship or the dialogue of the self with the collective past in the context of the present.”¹¹⁵

In this section of the chapter, I will try to explain how the documentary character of this group of novels works on behalf of rewriting, dealing with and comprehending Armenian history, which was ruptured by a very striking break in 1915. Being very popular writers of Armenian literature in Turkey and in the diaspora as well, Mıgırdıç Margosyan, Agop Arslanyan and Kirkor Ceyhan, while they write their own individual stories, actually take on the issue in a much broader

¹¹⁴ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri*, p. 294. “Hey gidi zalım felek! Benim kâfleden sağ kalan tek kardaşımın oğlu, al, ye! Diyydın, bastuğla cevüzle öğime koyıdın. Saro nenem cevüzleri bi daşla kırıdı, bastuğa sarıdı, elime verıdı, ben yiyerken o da başımı oğışıdı. (...) Ben ağzımın suyunı ağhıta ağhıta bastuğla cevüzi yerken ne Kافلة’yi anlıdım, ne de adını bahan verdiğimiz dedei bilıdım.”

¹¹⁵ Perroomian, “Historical memory: Threading the Contemporary Literature of Armenia,” p. 97.

dimension in relation to Armenian history centered around the events of 1915 and afterward.

First of all, the historical context in the novels of Margosyan, Ceyhan and Arslanyan gives the chance to repair the bond between the past, present and future in order to construct and shape collective memories. Therefore, we can assume that there is a purposeful attempt at a total historicization project in the name of a formation of collective memory. That project is actually a process of integrating the rupture created by the event of the catastrophe into the continuity of Armenian history and personal identities.¹¹⁶

For instance, Margosyan's *Tespih Taneleri* is one of the most important novels that speak of the events with a respectful courage. The Pandora's Box is opened and for the first time there is something about the Armenian problem in a Turkish Armenian novel. The author, in this work, fictionalized his own life story after 1915, giving the continuing effects of the events in people's minds and actual lives. While the novel tells Margosyan's childhood, the past is told using flashbacks from the memories of the survivors and witnesses. By that reconstruction of the past, Margosyan actually addresses not only Armenians, but also Turks, calling on them to be aware of all the mistakes made in the past that led to all that suffering in Anatolian lands.

In this book, I think I gave a place to the issue of the Armenian problem that is discussed in Turkey generally very secretly in between the lines. To do that, I just used reality. I tried to share my impression I got from people who had experienced those events in 1915 such as my father and close relatives. My intention here is to give a message to people about trying to find the mistakes made in the past and not to repeat the same mistakes.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Varjabedian, "Historicization of the Armenian Catastrophe," p. 143.

¹¹⁷ Evrim Altuğ, *Tespihteki Taneleri Çeken Bilir*, *Birgün Newspaper*, 29 November 2006. "Bu kitapta ben, öyle sanıyorum ki, bugüne kadar ülkemizde konuşulmuş veya zaman zaman üstü kapalı konuşulmuş Ermeni sorununa, satır aralarında yer verdim. Ama bunu yaparken, mümkün olduğunca gerçeklerden yola çıktım. O olayları 1915'te yaşamış olanlardan, ki bunlardan biri mesela babam ve

As I said before, this historicization project enables the writer to rewrite and transmit a collective past. The lived experiences and testimonies of the survivors of the *catastrophe* are combined with fictional characterization as part of the narrative structure of the story.¹¹⁸ That narrative and historical form thus include an alternative chronological time, description and possibility of dialogue that are absent in the official history. However, the most important thing that provides the historicization is, as Shirinian points out “the narrative voice that is capable of linking and binding together the chaotic events and its effects on the people’s lives.”

In so doing, the voices of those writers bring the imposition of order and sustain the linearity in fragmented history by this linking and binding process. Henceforth within collective memory, there should be no rupture between the consciousness of the past and its existence in the present; nothing is lost and nothing should be lost in this continuum.¹¹⁹ There is a continuum in the interpretation between lived individual history (personal experiences) and collective memory. Hence, and more importantly, this continuum provided the gathering of all the fragments together, thus is part of the process of healing and catharsis to make life whole again. In *Tespih Taneleri*, Margosyan shows us the changed but also continuing history of Diyarbakır with different narratives, stories and testimonies. History continues for him. He spent his childhood there and then went to İstanbul to be able to speak Armenian. Arslanyan, for instance, in *Adım Agop Memleketim Tokat*, like Mıgırdıç, describes his own history within the background of life in Zaza

yakın akrabalarım onlardan aldığım izlenimleri satır aralarında yansıtmaya çalıştım. Yani benim buradaki mesajım insanlara mümkün olduğu kadar geçmişte yaşanan bir takım yanlışların irdelenip, bir daha bu tür yanlışlara tevessül etmemeleri konusunda bir mesaj.”

¹¹⁸ Shirinian, “Survivor Memoirs of the Armenian Genocide as Cultural History,” p. 168.

¹¹⁹ Varjabedian, pp. 144-145.

after the deportation and so integrates his own personal history into the continuing Armenian history by giving it a linear structure.

As we have mentioned, the events of 1915 ruptured Armenian history by detaching the Armenians from their homeland, families, possessions, culture and community. Hence, attempts are now being made to write modern Armenian history by taking those events as the departure point. Mıgırdıç, Ceyhan and Arslanyan try to describe and document the event as a breaking point in the lives of Armenians in Anatolia. Locating 1915 as a departure point in their rewriting process, writers aim to draw the linear flow of time in Armenian history by also demonstrating their loss of it. For Margosyan it is *kafle*, for Arslanyan it is *seferberlik* and for Ceyhan it is *tehcir* (deportation).¹²⁰ The deportation is used to explain the sense of exile, pain, longing and nostalgia, actually gives us the description of the economically, socially and culturally transformed geography.

Because, even though we had many schools in different places around Anatolia in the past, after the deportation almost every school was shut down and the Armenian language can be spoken only in İstanbul (...)¹²¹

In *Tespîh Taneleri*, the deportation history of Margosyan's family takes place with a lot of details through the eyewitness of his grandmother Saro Nene. The story of pain and exile is no longer out of time and space, but rather it is *concrete* and situated on the center within the historical context proving its "truthfulness." In so doing the reader can understand the catastrophe, abstracting it from all the imagination and articulating it in real history, real people's lives. In our case, the tragic life and story

¹²⁰ Those words are the alternative way not to say 'genocide'. Marc Nichanian notices that 'genocide' is a political word and for those people who experienced it it was something beyond the words. For a deeper discussion on that conceptualization of the catastrophe, see Marc Nichanian, *Writers of Disaster: Armenian Literature in the Twentieth Century: Volume One, The National Revolution* (Princeton, NJ, and London: Gomidas Institute, 2002), pp. 1-22.

¹²¹ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri*, p. 187. "(...) çünkü bir zamanlar Anadolu'nun her bucağında okullarımız varken, Tehcir'den sağ kalıp kurtulan Ermenilerin toplandığı merkezlerde dahi okullarımız kapandığı için artık İstanbul dışında Ermenice imkanı kalmamıştı. (...)"

of Saro Nene, by being articulated in Margosyan's own life and Diyarbakır's history as well, gains its validity:

My grandmother Saro was living in one of the steep villages of mountainous Piran, and at the time the wheat berries were becoming yellow and she was getting ready to milk her cow and bake her bread she found herself with five children- one on her breast, one on her skirt in roads to Kafle. In the dark days of World War 1, when she had no idea about the place her husband Mıgırdiç had gone, in the days she called if you go to war, you cannot come back days, in the days they were deported and had to walk to Diyarbakır, where she had a better idea of what was going to happen to them or understand that the end was obscure. After giving her 8 year old daughter to a Muslim family, losing her 4 year old son Sarkis in a turmoil around a fountain near Siverek, giving her 12 year old son Apraham studying in American Yeprad College to a hadjı in Siverek to work as an apprentice, she was left with her two sons Nişan, whom and Haçadur, almost starving to death and reached Urfa with difficulty where she had to bury her son Nişan she could not breastfeed. She was left only with Haçadur in the church she hid in during the Urfa battle. And after Haçadur was shot with a bullet to his head in the church and died after 12 days, how could my grandmother Saro remain calm?¹²²

This story continues afterward by the coming together of the members who had survived: the author's father, Sarkis; Yeğisapet, who became Muslim and changed her name to Mirye; the aunt of the writer and Saro nene. The family continues their lives, becoming Christian again.

Arslanyan, despite his intention to draw continuity in Armenian history, is also aware of the fact that this is the beginning of a dark history even as it continues.

¹²² Ibid., p. 272. "Babamın anası Saro nenem doğup büyüdüğü Piran'ın dağlık, sarp köylerinden, Heredan'dan tam da buğday başaklarının sararıp biçilmeye başlanacağı günlerde, ineğini sağıp tandır ekmeğini pişirmeye hazırlanırken, biri memede, biri eteğinde, beş çocuğuyla kendisini ansızın 'Kafle' yollarında bulmuştu. Birinci Cihan Harbi'nin o kapkaranlık günlerinde, nerede, hangi cephede olduğunu bilemediği kocası Mıgırdiç'ten de gitti gideli bir ses duymadığı ve 'gidesen bi daha gelmeyesen Seferberlig' diyerek andığı o felaket günlerinde, tehcir edilip günlerce yürüye yürüye geldikleri Diyarbakır'da, kendilerini bekleyen akıbet biraz daha netleşince ya da bu işin sonunun tümünden meçhule doğru gittiğini daha iyi farkedince, sekiz yaşındaki kızı Yeğisapet'i bir Dacıg aileye emanet edip, dört yaşındaki oğlu Sarkis'i Siverek yakınlarında bir çeşme başındaki hengamede kaybettikten ve Harput'taki Amerikan Yeprad Koleji'nde öğrenci olan on iki yaşındaki büyük oğlu Apraham'ı da Siverekli bir hacıya, Zaza bir bezaza çırak verdikten sonra, kucığındaki Nişan ve altı yaşındaki Haçadur aslı iki oğluyla aç susuz, perişan bir halde nihayet gelip dayandığı Urfa'da artık emzirecek bir şeyi kalmadığı için Nişan'ı toprağa veren ve sonunda yanında kalan tek çocuğu Haçadur da Urfa Harbi sırasında sığındıkları kiliseye isabet eden bir top mermisinin saçtığı taşlarla başından yaralanıp on iki gün sonra ölünce, Saro nenemin zıvanadan çıkmaması mümkün müydü?"

Except for the details between the lines, in his novel, the deportation takes place exactly and at length in Zepür Ana's story from her own mouth. He actually tells her story to describe and document what the deportation really was besides all the mourning that makes the entire story like a fairytale full of exaggerated tales of cruel massacres.

"The messengers were yelling in the streets loudly:
"No one will leave their house tomorrow. There will be a census !" ...
As a matter of fact, the officers came to our house, we gave them the registry of our house. All our possessions were listed.
The deportation was to Malatya. (...)
Our father, state, why this migration? There is no answer, you have to go. Besides, in three days, however you can. With your horse carriage, on a donkey, with a train or by walking. In three days, no single Armenian will remain in Tokat. They called this a war campaign, they wrote songs about us, the damned wartime.
By constantly collecting wood, we ran out of wood
After the wartime, we ran out of pure women.¹²³

Ceyhan, on the other side, takes the issue of deportation within the context of the troublesome days of World War I and articulates it within a Republican context. Here deportation is seen as an event that has to be remembered, but on the other hand, not obsessed over such as that it would become an obstacle against moving on. Therefore, the deportation is located within the already continuing Armenian history by showing the daily lives of ordinary people despite all the tragic losses.

Because my mother had to deal with many difficulties during the bloody war times, she tried to protect us from possible harm, but sometimes passed the limits. She never thought that her child may enhance these fears with his imagination and become sick.¹²⁴

¹²³ Ceyhan, p. 102. "Dellallar sokak sokak, avazları çıktığı kadar bağıırıyordu: 'Yarın, ola ki hiçbir kefare-yi adem hanesinden ayrılmaya sayıma girilecektir!' ... Gerçekten de memurlar geldi, evimizin tapusunu teslim ettik. Bütün mal mülk yazıldı. Sürgün Malatya'ya. (...) Neden devlet baba bu göç? Bunu cevabı yok, gideceksin. Hem de üç gün içinde, artık nasıl gidebilirsen. İster at arabanla, ister eşekle, ister trenle, ister yürüyerek. Üç gün içinde Tokat'ta hiç Ermeni kalmayacak. Buna seferberlik dediler, üstümüze şarkılar dizdiler, ismi batasica seferberlik. Oduna gide gide, dağda odun kalmadı, Seferberlik çikalı, doğru kadın kalmadı..."

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 13. "Anam, kendi gençliğinde, o gidip de gelmeyesı sefeberlik yıllarında unutulmaz serencamları atlattıklarından, bizi de olabilecek kötülüklerden korumaya çalışıyordu, ama ölçüyü kaçıırıyordu. Çocuğu, geniş hayalgücüyle bu korkuları büyütür, belki hasta bile olabilir diye hiç düşünmüyordu..."

Giving the story of their relatives or neighbors they declare that the event led to the losses and a trauma of their souls. For example, the grandmother Saro Nene during the deportation lost all of her family including her husband and, after long period of pain, as a result of a coincidence, finds her son Sarkis and her daughter Mirye, converts them back to Christianity again but at the end she loses her mind like Gomidas.¹²⁵

Another character Bill Nacaryan, who immigrated to the United States of America and established a good and wealthy life there, follows his living family members in Turkey and finally finds them in Elazığ. However, the final scene is not as positive as he hopes, because they are totally content in their home as converted Muslims and do not want to leave there. So the hopeless uncle has to turn back to his new home. They are now totally distanced.

Accordingly, to pursue this huge historicization project and hold a consistent story line, the authors need the continuity over time with the fragmented stories. To be able to comprehend, deal with and express the whole history, culture and social life, they juxtapose all the fragmented histories, whether their own experience or the ones they heard about from the older generations. However this juxtaposition gives the works of the writers a quality of a series of anecdotes rather than the character of a novel. A reader can easily ascertain the efforts of the writers to document whatever they collect as postmemories to give a 'true' history of deportation with its concrete narrative and sense of continuity.

¹²⁵ Gomidas, Soğomon Soğomonyan, is the famous Armenian musician and compositor who was arrested and then deported from İstanbul to Anatolia in 24 April 1915 like many other Armenian intellectuals. While he was returned to İstanbul by the help of many European and Turkish intellectuals like Halide Edip Adıvar and Ziya Gökalp, because he lost his mind during the deportation he lived in Paris in a hospital until his death. He is such an important figure in Armenian cultural life that every writer absolutely refers to his name.

In *Adım Agop Memleketim Tokat*, Arslanyan, rather than tell his story in a linear order, prefers to give description of the detailed cultural and social life of Armenians embedded in a historical context. There is even an index portion of the novel in which you can find whatever subject you want to read about, such as Easter, Roses and Fishes, A death in Military, Gypsies, the Chickens of the Mill and so forth. The same is also true for Ceyhan's *Seferberlik Türküleriyle Büyüdüm* and Margosyan's *Gavur Mahallesi* and *Söyle Margos Nerelisen?*. In Margosyan's other book *Tespîh Taneleri* we can trace the description of the past in all of the flashbacks.

The chosen process of that historicization project is explicitly the touchstone of all the Armenian pain suffered first during the CUP era and then during the Turkish Republican period. Subsequently, we can notice that by historicization they make use of the continuing effects on people that Margosyan identified as *kafle artığı* (remnants from the deportation). For instance, Margosyan is conscious about choosing the correct times in his novel and follows the linear time full of other discriminatory policies in the Republican period.

'Tespîh Taneleri' was quite hard for me, let me explain: The question was, which dates would I sort in the book and how would I sort them? What kind of a message should I give? I did not want to be misunderstood. Because every single piece of a rosary was for me the life itself.¹²⁶

As for that selection process, the writers prefer to depict the major blows after 1915, respectively *20 Kur'a Askerlik* (20 Reservist Recruits) in 1941, the Wealth Tax in 1942 and the incidents of 6/7 September in 1955, which were economic, military and social policies carried out against non-Muslims to send them away from Turkey or to diminish their visibility in the public sphere. These are all fragments of post-

¹²⁶ From the speech of the writer for the presentation of his book in 27.11.2006. '*Tespîh Taneleri*' benim için zor oldu şöyle: *Tespîh Taneleri* içinde hangi tarihleri dizecektim nasıl dizecektim? İnsanlara nasıl bir mesaj verecektim? Yanlış anlaşılacak istemiyordum. Çünkü her bir *tespîh tanesi*, benim için bir yaşamın ta kendisi idi."

memories through which the writers try to reconstruct a linear historical narrative and create a context from all the fragmented stories giving them meaning.

In *Adım Agop Memleketim Tokat*, Arslanyan's historicization begins with a city, Tokat, which has lost its dynamism because of the deportation of the Armenians, and then continues on to World War II. During that historicization he does not disregard Armenian cultural and social practices like Easter, public baths, Christmas and so forth. He tells about '20 Reservist Recruits' in 1941 depending on the eyewitness account of a seven-year-old child. He sees it like the second blow on the remaning non-Muslim population after deportation. Proving his story's truthfulness, he prefers to describe first the wartime conditions giving birth to this decision of taking the non-Muslim population under military service:

The year 1941. War was on fire, thousands of people were dead. Germans were like a fireball destroying everything it sees. A big speaker on the tower of the famous caravanserai of Tokat was informing us about the recent news (...) Everytime a German woman sings a particular song or anthem, it meant that the Germans conquered another land. (...)

On those days, news was heard in Tokat where all Armenians were shocked. All non-Muslims between 25-45 years old were to go for military service. It was not a military service with a soldier uniform. It meant generally working on road projects. (...)

Requiems, weepings, tears flowing like a river... People thought they were on a trip where they don't know whether they will come back or not. Some of them even orally expressed their last wills. Bad weather, sleet, we were freezing to death and at least one man from every household was going to a mystery. From our home, my father, uncle Yervant and uncle Avedis and my brother Kervork were going... (...) Our fathers, uncles and brothers were going to an unknown place. Where they were going and why they were going? I suppose only God knew the answers to these questions. God knew. Therefore, elderly persons, our mothers, were all praying. We could ask for kindness only from the sky on that day.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Arslanyan, pp. 39-42. "Yıl 1941. Harp kızışmış, coşmuş, binlerce insanı bir anda toz ediyor, ölen öldüğüyle kalıyordu. Almanlar ateşten bir sel olmuş, her tarafı yakıp geçiriyorlardı. Tokat'ın ünlü kervansarayı Hapan'ın kulesinde büyük bir hoparlör ajans haberlerini duyuruyordu. (...) Alman bir kadının söylediği bir marş veya şarkı duydun mu Almanlar bir yeri daha almış demekti: (...) O günlerde bir sabah bomba gibi bir haber ulaştı Tokat'a ve bütün Ermenileri oldukları yere mıhladı. Evlerin ışığı söndü adeta. Yirmi beş yaşından kırk beş yaşına kadar ne kadar gayrimüslim erkek varsa askere alınacaktı. Amma öyle asker elbisesiyle falan değildi bu askerlik, görev genellikle yol işlerinde çalışmaktı. (...) Ağıtlar, hıçkırıklar, sel gibi gözyaşı, ahlar, vahlar. İnsanlar 'ya dönülür ya dönülmez'

Margosyan prefers to tell about the Wealth Tax using testimonies, too. Here, the attendant in the Patriarchate Narin *Kuyrig* (sister) tells her and her husband's story, giving a broader picture of the period with the help of the experiences of ordinary people:

That is the story Baron Karnig. After the Wealth Tax our life order was broken. The radish-red chicks of Garbisim became yellow like an island mimosa, because he was not able to accept what happened. He was always complaining and wandering in his sleep: 'My dacig neighbors, owners of big shop lands in Sultanhamam, people who were 40 times richer than me even did not pay such a tax...' There was nothing to accept about it at all. The reason is clear, only tiny rain drops were falling on Dacigs (Muslims) whereas there was a real tornado for *Horom*, *Hırya* and *Hays*. It really destroyed people. You could pay the tax or be deported to Aşkale! (...) You had to give all the money you had. If you did not have enough money then you had to sell everything you possessed and pay the tax before the deadline date! The worst thing is that there was nowhere you could ask for help or appeal to the decision. It was such a tornado; you could not hide anywhere...¹²⁸

This broad picture exposed by Narin *Kuyrig* describes not only her husband's difficulties in paying the tax, but also the segregation between the Turks and non-Muslims. As Armenians living in the Turkish Republic, they felt themselves in a desperate position in front of the Turkification project that had been continuing since 1915.

bir yolculuğa çıktıklarını düşünüyorlardı. Şifahen vasiyetlerini bırakanlar dahi vardı. Pis bir hava, sulu kar, iliklerimize kadar donuyoruz ve her evin en azından bir erkeği meçhule doğru gidiyor. Bizden ise hem babam, hem Yervant ve Avedis amcalarım, hem de Kervork ağbım... (...) Babalarımızı, amcalarımızı, dayılarımızı bir meçhule doğru götürdüler. Nereye gidiyorlardı, niçin gidiyorlardı? Galiba bunun cevabını yalnız Allah biliyordu ki, gözleri nemli ihtiyaçların, analarımızın hepsinin dudaklarından dualar akıyordu. Şefkat sadece gökten bekleniyordu o gün. (...)”

¹²⁸ Margosyan, *Tespah Taneleri*, pp. 237-238. “Ya işte böyle Baron Karnig, Varlık'ın ardından dirlik düzenimiz bozuldu. Garbisim, o bayır turpu gibi pembe yanaklı adam iki gün içinde sarardı, ada mimozasına döndü; çünkü neden diyecek olursan, bu işi bir türlü hazmedemedi. 'Benim Dacig komşularım, Sultanhamam'daki koskoca bonmarşe sahipleri, beni kırk kerem katlayıp cebinden çıkaracak kadar varlığı olanlar bile benim kadar vergi ödemezken...' deyip deyip rüyalarında sayıklamaya başladı. Aslında bu işin hazmedilecek yanı da yoktu; çünkü neden diyecek olursan, sebebi ortada, o da hatırı sayılır tek tük Daciglerin başına çiselerken, asıl fırtına Horom, Hırya, Hayların tepesinde gümbürdedi, milletin belini büktü, maf etti. Ya vergiyi vereceksin, ya da Aşkale'ye sürgün gideceksin! (...) Köşede bucakta paran, elinde avucunda pulun varsa derhal çıkarıp vereceksin; yoksa malını mülkünü satıp vergini kuruşuna, hem de mühleti içinde ödeyeceksin! En kötüsü de başını vuracağın bir kapı da yok, itiraz hakkın da yok, itiraz mitiraz, istida mistida hak gitire! Öyle bir tufan ki sığınacak dalın yok...” *Horom* means Rum, *hırya* means Jewish in Armenian.

As for September 6-7, 1955, Mıgırdıç chooses his own love story as a backdrop for the incidents. Not dramatizing the events, he seems more concentrated on the breakup with his love and he shows us the last days of Armenians and the problems that send them away from Turkey.

“My father says it is the best thing to leave the place and go away...!”

“We are going, too...”

My classmates in Getronagan were talking about how these incidents in İstanbul in one night resulted in the destruction of the shops of their fathers, uncles and other relatives. Some of them experienced similar stories at their own home and some of them were concerned about possible similar events in the future and planning to go away to other places. The main concern was what would happen the next day?

Solution?

To go... Leave... Fly away and get rid of it.

In the beginning it was just a thought but within time these thoughts began to become a real activity. A migration flow formed by the people who could not get over the shock was increasing. For me, the real shock was nothing else than my date that never took place.

How and when could we meet again or would we meet again at all?

No! After the disappointing first day, the shoemaker shop of Zulal's father in Gedikpaşa was also destroyed. They watched the destruction of that little shop underneath their house in horror. People destroying the shop left behind their old shoes and left the shop with their new ones whereas another group behind them was trying to benefit from what was left from the previous ones and destroyed the shop to death. After a few days I learned from Artin that Zulal quit the Esayan High-school and migrated to America with her family.¹²⁹

Accordingly, we may point out the fact that Margosyan, Ceyhan and Arslanyan are concerned with documenting the “true” history and provide its salvation from

¹²⁹ Ibid., pp. 511-512. “Babam diyor ki en iyisi çekip gitmek, buraları terk etmek...!” “Biz de gideceğiz...” “Getronogan'daki sınıf arkadaşlarımın büyük bir çoğunlu, bir gece içinde İstanbul'un neredeyse altını üstüne getiren bu olayların sonucunda kimisi babasının, kimisi amcasının, kimisi tanıdıklarının dükkanlarının yağmalanıp talan edilmesi, kimisi evlerinde benzer manzaralarla karşı karşıya kalması, kimi ileride bu tür olaylarla tekrar karşılaşma endişesiyle bir an önce yabancı diyarlara göç etmeyi düşündüklerini birbirlerine aktarırken gelip dayandıkları nokta yarının ne olacağı kaygısıydı. Çare? Gitmek... Terk etmek... Kaçıp kurtulmak... Başlangıçta fısıltı halinde dillendirilen düşünceler giderek icraata dönüşüyordu. (...) Olayın şokunu atlatamayanların başını çektikleri bir göç dalgası yayılıp gelişirken benim için asıl şok, onca hayalini kurduğum ama gerçekleşmeyen bu ilk randevudan başka ne olabilirdi ki? (...) Bir daha ne zaman, nasıl buluşacaktık ya da buluşabilecek miydik? Hayır! O ilk randevunun hüsrarla sonuçlanmasının ardından Zulal'ın babasının Gedikpaşa'daki kunduracı dükkânı da yağma edilenler arasındaymış. Evlerinin altındaki bu küçük dükkânın yağma edilmesine korku içinde şahit olmuşlar. Çapulcular ayaklarındaki eski ayakkabıları bırakıp yenilerini giyerek uzaklaşırken, arkalarından gelen bir başka grup da, öncekilerin eksik bıraktığı talandan paylarını alıp dükkânı tümüyle kırıp dökmüşler. Daha sonraki günlerde Zulal'ın Esayan'ı yarıda bıraktığını, ailece Amerika'ya göç ettiklerini yine Artin'den öğreniyordum.”

forgetfulness and unconsciousness. Those three writers by their multiple forms and narratives try to find true history as a continuous process where the rupture is reduced to personal stories rather than to a great History as a whole.¹³⁰ Therefore, they use the way to give voice to a true history to retrieve it from unawareness and make the readers ask themselves why they have never heard of it. The “true” history here is the basic motive in that manner, because they find the only solution and healing in the truth. Therefore, we do not see any fiction or imagined story in the novels.

In my writings, I told about our place like I saw it and lived it. I told the characters and name almost exactly as the same, without changing, as they are. Many of these uncles, wives and ants are now in heaven. Their names and their memories shall live in this book!¹³¹

Furthermore, during this history construction, the *Asr-ı Saadet* (golden age), meaning the geography where the Armenian population inhabited namely the native habitants, before and just after 1915 is mentioned over and over again. The peaceful times are remembered by the characters in the novels and refer to the culture of Armenian people in their homelands. Although this period has come to an end it is recalled as one of perfect cultural, social and economic order.

There we are, Tokat. In a few minutes, the reality hit us clearly. It was very hard to believe but there was neither a vineyard nor garden in my heaven land Tokat. It was full of buildings. My darling Tokat, what happened to you? Where are the music people talking about vineyards, where is the voice of Uncle Oshigan’s lute, where is Onnik’s joyful songs, the violin of Ethem and the only accordion player of Tokat and Keğam abi, the most handsome person of Tokat? Where is the smell of the fine wines, where is the fine smell of rakı produced secretly in cellars in midnights? Why are the people who used to grab their metal pots barried in the ground and drink by saying ‘Come on agas, to

¹³⁰ Varjabedian, p.149.

¹³¹ Margosyan, *Gâvur Mahallesi* (İstanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 1992), p. 6. “Yazılarımda, bizim oralari anlatım, gördüğüm ve yaşadığım gibi. Tipleri ve adlarını hemen hemen aynen verdim, değiştirmeden, oldukları gibi, onlardan, o bacolardan, o dayılardan, o amcalardan çoğu öte tarafa göçmüşlerdir. Adları, hatıraları biraz da bu satırlarda, bu kitapta yaşasın.”

Goodness' are so silent now? Why are those are replaced with a weird razzle dazzle? Which bitter wind came here and made you like that?¹³²

Secondly, apart from constructing and transmitting a collective memory to the community by creating a story line around the catastrophe, there is also a crucial attempt to write an alternative historiography to the Turkish one showing the presence of Armenians in Anatolia throughout the years and the unjust and cruel character of the deportation of the Ottoman government despite their respectful loyalty. Here the main aim is to refute the assertions of the Turkish nation-state, labeling Armenians as traitors, which give legitimacy to the deportation and massacre.

There is no cloud in the air, what is that smoke;
There is no one dead so what is that outcry.
There was neither a cloud nor a smoke in the air. However, the decision for the Armenians was taken made and after that, it will be always dark. Armenians so loyal to their state gave so many people many pashas, bureaucrats, Armenians who died for their country when it is needed.¹³³

This alternative history contains the lives, pain and experiences of the ordinary people living together despite their ethnic and cultural differences. Nonetheless, the figures like Talat Pasha, Cemal Pasha and Enver Pasha (Ottoman generals) accused the Armenians of being traitors and punished them unfairly. As opposed to those accusations that legitimize their deportation within Turkish historiography, the

¹³² Arslanyan, p. 10. “İşte Tokat’a vardık. Birkaç dakika içinde acı gerçek bütün çıplaklığıyla çarptı yüzümüze. İnanması benim için çok güçtü ama o yeşil cennet Tokat’ında ne bağ kalmıştı ne bahçe. Her taraf bina olmuş, bilmem ki sevgili Tokat’ım sana ne haller olmuş! Nerede bağdan bağa akseden o musiki alemleri, nerede Hapap’ın Oshigan emminin udunun sesi, nerelerde santuri Onnik emminin şen şakrak oyun havaları, nerede Efrem dayının, yani Kemani Ethem’in o nağmeli keman sesi, nerede Tokat’ın tek akordeoncusu ve en yakışıklısı Keğam ağbi...? Hani, nerede bağdan bağa mis gibi mürmurik şarabının kokusu, nerede geceyarıları mahzenlerde gizlice yapılan mis kokulu rakıların, amberi diye anılan kaçak likörün? Ellerindeki bakır kalaylı Tokat maşrapalarını toprağa gömülü küplerden doldurup “Haydi ağalar, iyiliğe!” deyip, sıhhate, afiyete içen o insanlar neden sessizliğe gömülmüş? Neden bunların yerine bir garip şamata kaplamış her yanı? Hangi acı poyraz essip de seni böyle tarumar etmiş?”

¹³³ Ibid., p. 102. “Havada bulut yok, bu ne dumandır, Mehlede ölen yok, bu ne figandır. Havada ne bulut ne de duman vardı, ama Ermeniler için bir karar verilmişti ve ondan sonrası hep karanlık olacaktı. Devlet-i Ali Osman’a onca sadık Ermeniler, Devletlerine onca nazır, paşa, bürokrat vermiş Ermeniler, günü gelince vatan için can veren Ermeniler.”

Armenian authors try to give the impression that they were very distant from any nationalist enthusiasm and lived with the feeling of fraternity in Anatolia. In these words, we do not see any different group of Armenians promoting Armenian nationalism as the Turkish historiography claims.¹³⁴

Only in *Tespîh Taneleri* we can find a name, Antranik Ozanyan, who is very famous figure in the Armenian collective memory and historiography and for his bravery and honorable resistance against Ottoman soldiers is considered as a national hero and called a freedom fighter. He is such a key figure, like Gomidas, that there are many songs and stories dedicated to him. Nonetheless, in Turkish historiography, he is the leader of the rebellious Armenians and a ferocious betrayer.¹³⁵ In Margosyan's novel mentioned above, Antranik Pasha is memorialized as a national hero and the symbol of the *kafle* days and the pain, despite his negative importance in Turkish historiography.

(...) The dentist was enjoying himself; he was singing the Antranig Pasha song with eyes full of tears, remembering the Kafle days and explaining the hard times he had had. They made a toast to the Armenian people.¹³⁶

Taking into account the fact that their national figure symbolizes the betrayal of the Armenian community within Turkish historiography, the authors try to destroy the hegemonic historical understanding that locks Armenians into certain stereotypes like 'wealthy' and 'traitor'. Ceyhan, for instance, portrays a homogenous community

¹³⁴ For official Turkish historiography, the reason behind deportation is the nationalist and brutal activities of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Hay Heghapokhakan Dashnaktsutyun in Armenian, and known as Taşnak in Turkey) established in 1890 to provide the independence of Armenia, which led to turmoil in Anatolia during World War I. However, none of the literary works talk about this organization.

¹³⁵ Kamuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası* (Ankara: TTK Basımevi, 1983), p. 166-167. Particularly in Turkish Embassies in the diaspora there are powerful bureaucratic obstacles to give a newly born child the name of Antranig (according to the interview with Aris Nalcı, editor of Agos Newspaper). This may be understood as an attempt to prevent his heroic image in the collective memories.

¹³⁶ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri*, p. 184. "(...) *Dişçi'nin kefi geli, misafirin şerefine bi de Antranigi zirnörneri (soldiers of Antranik) diye Antranig Paşa şarkısını söli, gözleri doli, çocığılığını, Kafle günlerini, çektiği sığhıntıları anlati. Ermeni milletının şerefine barabar kadeh kaldırılar.*"

loyal to the Turkish government. The history's unresolved and unjust pain is attributed to the Committee of Union and Progress and the troika Enver Pasha, Talat Pasha and Cemal Pasha.

They do not come to my door for money or food, think about it. They want a life. They want to save their lives through my help. Because officers search for Armenians every single day, in every neighborhood. There is an order from the government. All the people who try to hide Armenian people in their house will be hung in front of their door with the Armenians. It is not like former Ottoman prohibitions lasting only a couple of days. If it would be so, we could wait a couple of days and get rid of the problem. This is the law of Bahaeddin Şakierler, Envers, Talats, who worked so hard to get the control from the padishah and are unstoppable now. In order to hinder people in Anatolia who do not obey these laws, Yakup Cemil was appointed to spot these people and punish them. It was such times... (...) Although there are many brave and virtuous people in Zara, all the people were scared to hide Armenians whom they hid before like their own brothers. However, there were some Armenian children who were helped by them by changing their names to Turkish ones despite İttihat ve Terakki. Afterwards, the confessed by saying 'we thought that these laws will last forever, if we had known it will slow down after a year, we would have hidden longer.'¹³⁷

The Republic, on the other hand, is the new hope for their future. As Ceyhan learns from her mother, he was born on Republican day. He becomes very excited and asks why she had not said it before. Her mother then tells about that day:

Who know how many times that *vazgeçti* (issue) has been mentioned before. However, you could now understand it, because you were not wise enough before. In the times you were just born, many people, Kurds, Armenians and Turks were walking together with their torches. I

¹³⁷ Arslanyan, p. 71. "Benim kapıma para için, ekmek için gelmiyorlar, düşünsene bir. Can istiyorlar. Canlarını benim vasıtamla kurtarmak istiyorlar. Çünkü her gün tellalar İstanbul'dan gelen tamimleri alenen bağırıyorlar, mahalle mahalle. Hükümetin emir var. Her kim ki evinde, ahırında, velhasıl bildiği yerde Ermeni kaçağı saklarsa, yakalandığında, kaçaklarla beraber evin kapısında asılacak... Arkadaş amanı bildin mi? Bu öyle bundan önceki Osmanlı yasağı değil ki üç gün sürsün, ondan sonra sen sen, ben de ben kurtulasın. Bu, onca yıl uğraşıp imparatorluğu padişahın elinden aldıktan sonra artık önünde durulmaz olan Enverler'in, Talatlar'ın, Bahaeddin Şakirler'in kanunu. Hatta ola ki Anadolu'da bu emirleri de tam yerine getirmeyecek vali ve kaymakam çıkarsa, Yakup Cemil de onları kontrol ve cezalandırmak için gönderiliyor. Kimin canı kaç ki aksini yapmak şöyle dursun, düşünmek bile insanları bitiriyor. Devir işte o devir. (...) Zara'nın faziletlisi, yüreklişi çok olmakla birlikte yerine göre kardeş gibi yaşadığı, öz kardaşından bile ileri tuttuğu Ermeni komşularını saklayıp kurtarmaya korkuyordu insanlar. Yine İttihat Terakki'ye rağmen isimlerini değiştirerek kurtardıkları ermeni çocukları yok değildi. Ve sonradan, 'biz bu şeni kanunların hep sürüp gideceğini zannediyorduk, hızının böyle bir yıl sonra azalacağını bilseydik, daha nicelerini saklayabilirdik' diye çok da hayıflanmışlardı."

remember that like yesterday. It was the year that Sivas deputy Halis Turgut Bey was hung because of a murder attempt on Gazi Pasha. It was a particular day and year. Therefore, I never forget it.¹³⁸

Those loyal people, against all the assertions in historiography that label them traitors, were essentially peaceful with the new regime of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, despite the fact that they knew there was an uncertainty about their situation under the regime.

However, we were singing the songs correctly. After hard work lasting many days, we learned to sing it perfectly. We shouted like lions without any difference from the others. I was the lead singer, with permission from Allah:
We got out of
Every war since 10 years.
We created 15 million young people
From various age groups
At the top, there is the commander who is
Respected by the whole world
We are Turks, Our chests are shields for the Republic
Stopping is not for a Turk
Turk in the lead, Turk forward
Rap rap rap, rap rap rap, we were so joyful. In those years, my friend, we could not be smothered more than that, especially when our Gazi Pasha was the leader!¹³⁹

Nevertheless, in contrast to members of the younger generation who do not know the entire history, the survivors and witnesses of the deportation are always prudent vis-à-vis the Republic. The dialogue between Ceyhan and his father about a poem that will be sung in the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Turkish Republic shows

¹³⁸ Ceyhan, p. 45. “Kim bilir kaç kere bu vazgeçti (issue) olmuştur. Ama sen daha akıl baliğ olmadıgından ancak şimdi anlayabildin. Sen dünya yüzüne çıkıp da, ilk çığlığı attığın sırada, alay alay insanlar, Türkü, Kürdü, Ermenisi birbirine karışmış, ellerinde uzun sırkılarla fener alayı dedikleri meşaleleri geçiriyorlardı. Bu yüzden hep bugün gibi hatırlarım. Senesine gelince, Gazi Paşaya suikat tertibiyle ilgili olarak Sivas mebusu Halis Turgut Bey’in asıldığı seneydi. Belli gün belli yıl olduğu için hiç hatırımdan çıkmaz.”

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 52. “Ama şarkıları tam yerine getiriyoruz. Günlerce meşkten sonra tümüyle oturdu makam. Aslanlar gibi bağıyoruz, hiç kayırmadan, hiç de saptırmadan. Başrolde ben oynuyorum, Allah’ın izni keremi ile: Çıktık açık alımla; On yılda her savaştan; On yılda onbeş milyon; Genç yarattık her yaştan; Başta bütün dünyanın; Saydığı başkumandan; Türküz cumhuriyet’e; Göğsümüz tunç siperi; Türke durmak yaraşmaz; Türk önde türk ileri; Rap rap rap, rap rap rap, yere göğe sığmıyoruz. Onlar ne yıllardı arkadaş, daha zaptolacağımız mı kalmış; hele başımızda Gazi Paşamız da var iken!”

us his father's attitude toward history and the memory of their people dead for that nation-state.

Turks founded today the milestones for the Republic
They mixed the mud of these stones with blood
Happy festival all you people
There is no bigger day in history
We are out of darkness and see the light
Our Gazi is an example for all Bozkurts
(...)

Hayrig, look, they say that they mixed the mud with blood. I never saw blood in the things you have built, you always use water. Is there anything wrong with it?

(...)

"For now, try to learn the song or the anthem, whatever it is and sing it. You will see how great this cornerstone is in the future. You have to mix it only with blood in order to create a solid cornerstone. They use mud mixed with water only for these crappy buildings of ours made of wood!"¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p.84. "Türkler bugün cumhuriyet temeli kurdular, O temelin çamurunu kan ile yoğurdular, Kutlu olsun ey millet, bayramınız bugün, Tarihte yoktur böyle büyük bayram, bugün, Karanlıktan kurtulduk biz, aydınlık atımız, Bozkurtlara örnektir dernektir Gazimiz. (...) "Hayrig bak burasında bu temelin çamurunu kan ile yoğurdular diyor. Sizin attığınız temellerin çamurunda hiç kan görmemişim, hep suyla kariyorsunuz. Bunda yanlışlık olmasın?" (...) "Hele şimdilik güzelce öğrenip, şarkı mıdır marş mıdır ne karın ağrısıdır, çağırmaya bak. O temelin nasıl büyük bir temel olduğunu büyüdüğünde anlarsın. Onu ancak kan ile kararsan çimentosu sağlam olur. Suyla karılan çamurları bak bizim yaptığımız boktan kale çitten yapıların timeline koyarlar ancak!"

CHAPTER 4

NEW ARMENIAN WRITERS: BETWEEN REALITY AND FICTION

In this chapter, I will draw a picture of Armenian authors who, as the successors of Margosyan, Ceyhan and Arslanyan, have been demonstrating and opening up new dimensions in Turkish Armenian literature since the 1990s. I will discuss the literary works of Markar Esayan, Karin Karakaşlı, Jaklin Çelik, Kevork Kirkoryan, Rober Haddeciayan, Raffi Kebabçıyan and Aret Vartanyan. In spite of the similarities among those writers and their predecessors, it is obvious that those new authors' different historical backgrounds and generations raise some different concerns. In other words, even though we cannot speak about any epistemological break, we should examine the new problematics articulated to the fundamental concerns and the change in their approaches to dealing with the events of 1915 and other problems stemming from their identities.

There are some basic reasons for these differences. First, because they belong to a younger generation, they did not experience the rupture of Armenian history.

They are the grandchildren of survivors and of the fact that they did not experience the catastrophe or the other events causing continuity in the sense of “loss” distances them from the massacres and the displacement. However, we can still hear a tone of searching and excavating for real history, which is actually in pursuit of something beyond the concrete testimonies of survivors exposed by their predecessors.

Did it really happen? Is it the truth? Yes and no... It is certainly not less real than the crap was told us by our father, the history. *This is our reality, our past...*¹⁴¹

This more conscious approach to the *real* history also is related to the search for their own identities that is ruptured strictly because of the lack of any memory belonging to the catastrophe, September 6/7 incidents, 20 Reservist Recruits or the Wealth Tax. They are totally within the boundaries of the present without any lived reference to the past. Thus, the gap between their history and memory gets wider and this leads to a more conscious and deliberate search for something that can fill the gap with more open questions about the reality, history, identity, space and the feeling of loss. Hence with a deeper problem about history and identity, other mediums are used to explore the personal and collective memory, displacement, nostalgia, the feeling of minority, absence and healing.

Secondly, as we will see in later parts of the chapter, those writers who can be classified as “urban” construct different relationship between their identity and space, different from their predecessors who settled in Anatolia. Margosyan, Ceyhan and Arslanyan, although they settle in cities, feel the displacement again and Anatolia shapes their writings more than ever. On the other hand, in the novels of the new generation, the aim to prove an existence in Anatolia as the homeland of the

¹⁴¹ Markar Esayan, *Karşılaşma* (İstanbul: Hayy Kitap, 2007), p. 8. “*Olmuş mu? Gerçek mi? Hem evet, hem hayır... Tarih Baba'nın bize gerçek diye yutturduğu onca zırvadan daha az gerçek değil kesinlikle... Bu bizim gerçeğimiz, bizim geçmişimiz...*”

community gives up its place to Istanbul as the only space where they find a connection to their identity, with its character of being the living space at present. That division that is also a part of the definition of the original and authentic Armenian identity. While Anatolia is the homeland of the community, Istanbul is always questioned in the light of the history as discussed in the previous chapter. Hence this division places those writers in a position that we may call “in between.” However, in accordance with the collective memory of Armenians who have lost their connection with the past, they do not abandon Anatolia as the essence of their identity and they still attempt to locate it in the writings as a sort of utopia in the past.

Thirdly, I will try to understand different identities incorporated into Armenian identity and also different perspectives on the Armenian identity. Differently from Margosyan, Ceyhan and Arslanyan, this time we have to take into account other issues that are articulated in their identification problems, such as gender, hybrid ethnic roots or being alienated from the Armenian community, that push them toward other literary concerns. In short, we can suggest that the classic definition of the Armenian identity is also under transformation and is shaped by new components.

“Mythopoeia for the Ultimate Goal”: Historicization and Catharsis

Like the novelists in the first chapter, the continuity of Armenian history is extremely important for those from the new Armenian generation in constructing their identities. The main aim is again to integrate the 1915 events with modern Armenian history and so with their own pasts. While Margosyan, Ceyhan and Arslanyan deal with the catastrophe with the “true” testimonies of the survivors and are in pursuit of

recording everything they have that belongs to the past in order to create a more epic narrative, most of the writers from the new generation do not prefer the documentation of those testimonies. They try, rather, to construct a mass of myths and fictions to be able to cope with the gaps in their personal and collective history and to be able to demolish the silence on both the Turkish and Armenian sides.

The motive that pushes those writers to use mystery and fiction in their novels and stories may be understood in two ways. First, since they are from a different generation from the survivors and did not live within all the discriminative history, they lack any lived experience to use as a reference point. Hence, since there are some gaps in their memories, they cannot use the concrete narratives as a bridge like others do. At that point, their narrative has to enter the realm of the mythical to fill this gap. Therefore, they create the myths and all the gaps are bridged through mythopoeia,¹⁴² thus creating continuity within the collective memory of the communal group and the autobiography of the author in his interpretation with the collective memory. In short, the rupture created in the past is bridged over through the construction of myths and fictions and in that way a continuity is established between past and present. This mythicization of actual Armenian history will be understood better with the analyses of the novels below.

The second motive that pushes them toward these kinds of stories is the search for a catharsis. The fictional and mythic stories allow them to establish scenarios for the healing process according, of course, to their own prescriptions. In other words, the cure that they assume they need takes place within their mythic stories and becomes easily accomplished. They may reach their utopias via the

¹⁴² Varjabedian, p. 160.

fictions they imagine, rather than any worry of documentation of reality and history. On the contrary, they can manage to write their own reality and history by way of their semi-real, semi-imaginary heroes.

I want to start to my analysis with Markar Esayan, who is a member of the younger generation of Armenian writers. His concerns about his Armenian identity also shape his literature as we will discuss.

The insistence on the historicization of the Armenian catastrophe continues dramatically in Esayan's novels. In both of his novels, *Karşılaşma* (Confrontation) and *Şimdinin Dar Odası* (The Narrow Room of the Present), as he also overtly expresses, his indispensable aim is to find and recount the pasts of ordinary people, salvage them from oblivion and articulate them in the face of "History." From the opening of his first novel, *Şimdinin Dar Odası*, he explains why he has to write:

To be a human without a past... This is not a new obsession. It is not a disease that has been caught intentionally. We, Armenians, Eastern people, Anatolians live generally in the 'small room of the presence' and fear from our history like a Mouse fears from a cat or a cat from a dog. It is obvious that the future is uncertain but having a past that is uncertain is not a burden that a human can carry...¹⁴³

However, this so-called obsession with the past shows itself differently from that of his predecessors. Whereas Margosyan, Ceyhan and Arslanyan attempted to narrate the past and their history based on "truths" inherent in the testimonies of the survivors, Esayan creates continuity in history within a different framework: His stories are mysteries, a concept that is missing in Anatolian narrative memoirs. Esayan, for his history-writing process, prefers to "frame aspects of the non-concreteness of memories and he embarks on his project of integrating his own

¹⁴³ Markar Esayan, *Şimdinin Dar Odası* (İstanbul: İnkılap Kitabevi, 2005), p. 7. "Geçmiş olmanın bir insan olmak... Bu takıntı yeni değil. İsteyerek ve bilerek edinilmiş değil bu hastalık. Biz Ermeniler, biz Doğulular, Biz Anadolulular, daha çok Şimdi'nin Dar Odası'nda yaşar, farenin kediden, kedinin köpektan korktuğu kadar korkarız geçmişten. Belirli olan geleceğin belirsizliğidir ama adı 'geçmiş' olan o kara dulun utanmasızca belirsiz kalması, biz sahipsiz ademoğullarının taşıyabileceği bir yük olmamıştır asla..."

personal identity showing the self-reflexivity toward the historicization project with that of his family and the history to his nation.”¹⁴⁴

Even though he does not mention overtly that this is his own story, we can see the self-reflexivity if we look carefully at the characters and Esayan’s own life. Esayan’s father’s name is also Aram as in the novel, and he is a shoe seller, too. Moreover, Esayan’s mother is also Muslim like the character Nurten Hanım in the novel. Therefore, even if Esayan does not declare that this is his family’s story, we can find clues to his self-reflexivity.

Both of the novels begin with a mysterious opening waiting to be resolved; in other words, he wants us to discover the past. In the second chapter, like his predecessors, he also tries to reconstruct and create a linear historical narrative with all the fragments of memories transmitted from the witnesses. However, this time these testimonies have a different character. There is no need to give the “truth” and concrete evidence, even though he encourages the reader to doubt and question the reality of his writings. We, as the readers, in conjunction with the artist-narrator, are supposed not to be able to separate the real and the present from the stories of the past. As Varjabedian says, “history slips into myth and myth into history.”¹⁴⁵ It is not possible to differentiate the two anymore.

So what will happen to you? What will you do with the words that I have just said? How can you live with the possibility that I deceived you throughout this long story? And the worse, what if all of those are true? How will you decide what is wrong or true?¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Varjabedian, p. 154.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 160.

¹⁴⁶ Esayan, *Şimdinin Dar Odası*, p. 275. “Peki sizlere ne olacak? Nereye koyacaksınız bu anlattıklarımı? Uzunca bir anlatı boyunca sizleri kandırma olabileceğim olasılığını nasıl hazmedeceksiniz? Daha da kötüsü, ya bunların hepsi doğruysa? Nasıl karar vereceksiniz neyin ne olduğuna?”

For instance, in *Şimdinin Dar Odası*, we enter an otherworldly realm with the narrator. One night, when he learns that someone called Uğur¹⁴⁷ is dead, he suddenly falls in a deep sadness for all deaths, like those of his father, relatives and close friends. Nevertheless, here the thing that makes him sad is not death itself, but its symbolic meaning. Death means the disappearance of the past, the history of Armenians. This obscurity of their stories makes him think about the past all over again. Then he sleeps and when he wakes up, he hears some voices around him. Then he understands that they are the heroes of his past whose stories he wants to hear and write in order to prevent them from being forgotten.

“Father, is that really you?”

My father nodded his head and laughed. At that moment, all the shadows began to be more clearcut. I just could not believe it. Uğur’s grandfather Artin Efendi and his wife Hırpsime Hanım, Artin Efendi’s nephew Dikran, Soğomon Usta, my father’s cousin and one of the founders of AP Uncle Nişan, madam Alikı, our lawyer Raik Bey, Dikran’s mother Meline, Cüce Simon, uncle Zeki, Turan Bey, Melkon Dayday, Mösyö Stelyo and others... All began to appear one by one. All the heroes who are not alive right know but will appear in my story were in a single room. It was like a carnival. We were experiencing a huge and meaningful meeting.¹⁴⁸

In fact, this scene is actually a manifestation for breaking the wall of silence and telling the hidden and suppressed stories and testimonies of Armenians. Esayan wants to break that wall, not depending on the true stories told chronologically with an aim of documenting whatever he hears, but rather altering the time flow and melting the reality with the myths to reach to the past, because he knows that

¹⁴⁷ The reader only learns who Uğur is at the end of the novel. Uğur is the grandchild of Artin Efendi and he is raised by Aram who is the father of the narrator. So the narrator and Uğur are like step-brothers.

¹⁴⁸ Esayan, *Şimdinin Dar Odası*, p. 15. “Baba gerçekten sen misin?” Babam gülererek başını salladı. O an tüm gölgeler belirginleşmeye başladılar. İnanamıyordum. Uğur’un dedesi Artin Efendi ve eşi Hırpsime Hanım, Artin Efendi’nin yeğeni Dikran, Soğomon Usta, babamın kuzeni ve AP’nin kurucularından Nişan Amca, madam Alikı, Avukatımız Raik Bey, Dikran’ın annesi Meline, Cüce Simon, Zeki dayı, Turan Bey, Melkon Dayday, Korkut Bey, Mösyö Stelyo ve diğerleri... Hepsi teker teker belirmeye başlamışlardı... Hikâyemde yer alacak ve artık hayatta olmayan tüm kahramanlarım odama dolmuşlardı. Bir karnaval gibiydi sanki. Büyük ve anlamlı bir buluşma yaşıyorduk.”

chronological narrative does not matter for one who wants to understand the whole. It is only through these myths that he can transmit memories to reach the lost past. In other words, his process of historicization brings out the invisible and the mystery and fills the gaps created in his history. It is only through this choice of establishing a fairyland of ghosts¹⁴⁹ that the lost stories are revealed themselves.

That has two meaning for the reader. First of all, the author is aware of the fact that the deceased have no chance or opportunity to tell their own stories. Hence this is the time to reconstruct a total history and collective memory through their memories. In other words, they become like a site of Esayan's archaeological excavation to reach the past that has been ruined by of the great tragedy that the Armenian people experienced.

Secondly, these people, namely the survivors and their children, usually prefer to be silent in order to heal and overcome the entire trauma and the sense of loss. However, the third generation is now aware of the fact that healing can only be achieved not through silence but through speaking. Therefore, they want to write the untold stories of their ancestors to form their own identities. We can say this is the manifestation of the desire for healing.

After that confrontation with the ghosts throughout the night the narrator listens to their stories centered on Artin Efendi's family, the grandfather of the unknown character Uğur. Artin Efendi is a respectable accountant in Istanbul and he experiences the miserable days of the Wealth Tax and the incidents of September 6/7 that all non-Muslims experienced in Turkey. Giving that real historical context, Esayan again enters the realm of fantasy and creates his legendary character Dikran,

¹⁴⁹ This is a common theme in diaspora to speak with ghosts in order to catch the lost memories. For one strong example, see the analysis of Tina Bastajian' short film *Jagadakeer... between the near&east*, in Hrag Varjabedian, "Historicization of the Armenian Catastrophe: From the Concrete to the Mythical," in *The Armeninan Genocide: Cultural and Ethical Legacies*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2007), pp. 154-171.

who is the nephew of Artin Efendi. Dikran's soul can exit from his body, enter another one, and turn it into whatever he wants. With that magical power, he takes into his hand the cure for the catharsis of both Turks and Armenians. I will accordingly analyze the issue of catharsis in those novels in the later parts of the chapter.

Esayan's other book, *Karşılaşma*, again begins with a puzzle that we have to solve. We learn that this is the story of Zaymayr Parseğyan, the narrator of the novel. He is sick and on his last night, he decides to tell his life story and his secrets. He was born in 1905 and spent his life in Istanbul. While the story of Zaymayr gives the reader a whole history of Armenian experiences including all the touchstones, it also presents an ordinary and cosmopolitan life in Istanbul including Turks, Kurds, Armenians, Greeks, Alevis and gypsies. However, we learn that this ordinary life of Zaymayr is also the key for the catharsis and opens a bridge between the past and present of Armenian history, again by way of mythopoeia.¹⁵⁰ This time, his Armenian friend, Pehlivan Usta, is the heroic character in the novel. Pehlivan Usta is in the center of the novel and even the name Esayan has chosen for him plays an important role in his creation of the collective past and an authentic Armenian identity. Pehlivan Usta is actually the nickname of this heroic character. His original name is hidden and only known by the narrator who knows also his magical talent. Esayan sometimes abbreviates this name as 'S.', making a sensation about it and giving some clues about an Armenian hidden history.

Yes, he had many different names. Nicknames like Kalaycı, Pehlivan Usta (Master) or just Usta were following him like the mice following the piper. He was like a name-box. I was one of the few people who knew his real name. He usually preferred to be called 'Kalaycı' (tiner) (because it was his job) or 'Pehlivan' and did not like people knowing his real name 'S' or to be called that way. This sensitivity was due to

¹⁵⁰ Varjabedian, p. 151.

the fact that his cousin he lost in a dramatic way had the same name. In a way, he buried his name with his cousin.¹⁵¹

So who was this mysterious cousin? What is the pain behind his death? Why does he hide his name with his cousin? What was the dark spot in the history? We learn his original name, and also his cousin's connection with the tragic Armenian past, toward the end of the novel. Pehlivan Usta's real name is Soğomon. His cousin whose name is Soğomon Soğomonyan, is in fact a national hero in Armenian history. He was a famous musician, priest and intellectual and came to be known as Gomidas Vartabed.¹⁵² Through this imagined kinship, Esayan finds a way to represent the symbol of the 1915 events and finds also the opportunity to recount the catastrophic events in detail through the figure of Gomidas.

In his tale, Esayan says that Gomidas and his cousin Pehlivan Usta traveled throughout Anatolia to register all the songs of Anatolia. Gomidas became famous throughout the Ottoman Empire. Then they returned to Istanbul to work in a more convenient place. However when the *medz yeğern*¹⁵³ (great catastrophe) began, although Gomidas was one of the most famous and respected figures in Ottoman cultural life and gave concerts even for the organizations of *Türk Yurdu* (the journal established in 1911, is one of the most important publications that is influenced from the raising Turkish nationalist ideology) , he became one of the victims. He was arrested and deported to Anatolia like many other intellectuals on April 24, the day Armenians memorialize as the beginning of the genocide. Throughout the

¹⁵¹ Esayan, *Karşılaşma*, p. 67. “Evet onun pek çok ismi vardı. Kalaycı, Pehlivan Usta ve sadece Usta gibi pek çok mahlas, Farelüköyün Kavalcısı'nın peşine takılmış fareler gibi ardından sürüklenip gidiyordu. Bir isim kumbarası gibiydi Usta. Ben onun hakiki ismini bilen ender kişilerdendim. O daha çok kendisine Kalaycı (mesleği buydu çünkü) veya Pehlivan denmesini tercih ediyor, hakiki ismi S'nin bilinmesinden, ya da bilinse bile kimsenin kullanmasından hazzetmiyordu. Bu hassasiyeti, acı bir biçimde kaybettiği kuzeni ile adaş olmasından kaynaklanıyordu. Bu adı kuzeni ile birlikte toprağa gömmüştü sanki.”

¹⁵² As I have mentioned in the previous chapter Gomidas is a very common reference for Turkish Armenian authors. He is like the symbol of the loss of 1915 and proof of the past.

¹⁵³ This is one of the terms that Armenians often use for 1915.

deportation period and because of the pain he endured, he lost his mind. He could only return to Istanbul by the help of Turkish intellectuals and then went to Paris and died there in a hospital not even able to say a word about the pain he had seen and felt. When he was in Paris, Pehlivan Usta stayed with him. Here Esayan uses Gomidas, the symbol of genocide, to be able to tell this dark part of the history by the help of Pehlivan Usta:

The year 1915... It was April. (...) Three crazy people had come to power (...) Towards the end of April, a statement was published with the signature of the Minister Talat Paşa saying that the primary members of Armenian associations who were supposedly working against the country would be arrested. All the Armenians in Istanbul were arrested. The wave spread through Anatolia afterwards. (...)Destiny is scraped off Armenians from Anatolia with a palette knife. Nameless groups consisting of elderly people, women and children isolated from men filled the roads. This ancient people of Anatolia were forced to the South, to deserts, to cruel deaths.¹⁵⁴

While by these sentences Esayan puts out his victimized nation's pain, he also creates a bridge between the unknown past and present through the imagined kinship between Gomidas and Pehlivan Usta. He takes out the fragments of the past and binds them to the story he tells. Consequently, the mission is complete, the gap within the history is filled and the reality and fiction are mingled. We can also say that this myth as a new means, allows him to tell the "untellable" by transforming it into the "tellable," in other words, he can only overcome the difficulty and even the impossibility of conveying the pain and the loss of the Armenian people by that tellable tale merged with the real history.

¹⁵⁴ Esayan, *Karşılaşma*, p. 182-183. "Yıl 1915... Aylardan Nisan. (...) Devletin başına üç çılgın geçmiş. (...) Nisan'ın sonlarına doğru sözüm ona memleket aleyhine çalışan Ermeni cemiyetlerinin önde gelenlerinin tutuklamak üzere dahiliye Nazırı Talat Paşa imzalı bir tamim yayınlanıyor. İstanbul'da ne kadar Ermeni varsa tutuklanıyor. Güruh İstanbul'dan yayılarak Mayıs ayı sonlarına doğru tüm Anadolu'yu kaplıyor. (...) Şer ispatulasıyla kazıyor ermenileri tüm Anadolu'dan. erkeklerden arındırılmış, yaşlı, kadın ve çocuklardan müteşekkil yarı canlı, yarı cansız, isimsiz kafileler yolları dolduruyor. Anadolu'nun bu kadim milleti, Osmanlı'nın Millet-i Sadıka'sı, güneye, çöllere, vakitsiz, zalim ölümlere savruluyor."

In addition to that, he can also save himself from the controversy over the truth of those stories, since he does not declare that he only writes the truths and testimonies. He can find the opportunity to fill the gap between Turkish official historiography and the lived reality of the Armenians. He can find the possibility to deny Turkish historiography and speak the hidden truths. Since he does not claim that he documents the truths like an autobiography and uses the real people's testimonies, the mythopoeia that he creates allows him to express easily his own history, which conflicts with the Turkish one.

Our second writer, Kevork Kirkoryan, having a distant stance toward the Armenian community, shows that he seeks the clues to his Armenian identity in his books, too. In his collection of stories, *Aşkın Kör Noktası*, while he says he tries to understand the essence of love oppressed in real life, he actually brings old important Armenian figures, known or sometimes unknown, to the present. In his fictional stories, he makes these Armenian people protagonists or characters and so makes them known instead of forgotten and buried in the past. His aim seems to be to catch the unknown details in Armenian history and give them their continuity in a more detailed way, not stuck on the 1915 events. That is to say, he does not explicitly accept the 1915 events as the break in modern Armenian history, but is aware of this break and wants to connect it to the important and essential characters and their fictional stories. The fantasy world that he creates, as opposed to concrete testimonies, carries out the same task as Esayan does with his mythic characters and provides continuity in time.

For instance, in *Deli Dolu Öykü*, the narrator is an Armenian writer, Yeğya Demircibaşyan, who is not well known in Armenian literature. This mystic writer from the nineteenth century also prepared an Armenian-French dictionary, wrote a

lot of stories in literature magazines, and died in 1908 before the catastrophe. For Kirkoryan, this non-famous writer becomes one of the national heroes and gives details about the Armenian identity and history, too. In addition, similar to the imaginary kinship that Esayan created in *Şimdinin Dar Odası*, Kirkoryan also talks about an important Armenian politician and philosopher, Mina Çerez, by mentioning that Demircibaşyan wrote a letter to him. In that way we can learn about another important figure in Armenian history from the nineteenth century. Demircibaşyan also describes some of the Armenian rituals like *zadig* (Easter) and the fasting of Armenian girls for Saint Sarkis to get married.¹⁵⁵ These repetitive performances help Kirkoryan to create a unified Armenian identity not losing its continuity in history. By way of the fictional story of Demircibaşyan, Kirkoryan also describes nineteenth century Istanbul and by calling the schools, churches, hospital and social life attributed to the essence of the Armenian identity.

In his other story, *Son Huzurun Öyküsü*, the historical hero is again Gomidas, whom I have mentioned several times. Kirkoryan also makes use of this figure's importance in Armenian history and the integrative role between past, present and future. The story is set in 1910 and Gomidas, as the narrator of the story, is in Kütahya. He describes his feelings about Anatolia, its songs and history. With Kirkoryan's quotation from Euripides at the beginning of the story, we can better understand the meaning of the story and the mood in which the narrator Gomidas tells his feelings.

There is no any other sorrow bigger than one's losing his homeland.¹⁵⁶ Gomidas, here, mentions his attachment and commitment to the soil of Anatolia and its songs. Anatolia means belonging and therefore peace for Armenians. Gomidas's

¹⁵⁵ Kevork Kirkoryan, *Aşkın Kör Noktası* (İstanbul: İnkılâp Kitabevi, 2004), pp. 23-24.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 122. "Yeryüzünde birinin anayurdunu yitirmesinden daha büyük bir acı yoktur."

last moments in peace are also the last moments of peace for the entire Armenian community. Therefore, the crucial point in that story is the fact that he overtly plays his integrative role for the Armenian past and future. The songs that he collects from all over the Anatolia represent this bond and Gomidas by collecting them actually accomplishes his responsibility as a national hero.

Although it makes me sad that I will leave this place in the near future, I have no worries. The best thing is that this music will be played here forever. Of course, there will be some noises that will ruin this melody. But who can turn the volume of the nature down? Today, I am listening to it. Tomorrow, a shepherd will be captured by the same music. Maybe a hundred years later, another will sing this song by himself.¹⁵⁷

By representing the Armenian presence in the past with the songs, Kirkoryan also manifests the future of the Armenians despite the breaks by saying “Of course, there will be some noises that will ruin this melody” and Gomidas in that sense becomes the one that provides that bond, like in Esayan’s novel in which he provides the confrontation between the Turks and the Armenians.

Apart from those stories, we see an archival search by Kirkoryan to document the poems of several Armenian poets from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in his fictional stories.¹⁵⁸ The aim seems to be to memorialize and rearticulate them in Armenian history. In his story *Uyarlama Öykü (Story Adapted)*, for instance, he describes the love story of a man who suffers pain and misses the good old days. However, the interesting point with the story is the fact that it is like a collage from several Armenian poems. He integrates the lines of the forgotten poems and creates a

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 123. “Yakında buralardan ayrılacak olmam beni biraz hüznlendirse de içim rahat. En iyisi de, bu topraklarda bu müziğin hep çalacak olması. Arada, belki bu melodiye bozacak gürültüler olacak kuşkusuz. Ama bu doğanın müziğinin sesini kim kısabilir ki? Bugün ben dinliyorum. Yarınsa bir çoban aynı müziğin esiri olacak. Belki yüzyıl sonra, diline, bu zamanlardan kalan bir şarkıyı yerleştirip mırıldanacak ona eşlik edercesine.”

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 176-183. The poets that Kirkoryan refers are Armen Dorian, Madteos Zarifyan, Gosdan Zaryan, Rupen Seavg Çilingiryan, Siamanto (Adom Yarcaryan), Arşag Çobanyan, Karekin Demircibaşyan, Parseğ Gülbengyan, Yeghya Demşreçbaşyan, Dikran Yergat, Dikran Çögüryan, Vahan Tekeyan, Arsen Yergat and Mannig Berberyan.

new story. In that way he can pick several artists from the darkness of history and make them alive in the present.

Our second writer, Karin Karakaşlı, while she tries to use universal themes like “the fragile moments of life,” she cannot escape from her Armenian identity and the problem stemming from its ruptured history. She attempts to describe the catastrophe in a fictional language. She does not care about the concreteness of these stories, unlike Margosyan, Ceyhan and Arslanyan. She does not have the assertion to prove the accuracy of the catastrophe, but rather she describes it within her imaginary stories, allowing her to incorporate those imaginary stories into their ruptured and broken history. Moreover, unlike Esayan, her emphasis is only on the 1915 events and she tells of it in various fictional stories not even mentioning the name of the catastrophe. However, she uses the concepts that refer to 1915 in the Armenian collective consciousness such as deportation, loss, displacement, faith, the sense of exile and so forth. She especially focuses on the sense of exile, even though she did not experience the deportation. However the collective memory of Armenian identity reflects itself in her writings, too. She tries to deal with that sense with her fictional and mythic stories.

In one of her stories *Sürgün Tanrıçalar (Goddesses in Exile)*, in her book *Can Kırıkları (Broken Souls)*, she tells the dramatic story of the goddesses confronted with the deportation of a community and their deep melancholy and desperation. Even though we are not able to understand the historical context of the deportation or which people are deported, we can understand that the space is Anatolia, if we look at the names of the goddesses: The goddess of sun, Arinna; the goddess of earth, Kibele; the goddess of fire, Hestia; the goddess of the Armenians, Anahit; and the tree goddess, Astğik. There are also fairies, or Haverjahars, who are the fairy girls of

the Armenian community. Despite their extraordinary powers, even all those women have nothing that could prevent the tragic deportation. They are all ashamed and cannot understand the reason behind this suffering. They cannot understand why they must leave their homelands. They are very sad knowing that without its own people, the soil will no longer be fertile. Since they cannot prevent all the deportations that the people of this land have experienced and the pain they have suffered, they also decide to leave and go to other planets.

It was the duty of Anahit, the Mother of Gods, to calm and recover the confused fairies and danuted goddesses. “My friends” she said, “as you see we are just viewers of the suffering in this world. The destiny that we cannot change hurt our hearts.” (...) “What we can do after now is just to share this destiny we could not change. We are deporting ourselves from this world.”¹⁵⁹

Through this fairy, although she does not overtly mention the 1915 events, she describes them in a fairy narrative giving the incredible sadness behind the deportation and even the desperation of the gods in front of human pain and cruelty of course. The departure of their own children also causes the departure of the divine powers. In other words, this pain-filled land, understood to be Anatolia, abandoned by its own children, is now abandoned by the gods as well. It lost all its fertility coming from the superpowers of these goddesses. At the end, Karakaşlı concludes her story by identifying the goddesses with Armenian people spread all over the world longing for Anatolia where they existed before:

All the goddesses sat down to a different planet in the space and Haverjahars settled to the moon. But all their hearts were still on earth. They always had expected the world to become a place in which they can live too. They are still waiting.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Karin Karakaşlı, *Can Kırıkları* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitapçılık, 2002), p 70. “*Şaşkın perileri ve yılgın tanrıçaları toparlamak Tanrıların Anası Anahit’e düştü. “Dostlarım” dedi, “görüyorsunuz bu dünyada acıların seyircisi kalıyoruz. Değiştiremediğimiz kader, yüreklerimizi dağlıyor.” (...) “Bize artık değiştiremediğimiz kadere ortak olmak düşer. Kendimizi bu dünyadan sürgün edeceğiz.”*”

Karakaşlı, with that representation, tries to give the reader a means to understand the sense of exile that the Armenians experienced, without a need for any concrete testimony. We may claim that with this attempt she actually tries to understand, as Varjabedian says, how to “access the aspects of memory and history that are outside of any categories of conceptualization.”¹⁶¹ The crucial point for her is to represent the victimization of her ethnic group and to tell of their displacement and exile.

In her other story, *Sonrasız* (Eternal), this time, she picks up a scene on the television showing a group of Albanian people being deported from Kosovo to Macedonia. For the narrator, this scene from a different time and space is transformed into a scene from the deportation of Armenians. Since she reminded of her aunt when she sees the girl on the television, the narrator begins to tell her story of deportation from Erzincan. She describes all the pain people have suffered. Especially her aunt cannot endure any more and commits suicide by jumping into the Euphrates River. With this story, Karakaşlı brings the past into the present by rewriting it. For her, in the case of exile, the historical context and the space do not matter. The sense is always the same. In that way she plays with the flow of time, alters the linearity, turns back to the past, and brings it to the present saying that in fact the present is the past and the past is the present.

I thought that although so much time has gone, nothing has changed at all. My aunt still throw herself to Fırat. She dies one more time, thousand more times. It is stil not enough for her.¹⁶²

For Karakaşlı, the crucial point is the fact that the deportation that Armenian people experienced detached them not only from the space, but from the history also. The

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p 71. “Tanrıçaların her biri uzayın derinliğinde farklı bir gezegene kondu, Haverjaharlar ise Ay’a yerleşti, ama hepsinin de gönlü dünyada kaldı. Hep kendilerinin de var olabileceği bir hale gelmesini beklediler oranın. Hala da bekliyorlar.”

¹⁶¹ Varjabedian, p. 154.

¹⁶² Karakaşlı, *Can Kırıkları*, p 77. “Demek, bunca zaman geçmişte hiçbir şey değişmemiş diye düşündüm. Teyzem hala kendini Fırat’a atıyor. Biz kez daha ölüyor, bin kez daha ölüyor. Yetmiyor.”

survivors lost all their connections with the past and future. They have only lived the present, without any sense of past and future, because life in the past was over.

My mother never committed to a place again like it was her home. A couple of clothes for summer and winter and some underwear. She did not accept gifts from anybody. She did not allow the creation of new memories that could make it hard for her to leave. She never memorialized these days again.¹⁶³

The loss of the past brings together with it the loss of the future at the same time.

Karakaşlı, with that story however, attempts to illustrate this sense of loss and exile playing with past and present.

The Catharsis through Confrontations: Turning to the Past to Gain the Future

Here it is worth pausing to consider the superheroes that Esayan creates. In fact, Esayan puts out Armenian aspirations through the heroes he creates. He imaginatively provides what Turkish Armenians do not manage to gain in reality. It lets Esayan create his own utopia: a means to catharsis. Catharsis is an important theme and motivation for this generation of Armenians. As Margaret Bedrosian also expresses, since the Armenian people are frozen with pain, the real meaning of the catastrophe and Armenianness cannot be given with documentation or massacre narratives dependent on testimonies.¹⁶⁴ Whereas the Anatolian narrative literature is in the pursuit of the documentation of their memories and saving them from oblivion, to prove their presence in Anatolian history, writers like Esayan for instance, are more interested in the catharsis and healing that will be on a more

¹⁶³ Ibid., pp. 76-77. “*Ama anam hiçbir eve yuva diye bağlanmadı bir daha. Yazlık kışlık birer elbis, birkaç çamaşır. Kimseden hediye kabul etmedi. Ayrılamayacağı hiçbir anı oluşmasına izin vermedi. Hiç anmadı o günleri.*”

¹⁶⁴ Margaret Bedrosian, *The Magical Pine Ring: Culture and Imagination in Armenian-American Literature* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1991), p.168.

profound level. The healing is underscored instead of documentation through narrating the past. Moreover, he is aware of his responsibility as a writer to provide this catharsis:

We are sewermen. We will open the channels that are plugged and clean the pipes. Because no matter how many times we flush the toilet, the shit keeps on coming up. Now, it is time to purify... (...) Healing angels are ready in my room. They are waiting for you to get ready... To get ready for the truth, only the truth.
The redemption of the past should be done. We should pay our debts and come clear with our past. Doing that is actually to mourn for the past.¹⁶⁵

He builds up a legendary utopia in both of his novels, providing the catharsis in the Armenian memory, and in the Turkish one as well. Nevertheless, these utopias are located not in the future, but within the manipulated Turkish history. They require a confrontation with the past basically, to be able to bring back the perfect old times. In other words, they are aiming to build up a present and future referring the past.

For instance, in *Şimdinin Dar Odası*, Esayan's fantasy begins with 1965, as the narrator identifies it as the date in which Turkey's faith has been changed, the Eurasian Party, which is the symbol of the freedom and equality of all the identities, wins the elections. This party as we can understand from its name represents all Turkey including Istanbul and Anatolia with all its different identities. It pursues a total revolution in Turkey and is led by a team of Armenians like Nışan Usta and Turks as well. The mystic hero of the novel, Dikran, does not believe to the party's power and future at first and thinks that they will all be declared as traitors like Menderes was.

Do not tell this to me. Tell that to the people who are responsible for that. I am not being a pessimist, I am just making a realistic statement.

¹⁶⁵ Esayan, *Şimdinin Dar Odası*, p. 9. "Birer lağımciyız biz. Tıkanan kanalları, sıkışan dirsekleri açacağız. Çünkü sifonu ne kadar çeksek de, bok yukarı çıkıyor. Artık temizlik vakti. Artık arınma vakti... (...) Şifa melekleri hazır; yanımda odamdalar, ... Sizleri bekliyorlar; hazırlanmanızı... Gerçeğe, yalnızca gerçeğe hazır olmanızı bekliyorlar. Geçmişin kefareti ödenmeli, borcumuzu temizlemeli, onunla uzlaşmalıyız. Bunu yapmak yas tutmak demektir..."

You talk like it was another country who forced more than forty-thousand Greeks to leave the country. You dream of a Jewish military-commander, an Armenian minister or a Greek governor in a country that executed his own prime minister. It is just not possible.¹⁶⁶

Through these lines, like in the rest of the novel, the author, on the one hand tries to give concrete information of the on the actual Turkish history like the Wealth Tax or the 1964 Turkish Greeks' deportation to Greece. Moreover, he also underlines the de facto, actually before de jure, laws implemented on non-Muslim population in Turkey to prevent them from being civil servants.¹⁶⁷

However, all this dark past and actual implementations against different identities under the aim of the Turkification of the state, come to an end with the Eurasia Party, even though Dikran does not believe at the beginning. Indeed, it is Dikran who provides that triumph with his heroic talents, as I have mentioned before. He uses his power, entering in the bodies of other people, in favor of the party, changes all the objectors by modifying their thoughts, and makes them their partisans. In the end, in accordance with Esayan's utopia, Turkey becomes a member of the European Union and transforms it into a country full of democracy for all its citizens no matter what ethnic identity they possess. Even, Nışan Usta becomes the first Armenian prime minister of Turkey.

In that manner, we can say that Esayan alters the unfortunate faith and past of the Armenians by giving them political power. By this political power with the Eurasian Party, despite all the pressures on them, Esayan brings back the past of the Armenians to the present and make them visible in the public sphere, again shading

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p 203. "Bunu bana değil, bu işin mesulü kimler ise onlara söyleyin. Benim yaptığım karamsarlık değil, gerçekçi bir tespit sadece. Öyle bir konuşuyorsunuz ki, sanki kırkbinden fazla Rum'un birkaç ay evvel hudur dışı edildiği ülke burası değil de başka bir memleket! Kendi başbanını idam eden bir ülkede, Yahudi bir ordu komutanı, Ermeni bir bakan, Rum bir valinin hayalini kuruyorsunuz. Olmaz böyle şey!"

¹⁶⁷ Akar, pp. 29-30. With the Law no. 2007 promulgated in 1932, for the employment in some occupations, it is stipulated of being Turks. So foreigners would not be able to carry out activities in such professions.

from the invisibility in their lands and from the frozen nostalgic ethnic identity's frontiers. Consequently, he rearranges the history after 1965 with the purpose of turning back to the days when, the Armenians were so active in political life and preventing their extinction from history. Making Nışan Usta the prime minister allows them to be written again in the history of Anatolia with capital letters.

For Esayan, the catharsis is only possible when people in Turkey are able to confront their past and begin to live together no matter what the differences among them. The first condition is always to see, talk and accept the past. Only after that, Armenians can exit from their ghettos of the present, and access the future through the past and make peace with the land that sent them away.

All people were in the streets. Pera was worth seeing. Like celebrating the end of a long and big war, all the Turkish people followed their instincts and found themselves in the streets smiling. (...) Laughter did not remain just in İstanbul, it spreaded to west, east, north and south and began to embrace all the country. (...) It reached all the cities, villages and graveyards in Anatolia. All the country was smiling. The big fast was over. The mourning was over. The festival was there and people have really missed smiling. But they were smiling at that time. All of Anatolia was smiling, all the country was smiling. A new era was beginning.¹⁶⁸

In turn, if we call *Şimdinin Dar Odası* a novel that “rewrites history.” we may easily identify *Karşılaşma* as Esayan's “catharsis novel.” This time Pehlivan Usta uses his magical powers to change history and provide healing. One of the magical powers of Pehlivan Usta is to make “gold” from “tin” by the help of alchemy, that he learned from his cousin Gomidas. Here again Gomidas comes to the scene representing the past of Armenians and also saving their future with a mystical power. With this

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 279. “İnsanlar sokaklara döküldüler. Pera görülmeye değerdi. Büyük ve uzun bir savaşın bitişini kutlar gibi, tüm Türkiye halkları ne olduğunu tam da anlayamadan, içgüdülerinin ve kahkahalarının peşinden sokağa döküldüler. (...) Kahkaha tufanı İstanbul sınırlarını aştı, batıya ve doğuya, kuzeye ve güneye doğru tüm coğrafyayı kucaklamaya başladı. (...) Anadolu'nun tüm kentlerine, en ücra kasaba, köy ve mezralarına kadar ulaştı. Tüm ülke, tüm varoluş gülüyordu. Büyük oruç bitmişti. Yas bitmişti. Şölen başlamıştı. İnsanlar glmeye hasretti. İnsanlar katıla katıla gülmeye açtı. İnsanlar gülüyordu. Anadolu gülüyordu. Bütün memleket gülüyordu. Yepyeni bir çağ başlıyordu.”

talent, Pehlivan Usta helps everybody who suffers from poverty, especially during the Wealth Tax period, which was a medium of economic Turkification, and thus saves non-muslims from going to Aşkale to work to death.

Pehlivan Usta's second magical act is to heal sick people by praying.

However, this healing power causes him to lose his own health and strength and he is condemned to death in the end. Although Pehlivan Usta is aware of the fact that he will die, he returns to Turkey after the death of Gomidas and wants to confront and heal his land, despite all his anger and pain.

Maybe, the only thing that separate them was the way their hate affected their lives. "Well" said Pehlivan Usta, "Is this a small thing? I am aware of my sickness. Moreover, I came to face and settle up with the thing that make me sick. With my homeland that sent me away with hate..."¹⁶⁹

This confrontation and healing process is accomplished by the allegorical confrontation between Pehlivan Usta and Rakım Efendi in the novel. Rakım Efendi is a Turkish Muslim man and his child Yusuf is sick and gets an attack of nerves that has no medical explanation. However, Rakım Efendi continuously denies his sickness, like Turkish historiography denying 1915. This denial makes Yusuf sicker and while Pehlivan Usta is the only one that can prevent his attacks, Rakım Efendi is against him because he is a non-Muslim Armenian and does not give permission to him to heal his son. Moreover, he tries to send him away from his district. He complains about him to the police because of the fact that he does magic.

On the other hand, Pehlivan Usta shows a great tolerance to him and does not understand his unreasonable anger. His only aim is to put an end to this antagonism that exhausts him. In the confrontation part of the novel, Esayan uses the symbols

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 151. "Belki ikisini ayıran yegane şey, nefretin harici hayata ne şekil tezahür ettiğiydi. "Eh" dedi Pehlivan Usta içinden, "Bu da az bir şey mi? Ben hasta olduğumun farkındayım. Üstelik beni hasta eden şeyle karşılaşmak, hesaplaşmak için döndüm memleketime. Beni kovan, kusan memleketime..."

and puts forward the conditions for the catharsis. Pehlivan Usta is the symbol of the all-Armenian history against Rakım Efendi's anger. Derviş Efendi, a Sufi man, who plays the mediator role between them, also a divinely magical character again, sees the reality behind Pehlivan Usta's body:

The heart of Derviş Efendi was hurting. How much pain was in this man's heart? He was suddenly shuttered. He went to the past, to the day Pehlivan was there. He heard thousand, ten-thousands and hundreds of thousands screams. Crying children, and shrieking mothers saw thousands of dead bodies in the banks of the Kızılırmak.¹⁷⁰

After that time, the two figures cannot resist their emotions and both are squeezed under the burden of the painful years.

Şeyh Derviş Efendi fell to his knees. It was like he could not carry the burden on his back and was forced to get on his knees. Afterwards, Pehlivan Usta got on his knees. The two highly respected person laid their heads together and began to mumble very silently(...) It seemed like they had a pain hiding in them for years and mourning for that pain was forbidden until that time. It seemed like the prohibition was over. Tears were allowed to drop.¹⁷¹

Only after that did Rakım Efendi permit him to heal his son, not being able to reject the Şeyh's desire. While Pehlivan Usta is healing Yusuf, he realizes that there is some hidden secret that makes him sick: A shameful secret in his past. In other words, if we decipher the allegory, a secret in Turkish history. Then Rakım Efendi accepts this secret saying "I saw the darkness inside me. I realized it and I hated it."¹⁷² He begins to cry and confess his sin. He says that he killed an Armenian during the deportation, so that he would not be able to return and reclaim his wealth,

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 342. "Derviş Efendi'nin yüreği kasıldı. Ne kadar çok keder vardı bu adamın yüreğinde? Sarsıldı. Geçmişe, Pehlivan'ın durduğu o meşum güne gitti. Binlerce, on binlerce, yüz binlerce feryat duydu. Ağlayan çocuklar, feryat eden analar, üst üste yığılı, yamaçlarda asılı binlerce ceset ve günlerce akan bir Kızılırmak gördü."

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 342. "Şeyh Derviş Efendi diz üstü çöktü. Sanki tonlarca yük birden sırtına abanmış, yere çökmeye mecbur etmişti onu. Derken Pehlivan Usta da diz çöktü yere. İki yüksek şahsiyet baş başa vermiş halde, mırıldanmaya başladılar. (...) Sanki yıllardır içlerine gömdükleri bir acı vardı, sanki bu acının yası yıllardır yasaklanmıştı da, şimdi birden bu yasak kalkmış, gözyaşlarına izin çıkmıştı."

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 346. "İçimdeki kötülüğü gördüm. Onu fark ettim ve ondan tiksinti duydum."

which he had entrusted to Rakım Efendi. After that confession, Yusuf gets healed under the call to prayer and the bells of the church at the same time. Rakım Efendi, by his confession relaxes and loses all his anger. He sells the house and land of the Armenian man that he killed and donates it to the poor and an Armenian orphanage.

After that confrontation, the entire neighborhood changes. In that sense for Esayan, all the grudges and anger of history can be removed easily by the recognition of the pain and apology. The catharsis is so easy for him.

Can a neighbourhodd change so fast? Can people bury all the hostility under the ground accept others as real brothers and sisters in such a short time? Yes, this is quite possible.(...) Today, neither gypsyies are despised nor the scruffs living in the streets are left to death or hurt. Muslims- nonmuslims, Sunni-Alevi, Turk-Kurd, Kyrd-Gypsy clahes were over. *The change in Rakım Efendi has also ended the hegemony of hate in the neighborhood.* ¹⁷³ (emphasis mine)

As it can be seen, for Esayan it is the Turkish side's transformation that will provide the catharsis for all the inhabitants of this land. The magical superhero Pehlivan Usta alters the unfortunate faith of the Armenian people and vanquishes the persistent denial of the events by Turkish official historiography.

Manifested Identity Problems

Breaking the silence wall, the new Armenian generation also has a more open tendency toward questioning their identity and their relationship with the larger community. The nostalgic Armenian identity given in Margosyan, Ceyhan and Arslanyan, strictly dependent on Anatolia, is changing with these new writers. They

¹⁷³ Ibid., pp. 348-349. “*Bir semt bu kadar çabuk değişebilir mi? insanlar bu kadar kısa bir vakitte tüm husumetleri toprağa gömüp, birbirlerini hakiki birer kardeş olarak kabullenebilirler mi? Evet efendim pekala mümkündür. (...) Artık ne çingene vatandaşlar horlanıyor, ne sokaklardaki berduşlar ölüme terkediliyor, ne de herhangi bir cürum işleniyordu. Müslim-gayrimüslim, Sünni-Alevi, Türk-Kürt, Kürt-Çingene çatışmaları sona ermişti. Rakım Efendi'deki değişim semtteki nefretin halimiyetini kırmıştı.*”

are now overtly against the all frozen and commercial images of the Armenian identity and are trying to construct a more living image.

In that manner, they are also questioning the pure Armenian identity and incorporating other forms of identities into their writings. First, they openly refer to the problems about the recognition of the Armenian identity. That problem is given sometimes at the bureaucratic level, and sometimes in daily life. At the bureaucratic level, namely by the means of the Turkish official “state,” the difficulties that the Armenian people have to overcome are also between the lines and are mentioned usually in a humorous language, avoiding direct confrontation with the state. For instance, in Markar Esayan’s novel, *Karşılaşma* (Confrontation), Zaymayr starts his story by explaining his name, his identity and the enforcements of the state in order to implement its Turkification project:

As your obedient servant, my name is Zaymayr Parsoğlu. In Armenian *Չայմայր Բարսոյլուն*: My surname is actually Parseğyan, but with the Law of Surname ‘Yan’ fell and became Oğlu. Actually I find myself as lucky. At least my new surname so much reminds, at least according to the euphony, the older. That is because of this law that a lot of Armenian –certainly the other non-muslims also- have meaningless surnames.¹⁷⁴

Esayan, with the first sentences of the novel, puts forth his emphasis on his Armenian identity. Despite this humorous look at the nationalist project, Esayan’s character is actually furious and finds his own civil disobedience. So he continues:

However, I did not use my new surname except for official things. Until that time that I am preparing for my last breath, I have been Zaymayr Parseğyan, or rather *Չայմայր Բարսեղեան*. What can I do? This is

¹⁷⁴ Esayan, *Karşılaşma* p. 29. “Bendeniz Zaymayr Parsoğlu. Ermenicesiyle *Չայմայր Բարսոյլուն*: Soyadımın aslı Parseğyan’dır, lakin Soyadı Kanunu esnasında Yan’ı düşmüş, Oğlu olmuştur. Ben yine de talihli sayılırım. Hiç olmazsa yeni soyadım –en azından ses ahengi açısından- eskisini epeyce andırmaktadır. Pek çok Ermeninin –şüphesiz diğer gayrimüslimlerin de- manasız soyadlara sahip olması bu kanun sebebiyledir.”

the picture in my imagination... The negative film that depict me as I like, shows this image when it is developed.¹⁷⁵

These words may be comprehended much better if we take into account the importance of names for the Armenian identity. In fact, Esayan tries to understand the authenticity of the Armenian identity within the symbols rather than the facts. Indeed, this approach is a response to their symbolic meaning for Turkish historiography. He wants to say that they are more than these frozen typologies and have some cultural roots located in their own histories. Then, Esayan is not satisfied with the above sentences and again points out the fact that the Turkish nationalist movement has tried to erase not only their names but also their roots, histories and identities.

Above all for us, the Armenian people this name issue is so important that, do not even ask! (...) The reason for my obsession with the names is different from those. In my opinion, all those splendid celebrations and traditions are like baleful blankets laid out on our true feelings. To take so much care in our names is the crystallized situation of our efforts to maintain our existence and to be able to stay as ‘Hay yev Krisdonya’. Our names have sealed our souls and became their equivalent. Nobody can take the name of a dignified person even everything this person possess is in danger. One’s name is the last thing to spoil. When a man’s name is taken from him, it means that he is left alone as a cursed soul.¹⁷⁶

Esayan is aware of the fact that the names play an important role in their identity as a symbol of their presence. To prevent the sense of loss they need their own names and

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 29 “*Hoş, ben yeni soyadımı resmiyet dışında hiç mi hiç kullanmadım. Son nefesimi vermeye hazırlandığım şu ana kadar da Zaymayr Parseğyan oldum, daha doğrusu Չայմայր Քարսեղյան. Ne yapayım? Muhayyiledeki resmim böyle... Beni içime sindiği gibi gösteren filmin negatif, banyo edildiğinde bu görüntüyü veriyor.*”

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 64-66. “*Hele biz Ermeni milletinde o kadar mühimdir ki bu isim meselesi sormayın gitsin! (...) Benim isimlere olan takıntımın sebepleri bundan pek ayırdır. Bence tüm bu tantanalı kutlamalar ve sıkı sıkıya tutunulan ananeler, asıl hislerin üzerine serilmiş uğursuz bir örtü gibidir. İsimlerimize bu kadar itina gösteriyor olmak, mevcudiyetimizi sürdürme, Hay yev Krisdonya (Ermeni ve Hristiyan) kalabilme çabamızın billurlaşmış vaziyetidir. İsimlerimiz ruhlarımızı mühürlemiş, onun muadili olmuşlardır. Her şeyimiz tehlikede olsa da, kimse haysiyetli bir insanın ismini ondan alamaz. Yağma malı olacak son şey insanın ismidir ki böyle bir şey olursa, o kişi mevcudiyetini kaybetmiş lanetli bir ruhtan başka bir şey olamaz artık.*”

surnames. Esayan also sees that this symbol is also the means for the identity to connect to the past:

Having a real name is actually a reflection of the will to have a real history. The tree of life strikes roots underneath the ground with history where our names refer to flowers that blossom in its limbs. Our names are like moneyboxes, they protect whatever is important to us. Even though we, Armenians, are chased, treated roughly and have had to leave many things behind us, we always wanted to protect our names. I do not know the meaning of this. I cannot understand the meaning of these efforts considering the massive losses we experienced. However, our names seem like the most valuable things which are left with us. And, of course, our friends. Friends that call us by our names and make no discrimination.¹⁷⁷

The name issue also appears in the Anatolian narrative memoirs, but Esayan's attempt is more profound as seeing them as the symbol of their existence in the Turkification context. It is not an issue of being a stranger or not in Turkish society because of the different names, but rather it is an existential problem. He openly wants to be recognized with his Armenian identity.

Describing an Armenian identity interlocking with the other identities within Istanbul, Esayan again conflicts with the symbolic and frozen cliché concepts like "rich" and "honest merchant" about Armenianness. *Şimdinin Dar Odası* (The Narrow Room of the Present) actually uses that sort of framework interrogating the "rich commercial man" image of Armenians while also hinting that the Wealth Tax period took its legitimacy from that image which had been fixed in the eyes of the public.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 66. "Hakiki bir isme sahip olmak, hakiki bir maziye sahip olma dürtüsünün bir tezahürüdür aslında. Hayat ağacı, bereketli toprağın diplerine mazi ile kök salarken, geleceğe doğru kıvrılarak yükselen dallarında ise birer çiçek misali tomurcuklanır isimlerimiz. Bir kumbara gibi, bizim için ehemmiyetli ne varsa içinde saklar. Çok kovalanmış, pek hırpalanmış, arkamızda çok şeyimizi bırakmış olsak da, biz Ermeniler, isimlerimize her daim sahip çıkma derdinde olmuştuk. Bunun ne manası var, bilemiyorum. Bunca devasa kaybın yanında, böyle nafile bir çaba neyi ifade eder, onu da hala çözebilmiş değilim. Lakin, elimizde kalanların içinde en kıymetlisi bu gibidir. Bir de dostlarımız var tabii... Bizi kendi isimlerimizle hitap eden, hatırlayan, ayrı gayri tanımayan hakiki dostlar."

(...) Of course, it is not appropriate for a Muslim to have 500 Lira in his pocket, right? Wealth is only for you ‘gavurs’ (unbelievers). You get all the great things from our country and left us only with the pieces rest. In our own land, in a muslim country you live in wealth whereas we struggle to survive. You always take advantage of our goodwill and do not act as a guest. That’s not right!!!...¹⁷⁸

On that point, Esayan exposes a concrete perception of Armenianness not only accusing them of exploiting all the economic resources, but also as a “guest” that betrays its “host.” This accusation stems from the stereotypes in the collective memories of Turks. As will be seen below, there is an important problem in this stereotyping for Esayan, even though there is not any blaming.

(...)Well... Believe me, I did not recongize it at all. I only follow the accounts of the suspicious payers. Honest and trustworthy customers like you never stir up troubles. They always pay their money on time with their hands (showing the movement of the hands by paying). Let me tell you something brother, to make business with your people is easier. You always get your money on time. I earned a significant amonut of money from your people...¹⁷⁹

However, he is also aware of the fact that this stereotyping of Armenianness is also widespread among Armenians as well. The collective memory of the Armenians also locks them in the superficial patterns that they create. In other words, their lived experiences lock them in the “ghettos of identity” that the Armenian community creates itself.

(...) Dikran prefered something that is not even considered as an occupation at that time, painting, and signed up for an academy despite all the expectations of Artin Efendi, which was a huge disappointment for him. In his opinion, a non-Muslim in this country has no luxury to pick such a job. To survive with his family, he has to earn money,

¹⁷⁸ Esayan, *Şimdinin Dar Odası*, p. 231. “(...) Tabii ya bir Müslüman’ın zengin olması cebinde 500 lira bulunması yakışık almaz değil mi? Zenginlik siz gavurlara mahsustur. Memleketin kaymağını sizler yersiniz bizlere de kırıntıları layık görürsünüz. Kendi memleketimizde İslam yurdunda bizler sefil, sizler bolluk içinde yaşarsınız. Hüsnüyetimizi hep kötüye kullanır, misafirliğinizi bilmezsiniz. Yok öyle yağma!!!...”

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 103. (...) “Haa... Vallaha hiç farkında değilim. Ben sadece şüpheli alacakların hesabını takip ederim. Senin gibi itimatlı ve dürüst müşterilerim zaten müşkülât çıkarmaz, tıklar tıklar – eliyle para sayma hareketi yaparak- öderler borçlarını. Vallaha kardeşim, ticaret sizinkilerle – gayrimüslimleri kastediyordu- yapacaksın. Paran kalmaz; alacağını da vereceğini de gününde alırsın. Az ekme yemedim sizinkilerden...”

which is only possible with trade, the only field non-Muslims are allowed to enter. After Dimitra humiliated him by calling him a pathetic painter and he was about to lose the girl he loved, Dikran wished that he would listen to Artin Efendi...¹⁸⁰

Although Dikran resists this stereotypical identification, he is belittled by his love, Dimitra, because he is a painter, which cannot be acceptable for a non-Muslim in Turkey. Therefore, Dikran leaves the art academy and starts to work as an accountant, which allows him to attract Dimitra. However it makes him very unhappy and he is unable to be together with Dimitra and falls into a deep depression.

Esayan is not the only author who resists these templates within which Armenians are locked. Another writer Karin Karakaşlı, problematizes this frozen and fixed identification of Armenians and wants to have a real one dependent on recognition.

In her only novel, *Müsait Bir Yerde İnebilir miyim?* (May I Get off in a Suitable Place?), she tells a story of a woman who feels pain after her love has left her to go to another country. She, taking the basis from this break-up, tries to understand the meaning of the love, longing, belonging, pain and loss, the ones with which Armenian writers have to deal so much. Although these themes seem like universal ones, we see that she puts forth a very different Armenian story of pain in the middle of the novel, which is disjointed from the main subject and seems like indifferent. Here we understand that while she tries to write about a universal theme like pain and longing, she again returns to her identity and feels a need to explain the

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 110-111. “(...) Oysa Dikran, Artin Efendi'nin beklentilerinin aksine, o zamanlar bir meslek bile sayılmayan ressamlığı seçerek kendisinden habersiz akademiye kaydını yaptırmış, bu durum Artin Efendi için büyük bir düş kırıklığı olmuştu. Ona göre, bu memlekette bir gayrimüslimin böyle bir meslek seçmek gibi bir lüksü olamazdı. Onun ve ailesi hayatta tutacak tek şey, kazanacağı para olabilirdi ancak. Bu ise gayrimüslimlere açık tek alan olan ticaretle mümkündü. Dikran, keşke Artin Efendi'nin sözünü dinleseymi. Çünkü Dimitra onu bir ressam parçası olarak aşağıladığı zaman, bu öğüdü dinlemediği ve sevdiği kızı kaybetme tehlikesiyle yüz yüze kaldığı için pişman olacaktı...”

real cause of her pain. This is the story of a Turkish woman named Mukaddes and an Armenian woman named Sırpuhi. We have to keep in mind that their names mean the same thing. In other words, they are two different women who share the same history and pain. These two old best friends became estranged from one another because of the words of Mukaddes' son "Come on mum, we have nothing to do in that *gavurs* house (unbeliever's house)"¹⁸¹, at the end of a discussion about the genocide. After those words, Mukaddes left, not saying a word, and these two women stopped seeing each other because of the shame and disappointment. In that story, Karakaşlı severely objects to being remembered only by the frozen Armenian image. She wants to be recognized for all her people's past and pain:

Is it a too few times that we sit side by side together in this table? But life is not only composed of our *dolma*'s and *topik*'s.¹⁸² Is the pain of my mother suffered just a lie?¹⁸³

In those lines we see a similar approach to that of Esayan, objecting to the fixing of their identity on the nostalgia and on one of the colors of the so-called "mosaic" structure of Turkey, because this understanding of cultural commodity and nostalgia give way to a categorization of the identity, ignoring and making invisible the actual history and the living social, political and cultural practices of the Armenian people.

Istanbul As the New Space for Armenian Identity Construction: Markar Esayan versus Jaklin Çelik

The new Armenian writers, being the grandchildren of the displaced Armenian population, have an important concern with space and how they establish the sense

¹⁸¹ Karin Karakaşlı, *Müsait Bir Yerde İnebilir miyim?* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2005), p. 102. "Hadi anne bizim bu gavur evinde işimiz yok."

¹⁸² "Midye *dolma* and *topik* are the famous starters in Armenian kitchen.

¹⁸³ Karakaşlı, *Müsait Bir Yerde İnebilir miyim?*, p. 104.

of belonging. Since Anatolia is no longer the space in which they live, only the imagined homeland, they have now the sense of searching for a new space to be connected to in order to realize their identity construction.

Accordingly, to better understand the role of Istanbul for the Armenian people, we will borrow the term “spatial story” from Michel de Certeau, who emphasizes the interdependency between textual narratives and spatial practices.¹⁸⁴ As well, we have to admit that the new understanding about the identity construction is not based on “fixed roots,” but rather on the spatial stories that bring the sense of belonging. We can also refer to the term of “performativity” of Judith Butler in this context. As Neil Leach adapts from Judith Butler, “we rearticulate our identities and reinvent ourselves through our performativities.”¹⁸⁵

As those performances within a given space get replicated by the group members, the sense of belonging is incorporated as a part of their identity. Anne-Marie Fortier states that as communities are the imagined communities, so the spaces of communities, namely the spaces in which they claim to feel belonging, are also imagined. She claims that imagining community is not only to create a common history, experience or culture, but also how this community is attached to places and locates their culture.¹⁸⁶ For her, through the ritualized repetition of symbolic acts, these imagined communities can make “material the belongings they purport to describe.” These theories have obvious ramifications for us to understand the spatial role of Istanbul for the identification process of the new Armenian generation.

¹⁸⁴ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 115-130.

¹⁸⁵ Niel Leach, “Belonging: Towards a Theory of Identification with Place,” *Perspecta*, Vol. 33, *Mining Autonomy* (2002), pp. 130.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 130. Quoted from Anne-Marie Fortier, “Remembering Places and the Performance of Belonging(s),” in Vikki Bell ed., *Performativity and Belonging* (London: Sage, 1999), p. 42.

The absence in their homeland, Anatolia, eradicated the sense of belonging of Armenians, as I cited before in the previous chapter. While the writers of memoirs depict this sense of non-belonging in their works by giving all the spatial practices they perform in Anatolian lands making the land their own, the new space for the construction of identity is changed for the new generations. Istanbul as the space where the daily repetitive performances happen is now the only land that they can connect to their identities. They can continue their history with their daily spatial performances. We also can claim that this is the only land that can still establish a sense of belonging depending on the history before 1915's brilliant days of Istanbul's intellectual and dynamic life. That is why the space and identity relationship is constructed basically on Istanbul, in place of Anatolia.

One reason for that exchange is first that they live in Istanbul, are educated in Istanbul and work in Istanbul. That absence of Anatolia in the memories of the writers forces them to find another space to connect with. However, we cannot entirely claim that they neglect Anatolia as the homeland and the main space of their identity. It is obvious that they memorialize Anatolia as the land of their ancestors and the place from which they come. For instance, while Esayan, in both of his novels, writes of Istanbul to show the Armenian presence, he tries to find the connection between Anatolia through his characters who migrated from there. He is also aware of the fact that to establish the Armenian identity exclusively on Istanbul will be the extinction of the real essence of the authentic identity.

However, these writers attempt also to create a new space where they can feel like home with the sense of possession. That sense of possession of course takes the roots from their historical presence in Istanbul, as I noted above. All of the Armenian institutions, like schools, the Patriarchate, churches, hospitals, foundations and

cultural associations that direct, control and shape the community are in Istanbul. In other words Istanbul is not only the place that is the center of education and religion as Margosyan and Arslanyan identify. Moreover, as Melissa Bilal underlines, the works of Armenian architecture such as the Ottoman palaces and various buildings are also admitted as a sign of their historical presence in the city.¹⁸⁷ In that manner, we can claim that, mentioned before for the Anatolian narrative case, Armenian productivity, as the proof of the *permanent* settlement, in relation with the space again is the determinant of the belonging sense.

After presenting Istanbul as the locus of the Armenian identity, I want to analyze two different approaches to Istanbul by two young writers as a component of identity construction. First, there is Markar Esayan and both of his books *Karşılaşma* (Confrontation) and *Şimdinin Dar Odası* (The Narrow Room of the Present). Secondly, I will examine Jaklin Çelik, whose past in Diyarbakır and Kumkapı shapes her writings in a spatial manner, but she makes her identity construction through Istanbul mainly. Esayan's and Çelik's works show us two different approaches to the space in the context of identity, depending on their own pasts. While Esayan is an Istanbul Armenian and received an Armenian education and wrote his novels in accordance his experience, Jaklin's Diyarbakır days and the relationship that she establishes with Istanbul in accordance to that space are more decisive for her identity if we look at her stories.

In both his novels, Esayan describes Armenian Istanbul, actually spaces in Istanbul where a cosmopolitan life prevails, like Dolapdere, Kurtuluş, Pera, Beyoğlu, Tarlabaşı and so forth. Here many people from other ethnic identities live together.

¹⁸⁷ Melisa Bilal, "The Lost Lullaby and Other Stories about Being an Armenian in Turkey" (MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2004), p. 135.

Esayan, using these parts of Istanbul, actually opens a Western perspective on the city and on the Armenian identity.

On the other hand, Çelik's Kumkapı is like a small Anatolia with its less sophisticated inhabitants. It is like the symbol of Anatolia. Better to say it is like a representative microcosm of Anatolia, in fact Diyarbakır. Indeed despite the fact that both areas are cosmopolitan spaces in Istanbul, their representative power is different. Whereas Esayan's Pera, Beyoğlu, Kurtuluş and Dolapdere are the heart of Istanbul and represent the Western urbanness, Kumkapı with its cosmopolite structure is like Anatolia.

This difference between them brings out a differentiation with the relationship between city and identity. In her storybook *Kum Saatinde Kumkapı* (Kumkapı in An Hourglass), she tells the stories of the people in Kumkapı, which is one of the places which hosted Armenians saved from 1915 deportation. She describes the district like a small Diyarbakır, full of Kurds, Turks and Armenians; and on the other side she mentions her longing to this land and its lovely structure that she cannot find in the city. Her spatial relationship with Istanbul is not a desire to connect to its history and adapt it as a part of her identity. It is Kumkapı that she wants connect with, because it is the only place that seems like the continuance of Diyarbakır and her history. In that sense we may certainly say that the absence in Anatolia is recovered by its reconstructed example, Kumkapı.

On the other hand, for Esayan, Istanbul is the Armenian space through which he provides the historical continuity. He develops a different point of view of Anatolia about its cultural and social structure. He knows that Anatolia is the space that one can find the roots of Armenian life by its cultural remnants and practices,

and he also aware of the fact that it is also a homeland for various ethnic groups, not exclusively for the Armenian identity, as Gomidas Vartabed also does.

(...) He was with Gomidas Vartabed like a fedayeen when Gomidas was making one of his biggest contributions as a musicologist by going to all the Ottoman cities and writing down the musical notes of more than three thousand different Armenian, Kurdish, Turkish and Persian folk songs.¹⁸⁸

This outlook also brings a more objective stance for the reader about Armenian Anatolia's political and social structure that is not mentioned and takes place within the survivor memoirs focusing upon the nostalgia toward the daily lives. Esayan stands at a point to differentiate Istanbul and Anatolia with a more independent analysis. When he talks about Gomidas' achievements, he also illustrates a consciousness about Anatolia and the religious and social status quo of the land. In other words, the rupture with Anatolia lets him analyze the land and be relieved from the emotional bond.

The new life of Gomidas not only consists of positive incidents. The fact that Gomidas was not only interested in church music in its traditional sense and his innovative thoughts about church music created an important group of people who are opponent to him. According to Gomidas, these people against him prevented many new innovations in his mind. At such a hard time, he came to Istanbul in 1910 with his cousin to take a breath and to realize the projects in his mind. The only thing he wanted was some peaceful environment letting him to do his projects.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Esayan, *Karşılaşma*, p. 180. "(...) Gomidas Vartabed'in bir müzikolog olarak yaptığı en büyük hizmetlerden birinde, yani tüm Osmanlı ilini karış karış dolaşmasında, üç bini aşkın Ermenice, Kürtçe, Türkçe, Farsça halk ezgisi ve söylencelerini notaya geçirmesinde onun yanında bir fedai gibi yer almıştı."

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 181. "Gomidas'ın yeni hayatı kuşkusuz sadece müspet hadiselerden teşekkül değilmiş. Gomidas'ın sadece kilise musikisine değil, dünyevi musikiye de alaka göstermesi ve kilise musikisi üzerine geliştirdiği inkılapçı düşünceleri kısa zaman zarfında karşısında güçlü bir muhalefet oluşmasına yol açmış. Gomidas'a muhalif bu muhafazakar kesim onun yapmak istediği pek çok yeniliğe mani olmuştularmış. İşte bu zor dönemde bir nebze nefes alabilmek ve kafasında tasarladığı çalışmaları gerçekleştirebilmek ümidiyle 1910 yılında kuzeni ile birlikte İstanbul'a gelmeye karar vermiş. Tek arzusu rahat ve huzurlu çalışabilmek için daha elverişli bir ortam bulmakmış."

As it can be read from the above sentences, Anatolia before 1915 is not shown as a place of modernity as the general literature says, but rather he makes a comparison between Anatolia and Istanbul regarding their stance toward modernization. We have to take into account that the late of nineteenth century is the modernization period in the Ottoman Empire and Armenians were also under the influence of the modernization wind and underwent an Armenian cultural renaissance. This renaissance also brings the total secularism and the power of the church and the control of the religion over the community were also interrogated by the Armenian intellectuals in Istanbul.¹⁹⁰ Esayan, giving an aspect of that polarization about secularism and the loss of power of the church, also fortifies the modern and Western image of Istanbul against the conservative, religious and communitarian Anatolia.

For Esayan, Istanbul is also the symbol of freedom that brings the full construction of the Armenian identity. He thinks that since the Istanbul Armenians have lived in a freer environment they had the possibility of speaking fluent and good Armenian. They also have created dramatic developments in Armenian culture and art. That differentiation between two communities caused almost to a break the bonds and a disdain toward Anatolian Armenians. They even call Istanbul Armenians *Yanyan*, showing the conflict of culture and the differentiation of the identities based on the space, since the affixe of ‘-yan’ in Armenian surnames, turns into ‘-oğlu’ in Anatolia by that time.¹⁹¹

Esayan’s sense of belonging to Istanbul also shows itself in his “cognitive mapping,” the term of Fredric Jameson.¹⁹² This map is not the abstract geographical map of the city, but rather an individualized geographical and anthropological map

¹⁹⁰ Özdoğan, Üstel, Karakaşlı and Kentel, p.76.

¹⁹¹ Esayan, *Karşılaşma*, p. 358.

¹⁹² Leach, pp. 129-130.

that represents the space where he belongs. That mapping process also lets him individualize a spatial demarcation for his identity by narrative. De Certeau, as I mentioned above, emphasizes that narrative for spatial stories to be able to give a meaning to an abstract place and gain a sense of identity. In both his novels, Esayan gives detailed individualized maps for us to understand the space to which he belongs. For instance, in *Şimdinin Dar Odası*, Pera is described depending on the narrators' identifications, for these places that are meaningful for Armenians. He draws a geographical and anthropological map of Pera, passing through Tarlabası to arrive at Yenişehir. We can get all the places that are articulated to his identity:

After passing Mis Street, Ağacamii and Balo Street, I put myself in order before passing by Tokatlıyan. That is a habit from my youth. Because I might meet the most important people of the times that I know some of them who are in the teahouse. When I was passing Inci Patisserie, I glanced quickly inside of the shop without changing my walking speed with the hope to see someone I know.(...)
Finally, I was in the main foyer of Çiçek Passage embracing Pera. There was the famous restaurant Degütasyon. Instead of going through the passage (because it was possible to meet someone I know), I walked to the Balık Bazaar by turning to right. When I was passing Üç Khoran Armenian Church, I saluted the fellows standing in front of the door by slightly raising my hat.(...)
Although it is not a regular practice for me, I turned right and reached Tarlabası Street without intending to say hello to or making random conversations with anybody. (...) From the corner where the most showy building of the street stands, I went to Kalyoncukulluğu, the street that connects Tarlabası to Yenişehir. After a short walk, I let myself down the street. As you know, towards the end of the street, you see a Greek church in your right, Aya Konstantin. Although it is not as magnificent as Grand Palace of Brussels or san Pietro of Rome, I passed the church which was sacked but still able to spite its enemies with its beauty.(...)
This district in the hill, the most selected neighborhood of Greek people after Pera and Tarlabası(...) became relatively empty after many people living here migrated to other places. Involuntarily, I wished that those buildings were able to talk and explain the story of hundreds of people leaving the church with their joyful voices giving peace and faith to the environment. (...)After letting all these memories draw a bitter smile in my face, I finished the downhill road and turned right. I was in Yenişehir neighborhood.
Oh Yenişehir!(...) I have so much memories of you... (...)

After reaching Serdar Ömer street, I continued to walk quickly and passed the house of Polish poet Mickiewicz in 1955's that is now turned into a museum..(..)¹⁹³

The Interrogation of the Authenticity of a Pure Armenian Identity

In the construction of a pure Armenian collectivity, common origins again play an important role as Davis points out: “one usually joins the collectivity by being born into it.”¹⁹⁴ That means the others are excluded from the collectivity. In that framework the responsibility to dismantle an original and pure Armenian ethnic group falls to Armenian women by marrying with Armenian men only. This desire for that kind of intermarriage is the only solution to continue their collectivity. We also see that issue in the novels and stories. As I mentioned in the second chapter, the Armenian identity for Margosyan is a pure one that is the product of Armenian marriages.

¹⁹³ Esayan, *Şimdinin Dar Odası*, pp. 21-25. “Mis Sokağı’nı Ağacamii’ni ve Balo Sokağı’nı paralellemesine katettikten sonra, Tokatlıyan’ın önğnden geçerken kendime bir çeki düzen verdim. Bu, şahsımda geçliğimden kalmış bir itiyattır. Tokatlıyan Otel’i’nin hemzemininde bulunan camekanlı çayhanede, bir kısmını yakinen tanıdığım, devrin en mühim şahısları (...) ile karşılaşabiliyordum çünkü. İnci Pastanesinin önünden geçerken, tanıdık birilerini görürüm diye, süratimden taviz vermeden dükkânı şöyle bir süzdüm. (...) Nihayet Çiçek Pasajı’nın Pera’yı kucaklayan ana fuayesinin önüne vardım. Burada meşhur restoran degüstasyon bulunuyordu. Pasajdan geçmek yerine (bir ahpaba rastlamak işten değildi çünkü) biraz daha ilerleyerek Balık pazarına, yani sağa doğru keskin bir dönüş yaptım. Üç Khoran Ermeni Kilisesi’nin önünden geçerken, kapıda duran ahbablara şapkamı hafifçe kaldırmak suretiyle selam verdim. (...) Hiç adetim olmadığı halde, kimseyle uzun uzadıya selamlaşıp hal hatır sormalara yeltenmeden, Balıkpazarı’ndan çıkıp sağa kavisle tarlabası caddesine varmışım. (...) Tarlabası Polis Karakolu olan caddenin en fiyakalı apartmanın meydana getirdiği köşeden, Tarlabası’nı Yenişehir’e indiren caddeye, Kalyoncukulluğuna geçtim. Kısa bir yürüyüşten sonra dikleşen yokuşun (...) meyiline bırakıverdim kendimi. Bilirsiniz yokuşun bitimine yakın sağda bir Rum kilisesi vardır. Aya Konstantin. İşte şimdi Brüksel’in Grand Palace veya ne bileyim, Roma’nın San Pietro Meydanı’ndaki o muhteşem muadilleri kadar olmasa da, yağmalanmış, lakin hasımlarına nispet edercesine bir nefaset ve ihtişamla maziden atıye abanan bu kilisenin önünden geçiyordum.(...)”

Pera ve Tarlabası caddelerinden sonra Runların oturduğu en mutena mevki olan, (...) bu yokuş son yıllarda verdiği göç yüzünden epeyce tenhalaşmıştı. Gayri ihtiyari ‘ah bu binaların dili olsa da, Paskalyalarda Noellerde, ellerinde mumlarla kiliseden çıkan yüzlerce kişilik o güruhun, etrafa iman ve huzur tevzi eden neşeli uğultularını bir anlatsa diye iç geçirdim.(...) Tüm bu hatırların suratımda acı bir tebessüm çiziktirmesine müsaade ettikten sonra yokuşu bitirip sağa döndüm. Artık Yenişehir semtindeydim. Ah Yenişehir, ah! (...) O kadar çok hatıram var ki sana dair... (...) Serdar Ömer caddesi’ne indikten sonra süratle yürümeye devam ettim ve Polonyalı Şair Adam Mickiewicz’in 1955’lerde (...) müzeyeye çevrilen evini geçtim. (...)”

¹⁹⁴ Niral Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), p.26.

Some people think that Armenians should marry with Armenians, Assyrians with Assyrians, Keldanis with Keldanis, Pirotts with Pirotts and Dacigs with Dacigs. Mixes marriages were never accepted as allowable. It did not sufficient for a marriage, if an Armenian guy marries an Assyrian girl or a Keldani girl tried to get married with a Assyrian guy, even they both were ultimately believing in Jesus and his sacred book *Bible*! So, that issue had to be take into account primarily, it should determine who was in mixed marriages, and make a list of who were semi-Armenian, who were semi-Assyrian for not mixing the accounts!”¹⁹⁵

On the other hand, for the new Armenian generation, this pure Armenian identity is also questioned. This marriage issue, while providing the continuity of the Armenian community as pure, is also a means to put the nation above the individual. It is like a control mechanism for all the group members acting like one unified homogenous organism.

Moreover, by its ceremonial power, which is very important among the Armenian people, it also has an integrative function.¹⁹⁶ As Emile Durkheim writes “it sustains the vitality of [common] beliefs, to keep them from being effaced from memory and, in sum, to revivify the most essential elements of the collective consciousness. Through it, the group periodically renews the sentiments which it has of itself and of its unity; at the same time, individuals are strengthened in their social natures.”¹⁹⁷

Even so, Esayan, Karakaşlı and Kirkoryan illustrate a different point of view toward the Armenian marriage and pure Armenian identity. In Esayan’s *Şimdinin*

¹⁹⁵ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri*, p. 143. *Kimilerinin 'fıkrına' göre Ermeniler Ermenilerle, Süryaniler Süryanilerle, Keldaniler Keldanilerle, Pirotlar Pirotlarla, Dacigler de Daciglerle evlenmeliydi. “Karışık” evlilikler asla mübah sayılmazdı. Bir Ermeni genci Süryani bir kızla evlendiğinde, ya da bir Keldani kızı, bir Süryani ile ev bark kurmaya kalkıştığında, onların ikisinin de eninde sonunda Hazreti İsa’ya ve O’nun kitabı İncil’e inanan Hristiyanlar olmaları bu evlilik için yeterli olmazdı! Öyleyse bu konu da öncelikle göz önüne alınıp, karışık evlilikler yapanlar ayrıca saptanmalı, kimin .”yari yariya Ermeni”, kimin “yari yariya Süryani” sayılacağı kesinleştirilip ayrı liste oluşturulmalıydı ki “hisaplar karışmasın!”*

¹⁹⁶ Joseph C. Hermanowicz and Harriet p. Morgan, “Ritualizing the Routine: Collective Identity Affirmation,” *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 14, no. 2 (June, 1999), pp. 198-200.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 199. Quoted from Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1915*) (New York: The Free Press, 1965), p. 420.

Dar Odası there are many hybrid marriages, sometimes problematic and sometimes taken for granted, since he is also aware of the importance of that issue. For instance, Aram Usta, who is the like step father of Uğur, is married with Turkish Muslim Nurten Hanım and this situation is never questioned in the novel and taken for granted. In that point we have also take into account the fact that Esayan's mother is also a Muslim. Therefore, his hybrid identity is also influential in his perception of his own identity.

In the novel, there is also a problematic marriage between a Kurdish man and the daughter of Artin Efendi as an Armenian girl. Esayan explains this situation for both groups allowing us to understand what the marriage symbolizes and takes place among the identity, loss and collective memory. For Artin Efendi, this marriage, besides the fact that it is a blockage to the continuity of its nation, is also the symbol of the repetition of the past and the sense of loss. He feels like he has sacrificed his daughter to the history.

Artin Efendi found it hard to control the pain growing inside him. 'You took my relatives and now are you gonna steal my lovely daughter!' he shouted within himself.¹⁹⁸

On the other side, for Eşvak, the Kurdish person, there is nothing wrong with this marriage, since he is within the safety of his larger community. However, the rejection of Artin Efendi makes him think about their different identities and the hidden history that they shared.

Eşvak was sure. He was talking with someone without a God. He could not believe any of his three Gods. According to the last and perfect religion Islam, Allah's power was sufficient to do anything. (...) As his grandfather who battled against the Armenians in the past said: these non-Muslims were so cruel, so deviant...¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ Esayan, *Şimdinin Dar Odası*, p. 32. "Artin Efendi, yüreğinde büyüyen öfkeyi kontrol etmekte güçlük çekti. 'Akrabalarımı aldınız, şimdi de biricik kızımı mı çalacaksınız benden!' diye haykırdı içinden..."

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 47. "Eşvak artık emindi. Karşısında bir Allahsız vardı. Hatta kendi üç tanrısına bile inanıyor olamazdı. En son ve en mükemmel din olan Müslümanlığa göre, Allah'ın gücü her şeye

Eşvak's family, meanwhile, while they are not happy with her Armenian and Christian identity, because of their self-identification as “modern” do not allow themselves to object, because although they are also Kurdish they are glad to say “I am Turkish” and they cannot discriminate against people who are glad to be Turkish with different identities, like they do.

On the other hand, Karakaşlı also questions this issue in one of her love stories. One of the stories, called *Sabır Taşı*, is also important in deciphering the status of women in a male world, along with her Armenianness. The sculptor Mari is in love with Bedri Rahmi and she marries him despite all the objections of her family. However, this inappropriate marriage between a Turkish man and Armenian woman unfortunately fortifies her non-belongingness that is the result of the deportation. She does not only lose her family, but also her roots. Therefore, she again becomes a victim, since women are the symbol and the practical field of the antagonism between Turks and Armenians:

The biggest regret for me is my family. It is hard for me to leave them disgruntled. They are my roots. We already found ourselves separated once when we had to go from Talas to İstanbul. (..) “Not being able to belong somewhere is a heritage from the past for me. I was born in Talas village of Kayseri in 1913. My birth-year was also the deportation year for my family. Like all the Armenians of the neighborhood, we took the road too. I do not tell my story to everybody. Only Bedri knows everything because his love for me also embraces the past. The story of the past in which he was sent away was like a tale. “I had three uncles. In order to save one of them my family gave all their fortune but it did not work. Afterwards, my mother found herself in roads with her baby Mari and with all the sorrow of her siblings. Do you understand now why my family would not approve my relationship with her? The past is the reason for that. Bedri is the one who considers this pain as his own pain and creates poetry. I never believed that such a person could exist. At the end, I took all the risk and did not end my relationship. Now, I have no past. My future only consists of a couple

yeterdi. (...) Eşvak'ın zamanında Ermenilerle epeyce cebelleşmiş dedesinin dediği gibi, gerçekten de bu gavurlar pek imansız, pek sapkın idiler...”

of days in front of me. Although this mortal world, it is a shame for all
of us...²⁰⁰

Although she does not overtly claim any concern about the interrelation between the intermarriages and the continuity of the Armenian identity, we can see that a hybrid marriage means the loss of the past and also the future at the same time, because the boundaries of the collective identity becomes unlocked when the biological producers of the children/people, namely women, get married to anyone outside of this identity.²⁰¹ Again in that story, the one who loses her past and future is a woman, Mari Gerekmezyan, again who chooses a Turk and is rejected by her family and community. Her surname is like her faith,²⁰² she does not fulfill the things necessary for her family and for her nation as well, because she will not maintain the boundaries that she has to protect and guard, if we think that she is assumed as the guardian, protector and mother of the collective identity.²⁰³

As for our third writer, Kirkoryan, that kind of marriage is also unacceptable and the end of that relationship is the death of the Armenian woman, this time. In his *Psikopat Öykü* (Psycho Story), Kirkoryan tells the tragic love story taking place in the nineteenth century, between the writer Şemseddin Sami and the artist of theater,

²⁰⁰ Karakaşlı, *Can Kırıkları*, p. 46-47. “Bir tek ailem ukdedir içimde. Onlara kırıgın ayrılmak ağır geliyor. Onlar kökümdür çünkü. Ve zaten bir kez kopmuştuk Talas’tan İstanbul’a yollara düştüğümüzde. (...) “Aitsizlik eskilerden miras bana. 1913’te Kayseri’nin Talas köyünde dünyaya gelmiştim. Gel gör ki doğum yılım sürgün yılı olmuş aileme. Yörenin tüm Ermenileri gibi biz de düşmüşüz yollara. Hikâyemi öyle kimselere anlatmam. Bir Bedri bilir her şeyiyle çünkü sevgisi geçmişimi de alır içine.” Eski bir masal gibi aktı o kovulduğu geçmiş. “Üç dayım varmış benim. Bir tanesi kurtulsun diye tüm servetlerini vermiş de ailem yine işe yaramamış. Anam böyle düşmüş yollara işte, kucığında bebeği Mari, bağrındaysa gencecik kardeşlerinin dinmeyen kederi. Şimdi anlıyor musun onunla beraberliğimi ailem neden tasvip edemezdi diye. Yaşadıkları geçmiş mâniydi bir şeyi kabullenmelerine. Bedri de bu geçmişi de kendi acısı gibi sahiplenip şiirleştiren insandır, ama inandıramazdım onları böyle bir insanın var olabileceğine. İlişkiyi göze almış oldum. Fena küstü ailem bana, koruyucu ellerini çektiler üzerimden. Artık geçmişim yok. Geleceğim de günübirlik bugünlerden ibaret ne zamandır. Oysa ölümlü dünya işte. Yazık hepimize...”

²⁰¹ Yuval-Davis, p. 26.

²⁰² Mari’s surname is *Gerekmezyan*, which means ‘not necessary’ in Turkish.

²⁰³ Rick Wilford, *Women, Ethnicity, and Nationalism: The Politics of Transition* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 14.

Mari-Nvart Karayan. He, again with the intention to save the Armenian intellectuals from oblivion and make them known, also demonstrates the Armenian perspective on hybrid marriages even before 1915. He seems to say without any historical context, those sorts of marriages between Turks and Armenians had been always impossible for the continuity of the community.

Although Sami and Mari-Nvart are deeply in love and they are the intellectuals of the community, they cannot even declare it because of the pressure on them. That is to say that even their free environment cannot accept that kind of relationship and both of them know that an Armenian and Turk can never be together. However, Mari-Nvart gets pregnant. She tells this pregnancy only to Zabel Ana, who is also an artist Zabel Hekimyan, and the words of Zabel Ana are very harsh.

Neither your family nor your society nor your friends can accept this.
You only have one option about pregnancy: Abortion!²⁰⁴

However, Mari-Nvart does not accept that kind of solution and she prefers to commit suicide because of this impossible love and child. She thinks of begging to their old kings or Asdhig, the love goddess of love for Armenians. However, in front of that impossible love story she prefers to die and commits suicide.

As we can see in both Karakaşlı and Kirkoryan, those are the women who get punished at the end of such love stories or marriages like we have seen in Margosyan's writings, since they are the bearers of the continuity of Armenian community and collectivity. It does not seem a coincidence that for those kinds of marriages, the woman chosen is always Armenian. I will discuss this gender problematic in the novels and stories in the following part of the chapter.

²⁰⁴ Karakaşlı, *Can Kırıkları*, p. 130. “Ne ailen ne cemaatimiz kuralları ne de arkadaşların bunu Kabul edebilir. Hamilelik için de tek bir çözümün var, sen de biliyorsun. Kürtaj!”

“Armenianness” and Gender

Besides the Armenian identity that we discussed as the main motivation to write, we also look at their other identities that take place in their writings, but again beyond the Armenianness. One of these differentiations is based on gender.

For this part of the chapter, I will examine two woman authors, Karin Karakaşlı and Jaklin Çelik, whom I have already talked about. In Karakaşlı and Çelik’s writings, we confront a gender issue, whether implicitly or explicitly. In fact, we can claim that the dual minority discourse that stems from their subordinate identities they possess, gender in one hand and Armenianness on the other, shapes their writings. They both write “woman” stories but in accordance with their Armenian identity and with other differentiated concerns about the gender issue.

Firstly, Karakaşlı takes the issue as more interrelated with the sense of “exile” that Armenians have experienced and still feel. In *Müsait Bir Yerde İnebilir miyim?* (May I Get off in a Suitable Place?) and ‘*Can Kırıkları*’ (Broken Souls) do both have the female protagonists and contain stories based on the loneliness and fragility of the women in a masculine world, generally framed with love, pain and exile themes. She does not disregard her ethnic identity, but takes it in relation with the loneliness and fragility of the characters. We can actually say that these two identities depending on their shared subordinate and victimized positions are melted in one framework.

For instance, in *Müsait Bir Yerde İnebilir miyim?*, while Karakaşlı actually tells the story of a woman in pain over love, which seems a very ordinary universal literary theme, after the part where she commits suicide, she starts a new story to describe two women who lost their friendship because of a discussion about

“genocide,” the one that I have told about in the previous part of the chapter. In that story, she combines both of her identities, “womanhood” and Armenianness, and presents both in a victimized position.

The crucial part in that story is the fact that, this genocide discussion is not actually between Mukaddes and Sirpuhi, but between Mukaddes’ son and Sirpuhi’s grandchildren Levon. These two boys discuss Asala, the Armenian terrorist organization killing Turkish civil servants abroad, and reasons about the deportation. On the other side, Sirpui and Mukaddes represent women who are accepted as symbols of peace. In other words, Karakaşlı maintains the prevalent understanding that feminist theories underline. She accepts man as constructed naturally linked to warfare and woman as constructed naturally linked to peace.²⁰⁵ Those two women in the story have never talked about the 1915 events, before, not to destroy their friendship, although they know the past.

Besides, he never opened his mouth and complained. Not because he was afraid of your mother, it was due to his friendship and respect for your mother. But we always knew what happened. This is the story of ours and others, the story of all of us. We knew what happened until today without being hostile.(...) ²⁰⁶

Through those sentences, Karakaşlı’s referring to the silence and peace for woman can be seen clearly. However, on the other side, the male characters destroy this peace and are involved again in discussion. When Mukaddes’ son is confused in the face of the pains that Levon mentioned, he cannot find anything to say and then leaves the house. On the other hand, the problem is the fact that Mukaddes also goes

²⁰⁵ Yuval-Davis, p. 94.

²⁰⁶ Karakaşlı, *Müsait Bir Yerde İnebilir miyim?*, p. 104. “Üstelik bir kez ağzını açıp da şikayette bulunmadı. Korkusundan değil, senin annenle olan dostluğundan ve saygısından. Ama biz yaşananları hep bildik. Bu bizim ve diğerlerinin, hepimizin hayat hikayesi. Yaşananları bugüne husumet çıkarmadan bildik.(...)”

with him not being able to object. She is again passive, as opposed to the actively constructed male identity.

Another important point is the fact that Karakaşlı maintains the familiar genocide and war discourses taking its basis and accuracy from the victimized “women” and their pains. Like the war discourse is also constructed on, women have always a vulnerable and passive role during the warfare times and their pains are the proof of the cruelty of the war. That is why Levon, also to be successful at proving the genocide’s truthfulness, uses the pain that the women suffered during and after deportation, as almost all the mainstream war and genocide literatures do. Here the victimized women are the proof of the pain of the Armenian nation:

How can you dare say that what happened was a lie despite all the pain suffered? Do you even not know the history of the people in your own house? Did you never listen to the things that my Sırpuhi Yaya and her mother experienced.²⁰⁷

We see the same relationship between these two interrelated subordinate and victimized identity approaches in ‘*Can Kırıkları*’ (Broken Souls) also. In that book, Karakaşlı tells stories of women that stop being silent and begin to talk about their pains. The first story, *Garine* (Erzurum), is the story of a woman called Kadriye who marries a Turkish man in order to be saved from the deportation and became Muslim. That woman, who lost her Armenian identity and her bond with Erzurum, is the symbol of the all victimized women of the deportation. Her granddaughter Elvan now tells her story and her hidden pain, and gives us a framework to analyze womanhood and Armenian identity.

On that night, I was ready. I asked my mother: “Is Kadriye Nene speaking Armenian?” My mother was not even suprised and directly answered my question. “Yes,” she said. I asked her “Did you ever tell you her story?” My mother answered: “Only once and very blurry” and

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 103. “*Onca yaşanan acıya ne cüretle yalan dersin sen. Bulunduğun evin aile hikayesinden de mi bihabersin? Hiç mi dinlemedin Sırpuhi, Yayamın, onun anasının yaşadıklarını.*”

added: “It seemed like she personally did not experience these things and just told what she had heard from others. She told me about gardens, croppers, the foods made at home and the day bed that is prepared every single night. Afterwards, she told me about blood, too much blood, screams, people hiding at their neighbours ve people setting of on a journey...

I asked “Do you know the Armenian name of Kadriye Nene mother?” (...) My mother almost whispered like telling a very secret password and said in a very confident way “Gariné”, “She is your ‘Gariné Yayan’”. I repeated and said, “Gariné”. I looked at the body of the woman whose soul is very far away and said : “Gariné”. Then, my father continued to speak: “Gariné means Erzurum in Armenian language.”²⁰⁸

The attempt to decipher the hidden Armenian women in Turkey is now a very common subject in literature and the political debates as well.²⁰⁹ For that reason, we can take the issue within two approaches. Firstly, as I mentioned above, women suffering are always the visible side of the wartime conditions and in that case of ‘genocide’ the hidden Armenian women, converted to Muslims, are the proof of their pasts, their painful pasts. They are now means to be able to connect their pasts to the present.

Secondly, Davis’ assumptions about the relationship between the role of the women and the uniqueness give us a chance for a deeper analysis. As I have also mentioned with regard to the marriage problematic, women are at the core of the identity construction. For Davis, even in the nationalist projects where the emphasis on origin is not the most important dimension, “the knowledge of one’s true origin

²⁰⁸ Karakaşlı, *Can Kırıkları*, p.14. “O gece artık hazırdım. Anneme “Kadriye Nenem Ermenice mi konuşuyor?” diye sordum. Annem ne şaşırdı ne de lafı dolaştırdı. “Evet” dedi. “Sana hiç öyküsünü anlattı mı?” diye sordum. Annem, veda eden bu canın elini sevgiyle okşarken “Yalnızca bir kez ve çok silik olarak” dedi, “Sanki kendi başından geçenler değil de, tanık olduklarıymışçasına. Bağları, bostanları anlattı, ekinleri, evde pişen yemeği, her gece yeni baştan serilen döşeği. Sonra o kanı, çok kanı, çığlıkları, komşulara sığınanları ve dönüşsüz yollara koyulanları...” Kadriye Neneme Ermenice ne deniyor, biliyor musun Anne?” diye sordum. (...) Bir parolayı söyler gibi, usulca, dikkatli ve kendinden emin bir sesle “Gariné” dedi, “O senin Garine Yayan”. “Gariné” diye tekrarladım, ruhu uzaklarda, bedeni yanı başımızda olan bu kadına bakıp. Annemin sesi bir kez daha duyuldu. “Gariné Ermenice’de Erzurum demek.”

²⁰⁹ For that sort of publications, see Ayşe Gül Altınay and Fethiye Çetin, *Torunlar* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2009); Fethiye Çetin, *Anneannem* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2004); Gökçen Beyinli Dinç, “Benim Vatanım Türkiye,” *Yeni Aktüel Dergisi*, no. 117 (September-October, 2007).

can deeply affect one's identity and identification with particular ethnic and national collectivities.”²¹⁰ The discovery of the true biological origins thus as Davis notices is important if we think of the fact that if the emphasis on culture and tradition is so powerful, then the loss of the population of woman is seen as the loss of the nation.²¹¹

Within that framework, the hidden Armenian mothers and grandmothers gain importance in order to create continuity in the collective history and to help to the construction of the Armenian identity by “true parents.” To find the hidden Armenian women is the means to reach to the past, because women as the national symbol are the guardians of the continuity and immutability of the nation, the embodiment and its respectability, as Rick noticed.²¹²

Those women keep their silence about their original identities and even say not to talk about the painful history. This passive position is actually convenient to their gendered roles to be passive rather than active. Garine, for instance, does not use her original name and does not talk about her original identity and keeps it as a big secret.

In Karakaşlı's *Sürgün Tanrıçalar*, which that I have mentioned before, we also see a similar approach of Davis' saying that “becoming refugee is a gendered experience.”²¹³ In her story Karakaşlı does not mention any name of male god, and those are the goddesses who decide to deport themselves from their homelands as a protest to the deportation of the desperate people. The men are again disappeared, even the gods, and those are the women who experience to become refugee.

²¹⁰ Yuval-Davis, p. 28.

²¹¹ Ibid., p. 32.

²¹² Wilford, p. 14.

²¹³ Yuval-Davis, p. 109.

The second issue that she puts into words is, like Çelik, the gender problems, but differently from Karakaşlı. Instead of taking the issue within a “victimization discourse” in relation to her Armenian identity like Karakaşlı does, she prefers to be involved on a more *practical* level like violence, harassment and the inequalities between the two sexes that women suffer in their daily lives.

“Do you know Füsün abla, she called me bitch”

Füsün started to laugh. (...)

“Füsün abla, this cannot go like this, everynight the same thing! Ok, it is true that I make some noise but when a man does it he becomes a real man. When a woman does it, she is a bitch. My god, is it really the justice? Why didn’t you think of these days when creating us?

(...)

What is the blame of our creator? His justice is bth for men and women since the beginning. Look, no one is even complaining. He should be the one to be suprised.”²¹⁴

Similar to this passage, she also questions the male violence against women and its normalization within the hegemonic patriarchal structure.

... Cumali threw his finished cigarette out of the window and turned to the woman from Istanbul sitting inside, with a courtesy that one cannot expect from a man who has beaten his wife ten minutes ago, he said “If it makes you uncomfortable, I can close the window.”²¹⁵

Different Perspectives on “Armenianness”

In this part of the chapter, I will analyze four writers from different backgrounds whose writing reflects these backgrounds. Those writers do not exhibit a definite

²¹⁴ Jaklin Çelik, *Kum Saatinde Kumkapı* (İstanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2000), p. 47. “Füsün abla, biliyor musun bana orospu dedi” Füsün da kıkır kıkır gülmeye başladı. (...) “Füsün abla, olmuyor, her gece aynı şey! Bir kadının bu saatte evine gelmeye hakkı yok mu? A vallahi de billahi de bıktım! Hadi biraz gürültü yaptığım doğru, ama erkek yapınca erkek adam oluyor, kadın yapınca orospu oluyor! Allahım sence bu adil mi? Yarattın yarattın da bugünleri niye düşünmedin? (...) Yaradanın suçu ne? Onun adaleti ta başından beri kadınlar ve erkekler için. Baksana kimse de şikayetçi değil. Asıl şaşkınlığı o yaşıyordur..”

²¹⁵ Ibid., p. 88. “... Cumali biten sigarasını camdan dışarı attı. İçeride oturan İstanbullu kadına döndü, daha on dakika önce karısını döven bir adamdan beklenmedik kibarlıkla: “Bacım eğer rahatsız oluyorsan camı kapatabilirim...” dedi.”

kind of stance to their Armenian identity and prefer to put a deliberate distance toward it depending on their own backgrounds and the relationship that they establish with the community.

Firstly, we will analyze Raffi Kebapçıyan, who has a more Westernized perspective on Armenianness in relation to his life more interrelated with Europe. His life story, including Western style education, his years in Europe and being distant from the Armenian community in Turkey, reflects in his only collection of stories in Turkish, '*Konuş Halil Bey Konuş*' (Talk Mr. Halil Talk), from a Westernized and more critical point of view toward both Armenians and Turks. He actually wrote several stories in Armenian in the diaspora. Although he also wants to come to terms with the past and his stories take the past as the main issue and the framework for his fiction, it can be said that this past is held not with a nostalgic and Orientalist point of view, but rather with a more analytic Westernized one. He wants to display all the changes and differences from the old days and to accept them with a more conscious and objective way. He does not look to the past as something that is dead but instead as a dynamic process continuing to the present. In fact, before beginning to his book, he uses the quotation from William Faulkner showing his interest in the past: "The past is not dead, actually it is not even past."²¹⁶

His story called *Kabus* (Nightmare), for instance, tells the story of a family in the context of the incidents of September 6/7. Here he uses a cold-blooded narrative rather than a tragic narrative and attempts to give it as a fact in the history. The conspicuous part of the story is about a photograph. In that photograph, one of their family friends, Halil Bey, is among the crowd that overran the stores of the non-Muslims in İstiklal Avenue and was shouting something. The father of the narrator is

²¹⁶ Raffi Kebapçıyan, *Konuş Halil Bey Konuş* (İstanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2000). "*Geçmiş asla bir ölü değildir, aslında geçmiş bile değildir.*"

shocked in front of that picture and cannot believe it. However the narrator wants to call him to account for that picture and says “(...) Mr. Halil, what were you saying that night? What were you doing, Mr. Halil, in İstiklal District, at that September night, at that hour? Talk Mr. Halil, talk, say something!”²¹⁷ Yet, Kebabcıyan also knows that he cannot say anything and can never give an answer about those incidents in the past.

In another story *Erciyes*, he describes a confrontation between a man, Garabed and the mountain Erciyes, which is the symbol of his past. He tries to learn the way to go Erciyes from the people of Kayseri. During his search, he feels like he is in on archaeological excavation and tries to find clues to his past. He looks for the remnants of the past and gives meaning to the entire environment. Kebabcıyan here again maintains his calmness and with a very objective stance ask questions about the past. For instance, when Garabed goes into an old Greek church, he tries to animate the past to be closer to it.

I wonder how people hiding in these church years ago felt? They probably knew that the door could protect them forever and they would be beaten by the attackers sooner or later. What happened to these women, men, elderly people and children? They were not burned. There was no tume on the walls. They were either executed by shooting or stabbing. Then, what did the grandfather of this young man do 10 minutes ago? What about the grandmothers of the young girls? “Did they pray and wish that no innocent people get hurt in a holy place like a church, house of God? Or maybe... Just the opposite.”²¹⁸

Another objective and documentarian look from Kebabcıyan shows itself against the last Armenian church, Surp Asdvadzadzin, in Kayseri. When Garabed wants to see

²¹⁷ Ibid., p. 22. “Halil Bey sen o akşam neler diyordun? O eylül akşamı, o saatte, İstiklal Caddesi’nde işin neydi Halil Bey? Konuş Halil Bey konuş, birşeyler söyle!”

²¹⁸ Ibid., p. “36. “Yıllar önce bu kiliseye sığınan insanlar acaba neler hissetmişlerdi? Kapının kendilerini sonsuza dek koruyamayacağını, er ya da geç saldırganlara yenik düşeceğini biliyorlardı mutlaka. Başlarına ne gelmişti bu kadınların, erkeklerin, yaşlıların, çocukların? Yanmamışlardı. Duvarlarda is yoktu. Kurşuna dizilmiş ya da bıçaklanmış olmalıydılar. Biraz önceki delikanlının dedesi ne yapmıştı acaba o zaman? Ya o genç kızların büyükanneleri? “Masum insan kanı akmasın, kilise kutsal yerdir, Allah’ın evidir.” diye yalvarıp yakarmışlar mıydı acaba? Belki. Belki de tam tersi.”

the church he does not use tragic words calling up the pains of 1915, but rather prefers to use a more touristic guide tone.

The second and last Armenian church which was overlooked by the people who destroyed the city, Surp Asdvadzadsizn, could be visited. God knows for which purposes the church is used right now and maybe this was the reason that the church was able to survive until that day.²¹⁹

As we can see, the lack of any nostalgic memory and reference separates Kebabcıyan from the other Anatolian narrative writers. His aim seems to take the past with a total coherence and comprehend it with a more objective outlook to be able to protect the Armenian identity.

This more Westernized and analytic view also brings a more realistic understanding of history and a desire for a more open society rather than being a community stuck in the tragedy of the past and space. He believes that the Armenian community must be a part of the space where they are living rather than establishing ghettos creating a disconnection between the life and history as well. In his story ‘Ziyaret’, for instance, he displays the dilemma of space, when he tells of a visit to an old Armenian friend in Germany. In the beginning of the story, the reader assumes that the narrator is in Istanbul, but we see that he is actually in Bremen and experience a sense of alienation and confusion of his memories.

(...) Did you see it? Look below. See what? Don't you see the artificial oasis consisting of houses that are stranded in a circle? But that is Şişli Armenian Graveyard... Very true. Look closely to the white domes showing themselves from the corner of the greenness between whites and reminding- just reminding- of a temple and try to bear them in your mind. Look carefully, so you don't forget. Being not able to forget is what ruins me, I don't need these things (...) yes, the bridge(...) turn your head to right. Otherwise, you won't see the sign heralding the exit from the subway. Bremen-Hemelingen.(...)²²⁰

²¹⁹ Ibid., p. 43. “Şehrin altüst edenlerin gözünden kaçan, Kayseri'nin ikinci ve son Ermeni kilisesi Surp Asdvadzadsizn'ı ziyaret edebilirdi. Kilise kimbilir hangi amaçla kullanılıyordu bugün ve belki de bu sayede varlığını koruyabilmişti.”

²²⁰ Ibid., p. 45-46. “(...) Gördün mü? Aşağıda. Neyi? Evlerden oluşmuş amansız bir çeöber içinde sıkışıp kalmış şu suni vahayı görmedin mi? Fakat bu Şişli Ermeni Mez... Çok doğru. Zaman

However, despite that collective memory about the space, he is also aware of the fact that there must be a consolidation with the new space in order to feel Armenian. Still, in one of his interviews he also explains the needed relationship between the spaces to feel like an Armenian.

We are more and more becoming less Armenian, we just feel like Armenians. But that is not enough. One should accept that people living in a particular place like us are also affected by our environment. For instance, if you live in Germany, you cannot fully ignore the German way of life. This is not something demanded either. Because that means you are becoming more and more part of the ghetto and become isolated from life. In my opinion, that would be a big mistake.²²¹

In accordance with those sentences, we see the approach in the narrator's thinking about Yeşilköy which is the place where he lived in his childhood. He knows that this is not his place anymore and he notices that he now knows a lot about Bremen and has new memories about it.

Even I can hardly recognize the Yeşilköy of my childhood. I am trying to prepare my self for my farewell. For others, Yeşilyurt today is a home with childhood memories that cannot be replaced. The phone was ringing. I just realized that Anuş brought the phone to the kitchen. The houses in Bremen are tidy and well groomed. The houses in Bremen.²²²

We see another approach to Armenianness as contextualized in the Armenian language, without any other emphasis to other references for the construction of identity. Our second writer, Rober Haddeciyan, is one of the defenders of the West

zaman yeşilliğin bir köşesinden kendini gösteren ve bir mabedi hatırlatan –sadece hatırlatan- beyaz kümbetlere iyi bak ve onları zihninen kazı. Bak ki unutmayasın. Beni zaten unutamamak mahvediyor, böyle şeylere ihtiyacım yok (...) evet evet, köprü. (...) başını sağa çevir, sağa. Otoyoldan çıkışı müjdeleyen tabelayı görmeyeceksin yoksa. Bremen-Hemelingen.(...)”

²²¹ *PostExpress*, January-February, 2006. “Ermeni olmaktan çıkıyoruz, artık sadece kendimizi Ermeni hissediyoruz. Ama sadece onunla olmuyor. Bunu da kabul etmek gerekir ki, herhangi bir yerde yaşayanlar, bizim gibiler, çeşitli etkiler altındayız. Eğer Almanya’da yaşıyorsan sözgelimi, Alman hayatından kopman mümkün değildir, aslında istenen bir şey de değildir bu. Tamamıyla gettolaşıyorsunuz, hayattan bütünüyle kopuyorsunuz demektir o. Bu da büyük bir hata olur bence.”

²²² Kebabcıyan, p. 51-52. “Ben bile, çocukluğumun Yeşilköy’ünü güç bela tanıyabiliyorum; artık yavaş yavaş nihai vedaya alıştırıyorum kendimi. Başkaları içinse, bugünün Yeşilköy’ü bir yurt, çocukluğun tahrip edilemez hatıraları demek. Telefon çaldı. Anuş’un, telefonu mutfağa kadar getirdiğini ancak şimdi farkettilim. Bremen’in evleri ufaktır, derli topludur. Bremen’in evleri.”

Armenian language²²³ and has had many articles about the importance of Armenian education. His insistence on Armenian language shows itself in his literature too, which he writes in Armenian. His novel named *Tavan* (Ceiling) translated into Turkish in 1997 is an important work that focuses on the Armenian language and its meaning for Armenian identity construction. Although he is a journalist, he does not concern himself with reference to the 1915 events or other political events that are devoted to the Armenians like all the other Armenian writers who use as the explicit or implicit themes. His only emphasis is on the language and accordingly its relationship to the Armenian identity.

The narrator of *Tavan* goes out shopping for his daughter and grandchild for Christmas and falls down, slipping on a banana peel. The result is paralysis. After that moment, he is condemned to be in bed and seizes the life from his neighboring patients and the visitors. During the entire story, the narrator talks about the daily life without any political or ethnic engagement. He is so depressive and bored because he is imprisoned in bed but he tries to be happy and optimistic with the love his daughter and grandchild.

Nevertheless, towards to the end we learn the actual motivation of Haddeciyan for the novel. One day, his grandchild Rupik asks his grandfather what “good morning, table, school” mean in Armenian. The narrator is surprised and wonders why he asks that question. Then he learns that he has been taking English courses for a while because they will migrate to Canada. This news makes him collapse.

²²³ West Armenian is Armenian spoken in Istanbul and Europe different from that of Eastern Armenian spoken in Armenia.

I looked upward, to the ceiling which was still there despite the metal pieces of the bomb. Canada. I was repeating to myself. Canada. Canada. Good morning...table... school...²²⁴

Through those words, we realize that there is something else that upsets him beyond the immigration to Canada. In the following sentences he, this time, says that this is the end of the world and his executioner gives the authorization to innocent Rupik. As a matter of fact, he goes too far, saying “My poor grandson, my poor baby; why have you been chosen for pushing the botton that will destroy my world?”²²⁵ This strong metaphor shows the meaning of the Armenian language for the narrator and the writer, of course.

Thank god, you are not mature enough to understand that the words that have popped out of your mouth are killing me, your aim was just to tell me some English words you just learned. Good morning, Rupik. Your mother is right, one day you will use these words for real. A couple of months, maybe a couple of years later, you will belong to a very different world. In that big city, you will come to a level just as I became very different from my Anatolian father.²²⁶

As we can see, for Haddeciyan, the Armenian language is something beyond an ordinary means to communicate with each other. He thinks that is the last and essential magical thread that connects the Armenian generations to each other. For him the Armenian language is the thing that provides the continuity and symbolizes the East, Anatolia and Armenianness. It represents the Anatolian Armenian identity that has to be transmitted from one generation to another. However, the English words are the obstacles to that transmission process and symbolize the displacement

²²⁴ Rober Haddeciyan, *Tavan* (İstanbul: Telos Yayınları, 1997), p 181. “Gözlerimi yukarıya, biraz once patlayan bombanın madeni parçaları altında yıkılmasına karşın hala yerinde duran tavana diktim. Kanada. Kendi kendime tekrarlıyordum... Kanada... Kanada... good morning... table... school...”

²²⁵ Ibid., p. 182. “Zavallı torunum, zavallı yavrum; dünyayı yıkacak düğmeye basmak için niye sen seçildin?”

²²⁶ Ibid., p. 182. “Çok şükür, ağzından kaçırдыңın sözcüğün beni öldürdüğünü kavrayacak kadar olgun değilsin, senin amacın salt yeni öğrendiğin birkaç kelime İngilizce kelimeyi masum samimiyetinle bana bildirmektir. Good morning, Rupik. Annen haklı, bir gün bu kelimeleri gerçekten çok kullanacaksın. Birkaç ay, birkaç yıl sonra bambaşka bir dünyaya ait olacaksın. O büyük kentte, Anadolu kökenli babamdan farklılaştığın kadar değişik bir çizgi edineceksin.”

and discontinuity. The narrator reminds that as a beginning they have lost the last connecton with Anatolia with the death of his father. For once, with his own death the last light in East will go out.

With my father's death, the last connection between us and Anatolia was over, the last lamp in the village was extinguished. I said to Verjin when my father was dead "It is over". Verjin did not understand what I meant. What I wanted to say is, even the air my father breathed was different (...)

One day, they will learn that their old and paralysed father died there. When Satenik's eyes are on the iced window, Rubik will ask "What happened to mummy? What happened to daddy?" Satenik will answer: "It is over Rupik, it is over." Rupik will think that the thing that is over is the life of his precious grandfather. (...) A light that was on centuries ago in the East extinguish in a hospital room and the last trail is gone for forever.²²⁷

In short, Haddeciyan's emphasis on the Armenian language comes from its symbolic meaning for the continuity of the Armenian presence and history in the East, rather than a short equation to "belonging" to an origin group. It is the thing that provides the sense belonging to the homeland and history.

Our third writer, Aret Vartanyan, draws a totally different picture from other Armenian writers. We may actually consider him as a professional writer rather than a writer engaged with any identity issue or political concern. He also takes part in the marketing process of his books that tells us his professional attitude toward authorship. His background and life story show a writer whose stance is distant from his Armenian identity without questioning it. He is involved in more individualist and ontological problems. That style can be seen readily in his first book *Sen ve Ben*

²²⁷ Ibid., p. 183. "Babamın ölümüyle, Anadolu'yla aramızdaki son bağlantı da kopmuş, köyde yanan son lamba sönmüştü. "Bitti" demiştim Verjin'e babam öldüğünde. Verjin neyi ima ettiğimi anlamamıştı. Belirtmek istediğim, babamın ciğerlerini dolduran hava farklı havaydı. (...) Yaşlı ve felçli babalarının öldüğünü orada öğrenecekler bir gün. Satenik'in yaşlı gözleri buzlanmış camda takılıp kalırken, Rupik "Ne oldu mummy? Ne oldu daddy?" diye soracak. Satenik yanıtlayacak. "Bitti Rupik, bitti." Rupik sona erenin büyükbabasının değerli yaşamı olduğunu sanacak. (...) Yüzyıllar önce Doğu'da yanan lamba bir hastane odasında sönerken, son iz de silinip gidecek böylece."

(You and Me).²²⁸ In that book, Vartanyan is interested in finding consciousness to our existence interrogating the life, love, art, contradictions and so forth. This new type of Armenian authorship tries to stand distant from the community, does not prefer to put forth a certain ethnic identity and is more interested in becoming a universal writer than to be called an Armenian author.

However, his second book is in a more differentiated line, but again coming after the multicultural trends in the cultural life of the day and not disregarding the ways to increase the marketing power of the book. *Bir Nefes İstanbul* (A Breath of Istanbul) is a novel about Istanbul with its multicultural and marginal structure including all the diverse identities like Armenians, Kurds, Jewish, marginal, conservatives and so on.²²⁹ However, this cosmopolitan structure of Istanbul with different identities is not a reflection of a concern for displaying his Armenian identity, but it is more a professional approach to the literary environment of Turkey in which nostalgic discourses on multicultural Istanbul are quite popular. Although he tries to put forth the possibility of living together, he is more interested in “human,” rather than those identity differences. That is to say that his aim is not to put forth the differences, but it is to live together disregarding them.

On the other hand, for our forth writer, Jaklin Çelik, the different point of view to her Armenianness comes from the emphasis on the Orient, even in Istanbul. In contrast to Kebabcıyan, she bears a nostalgic and emotional Orientalist gaze on her Armenian identity, which is connected strictly to “Anatolian-ness.” In other words, we can suggest that she assumes that her identity strictly stems from the lands of Anatolia, rather than any ethnic root. She is aware of the fact that this is this land that makes all of them similar and depending on an Orientalist point of view, she

²²⁸ Aret Vartanyan, *Sen ve Ben* (İstanbul: Goa Basım Yayın, 2008).

²²⁹ Aret Vartanyan, *Bir Nefes İstanbul* (İstanbul: Goa Basım Yayın, 2009).

finds the perceptions of difference as meaningless. As a matter of fact, in one of her stories in *Kum Saatinde Kumkapı* (Kumkapı in the Hourglass), she tells of the similarity among Kurds, Turks and Armenians, using a humorous language.

“Come and drink a cup of tea Kirkor!” said Ohannes.

He came inside. (...) There was a random chat going on. Kirkor suddenly realized that Vatanuş’s brother Dikran was walking down the road and stepped back in. However, Dikran saw him, saluted him and was about to come inside the shop.

“Selamınaleyküm Uncle Kirkor” he said.

Kirkor was about to complain about it but he preferred to sit down and remain silent. He took the jacket Ohannes was working on in order to look busy. He looked at him over his glasses and said, “Welcome.” He did not like Dikran. For him, Dikran was a person who possessed all the distorted behaviours by himself.

“What for a phrase is that. ‘Selamınaleyküm, Uncle Kirkor’ Dikran answered in a cheeky way: “Is it a mistake to say hello Uncle Kirkor?”

“Your excuse makes it even worse. Tell Kirkor Hadji if you want after saying selamınaleyküm! Is it proper for an Armenian to use such words?”²³⁰

As this passage shows, she thinks that the practice of living together in Anatolia makes people similar to each other and the attempts to differentiate are actually nothing but symbolic conceptualizations. In an interview she particularly focused upon the meaningless conceptualizations and she attached an importance to the “East’s multicultural living practices adapting a more intimate and honest feature” against Istanbul’s more complicated and superficial life styles. In an interview made with her, she says “In my stories, I tried to tell not the superficial others whom

²³⁰ Çelik, pp. 127-128. “Gel bir çayımı iç Kirkor!” dedi Ohannes. İçeri girdi. (...) Öylesine, havadan sudan bir sohbet akıp gidiyordu. Kirkor gelini Vatanuş’un erkek kardeşi Dikran’ın yokuş aşağı inmekte olduğunu fark etti birdenbire, kendini geri çekti. Fakat bu arada Dikran da onu görmüş, selamvermiş, kapsının kolunu kavramış, içeri girmek üzereydi. “Selamınaleyküm Kirkor dayday” dedi. Kirkor, hay senin selamınaleykümüne, diyecek oluyorsa da sesini çıkarmadan yerine oturdu. Çalışıyor gibi gözükmek için eline Ohannes’in yarım bıraktığı ceketini aldı, yaka teğeli üzerinde oynamaya başladı. Gözlüklerinin üzerinden baktı. “Hoş geldin” dedi. Dikran’ı sevmiyordu. Ona göre Dikran bir insanda bulunabilecek bozuk davranış mahsulü bütün özellikleri taşıyordu. “O ne biçim laf! Neymiş, selamınaleyküm Kirkor dayday” “Selam verdiysek suç mu işledik Kirkor dayday?” dedi Dikran pişkince. “Özrün kabahatinden büyük. Oldu olacak selamınaleyküm dedikten sonra Kirkor’un başına bir de hacı ekle ki olsun bitsin. Yakışır mı bir Ermeni’ye o laf?”

society in Turkey separate, but on the contrary I tried to tell that the faces that are seen as others are not different than the rest,” rejecting all superficial concepts of Armenian otherness and continues:

Although I usually tell the lives of Armenian people living in Istanbul, at the end they are just living like you, they are no different from you. Their name might be Ohannes, Hampartsum or Ağavni, but they are just living like you. They are no different from Hatice, Ahmet or Mehmet. That is what I tried to explain. Because we, the Turks, Syrians or Armenians, live together and are not so different from each other. That is in a way the story of “Oh right, I got an Armenian neighbour” sentence. Yes, you had a Armenian neighbour and he was like that. At the end, we are all the same.²³¹

Consequently, as we have seen, it obvious that as opposed to the Anatolian narrative novelists, the Armenian identity is now considered by writers of the younger generation on a much broader scale instead of as a static identity. Gender issues or more Westernized thoughts are incorporated into the evaluation of identity. This differentiation, however, generally depends on the writers’ backgrounds, rather than on a deliberate attempt to change Armenian literature or to salvage it from being a kind of minority literature.

²³¹ Agos Newspaper, 01 February 2008. “Ben, Türkiye’deki toplumun ‘sen, sen, sen’ diye ayrıştırılmaya çalışıldığı, zorlamayla gelen öteki yüzleri değil, tam tersine öteki olarak görülmeye çalışılan yüzlerin, diğerlerinden farklı olmadığını anlatmaya çalıştım öykülerimde. Dolayısı ile bazı öykülerimde her ne kadar bariz bir biçimde İstanbul Ermenilerinin yaşamını anlatıyor olsam da, sonuç itibarı ile ‘Evet onlarda senin gibi yaşıyorlar işte, senden hiç farkları yok. Adı Ohannes, Hampartsum veya Ağavni ama senin gibi yaşıyorlar. Hatice’den, Ahmet veya Mehmet’ten farklı değiller’ düşüncesini anlatmaya çalıştım. Çünkü biz, gerek Türkler, Süryaniler ya da Ermeniler olarak, hepimiz iç içe yaşıyoruz ve insan olarak birbirimizden farklı değiliz. Bu bir anlamda, ‘Aaa... Benim bir Ermeni komşum vardı’ ifadesinin öyküsüdür. Evet, senin bir Ermeni komşun vardı ve o işte buydu. Sonuçta hepimiz aynıyız.”

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis represents the analysis of Armenian literature in Turkey within the context of the post-1990s. I suggest that the understanding of the Armenian community, its identity, memory and history, as one of the problematic minority groups in Turkey, is best accessed through its literary works, because the Armenian community mostly prefers to represent itself in cultural realms such as music, dance and literature, rather than a political one. This is why I consider Armenian literature an important medium for the introduction of the Armenian identity into the “public sphere” in Turkey after the period of silence following the events of 1915. It is also important to study the historical framework that makes these culturally constructed texts meaningful. For this purpose, I analyzed Armenian literature in relation to the changing cultural politics in the 1990s that gave way for the possibility of different identities to speak and make themselves visible. However, this is also a context in which “different” identities, especially minorities, are dealt with as “dead” cultures- isolating them from their pasts full of pain and loss, they call it so. In that connection, we see the tendency of the studied authors to demonstrate their existence in the “present” by destroying the image of any dead culture, which they think, is assumed as spaceless and timeless.

At the end of my research, I understood that the production of these specific artistic texts is related to the representation of the collective Armenian identity and history. Although at the beginning of my study I was expecting to find literature

which might be closed to the “genocide literature” of the Armenian literature in the diaspora, I found Turkish Armenian literature to be quite different. The literary produced texts mostly are focused on the construction of an Armenian collective identity and memory after 1915. In other words, I have seen that Turkish Armenian authors do not prefer to narrate the “tragic moments” of the catastrophe, but instead they try to reflect its impacts on their collective identity and memory, thus aiming to bind the past with the present because they believe that the “present” is ruptured by that catastrophe. These authors aim to rewrite Armenian modern history after 1915 through the memoirs of the survivors and their children or via fictions of imagined past experiences. Whatever way the authors choose, they typically attempt to draw a linear Armenian modern history after 1915 to include all discriminatory incidents occurred during the “Turkification” process. In this way they are both reconstructing the Armenian collective memory and give witness of the Armenian historical presence in Anatolia.

This study points out that this sort of literary writing of history is seen also as a medium for catharsis and healing for the Armenians. The authors want to demonstrate their past experiences caused by the 1915 events, which they think are denied by Turkish historiography, and to be recognized as a living identity rather than merely one of the colors in the cultural mosaic discourse. The catharsis comes by way of making their history known to date and ending the denial of Armenian pain and losses. We may say that, for the authors, the key factor in this healing process comes when the actual lived experiences of the Armenian community confront the official Turkish historiography.

The deportation of 1915 is also seen as a displacement of the Armenian people from their ancient homeland, consequently detaching them from the culture,

history and memory of Anatolian geography. In that sense, the displacement and the relationship between the Armenian identity and the space within which that identity existed are also major issues in Armenian stories and novels. In order to overcome this sense of exile and loss, the authors try to make themselves present and visible in the history of Anatolian geography. The writers in the third chapter narrate Armenian historical presence in Anatolia by displaying their lived cultural, social and economic experiences. On the other hand, the writers of the new generation, who are from Istanbul, try to construct the sense of belonging within the new “home,” İstanbul, as the last space that Armenians can perform their cultural and social activities. In these literary works, the authors attempt to represent their existence in İstanbul, in the past and present, to recover the sense of belonging which is damaged after the deportation. I conclude that these may be viewed as the two different spaces in which Armenian literary works attempt to attach and construct the Armenian collective identity.

With this study, we see that Armenian literature is the literature of a minority group claiming recognition under the Turkish political and cultural hegemony and demanding an environment in which Armenians can live their identities without prevention or disturbance by bureaucratic or social means. These demands are for the right to fortify their cultural identities by such means as the freedom to use Armenian names in the public sphere without the need to convert them into Turkish in order to avoid being the victims of aggressive behavior. They also demand the right to learn Armenian history in Armenian schools. Considering this in context, we must see Armenian literature as the powerful collective voice for equal rights with the Turkish majority, verses the weak and silent political voice of the Armenian community. This voice gains significance when considering the current importance of “minority

rights” within political debates for European Union membership. It is my opinion that in place of any strong political involvement of the Armenian community, Turkish Armenian literature may be seen as a tool to establish a kind of Armenian civil society.

Finally, I believe that contemporary Armenian literature in Turkey is an important field of research for understanding the Armenian collective identity, memory and to fill in the gaps in modern Turkish historiography. My study is just an introduction and for this reason, in order to comprehend the whole body of literature, I was forced to make some generalizations. Therefore, I realize we must to continue deeper research to avoid any homogenization and generalization about these culturally constructed texts. Moreover, because the majority of this literature is written in Turkish, we can create a remarkable opportunity for access to the world of the Armenian community, which has been closed to the greater Turkish society for many years.

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